

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 8th March 2011 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer, Dr Aileen Douglas (*Chair*)
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate)
Dr Evangelia Rigaki, School of Drama, Film and Music
Dr Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Dr Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Dr Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Dr Conor McGuckin, School of Education
Dr Oran Doyle, School of Law
Dr Dermot O'Dwyer, School of Engineering
Dr Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Stefan Hutzler, School of Physics
Professor David Grayson, School of Chemistry
Dr Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Dr Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Dr Catherine McCabe, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Anne Marie Healy, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Dr Francis O'Toole, Director of BESS
Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL
Ms Jennifer Fox, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Rachel Barry, Student Representative

Apologies: Dr Philip Coleman, School of English,
Dr Irene Walsh, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Jim Quinn, School of Business
Dr Ian Sanders, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Mr Trevor Peare

UGS/10-11/028 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 1st February 2011 were approved.

UGS/10-11/029 Matters arising

- (i) UGS/10-11/023: The Senior Lecturer noted that schools' responses, in relation to the review of the academic year structure, are currently being collated and will be considered in totality shortly. She confirmed that the item would be brought back to a USC meeting before the end of the academic year.

UGS/10-11/030 GeneSIS Implementation

A memorandum, 'Implementation of the new student administration', from the Academic Secretary, dated 4th March 2011, was circulated along with a presentation which had been given to the College Board, 'Change Management, Administrative Reform and GeneSIS', dated 2nd March 2011.

The Academic Secretary, speaking to the item, noted that Board, at its meeting of 2nd March 2011, approved the business case, project budget and timelines, and endorsed the assumptions on which the business case was based. She informed the meeting that considerable work had already taken place to gather information on courses and regulations from websites, handbooks, the Calendar and other sources. Analysis is being carried out to ascertain if certain dominant course structures are emerging. She emphasised that academic staff input is required in the near future to verify collated information and to participate in the process of standardising course regulations. Such input is necessary to ensure that proposed measures do not impinge on the academic integrity of courses. She asked Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG) and Course Directors to consider the best methods for engagement with their respective schools.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Academic Secretary for her report and reiterated the importance of academic staff involvement, which is crucial to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

Responding to a number of queries and comments made, the Academic Secretary stated that the system would be flexible enough to accommodate Christmas examinations, if introduced, however, the immediate task at hand is to make examination regulations more consistent across College; at this stage it is not clear which courses, if any, would require significant changes; the reference to no further restructuring during the implementation phase relates to academic restructuring and not academic year restructuring; schools and faculties should be able to access a number of standard reports themselves; schools, in the initial phase, will be required to verify information already gathered for the course catalogue and to provide additional details where there are gaps; the system will be able to deal with recognition of prior learning; and it is hoped that the course catalogue will be available in a viewable format by October/November 2011, though it will not be published.

Commenting on the planned restructuring of the general Office of the Vice-Provost, the Academic Secretary explained that the new system should ensure that there is be greater capacity for the redeployment of staff to the academic services centre. The introduction of the new student administration system will also require changes in other areas such as the Treasurer's Office and in Information System Services. She noted that industrial relations issues are a possibility but communication with unions and staff representative bodies will be initiated early to help resolve difficulties. Further, the successful implementation of both the system and organisational changes will require a high level of support from across College to ensure success.

The Senior Lecturer commented that, while Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG) are likely to be involved, it is not expected that they will bear this work on their own. Schools will have to draw on experienced staff.

The meeting agreed that the GeneSIS team should meet with the nominated staff members in each School to progress the implementation of the project.

UGS/10-11/031 Plagiarism

An article on plagiarism, from the *University Times*, dated 22nd February 2011, was circulated along with the section on plagiarism from the General Regulations of the *University Calendar*.

The Senior Lecturer introduced the item by referring to the content of the circulated article in which it was reported that an online service is now operating which offers bespoke essays to students who may use these as 'a guideline and academic aide for research purposes'. The company, *Write my Assignments*, is run by graduates who enlist other graduates, from a number of Irish higher education

institutions, with particular knowledge of course requirements to write the assignments, therefore, making detection of replicated work difficult. She noted that the service is expensive which might in itself deter students. Commenting further on the article, she added that it is necessary to raise awareness of the issue of plagiarism across the student body and to look at ways of increasing detection. She queried if assessments could be set in such a way to help prevent plagiarism or if students should be required to sign a declaration confirming that they are submitting their own work.

During the discussion the following comments were made:

- not all plagiarism is deliberate and can arise out of a lack of understanding of the issue;
- the provisions in the Calendar are not particularly accessible for students;
- the definition should be broken down and the consequences fully explained;
- website based tutorials could be helpful to explain what it is and how to avoid it;
- plagiarism in professional courses is considered a serious ethical breach;
- cultural differences might explain some incidences of plagiarism;
- requiring students to sign a declaration might not be particularly effective;
- litigation has been initiated in the UK arising from a case of plagiarism where the student is arguing that his/her plagiarism should have been detected earlier;
- the issue of plagiarism emphasises the value of written examinations;
- providing feedback to students and questioning students on their work could be effective.

The Students' Union Education Officer noted that the Students' Union could help raise awareness of the issue.

The Senior Lecturer commented that a draft declaration template would be circulated for discussion at a local level following which comments could be brought back to a future meeting of USC.

UGS/10-11/032 **Proposal to merge the Biochemistry Sophister options in Science (TR071)**

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A document, 'Proposal to Merge Biochemistry with Cell Biology and Biochemistry with Structural Biology in 2012/2013, Science (TR071)', from the School of Biochemistry and Immunology, dated February 2011, was circulated.

The School of Biochemistry and Immunology's Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) spoke briefly to the item. She advised that the proposed merger of the two options to create one Sophister option in Biochemistry has the support of the School and the Faculty Dean. She also noted that there would be a straightforward amalgamation of the two quotas.

The meeting recommended the proposal, to merge the Sophister options in Biochemistry with Cell Biology and Biochemistry with Structural Biology, to form one option in Biochemistry from the academic year 2012/13, to Council.

UGS/10-11/033 **Calendar changes**

Course entry amendments for the University Calendar 2011/12 were circulated. Speaking to the item, the USC Secretary noted that changes to the general regulations will be presented to the next USC meeting and that, as in previous years, schools and disciplines will be contacted in relation to minor queries and clarifications. She highlighted the following in relation to the submitted changes:

TSM

- She noted that there are minor queries which would be clarified through the editing process.

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

- She noted that there are minor queries which would be clarified through the editing process.

Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

- She noted that the Schools of Engineering and Computer Science and Statistics are developing five-year integrated programmes in response to the changing accreditation requirements specified by Engineers Ireland. It is planned that these course proposals would be presented to the next meeting of USC and that the necessary revised Calendar entries would be provided as part of the proposal documentation.

Faculty of Health Sciences

- She highlighted the proposed insertion of 'The Dean of Dental Affairs may grant the students permission to absent themselves from the supplemental examinations and allow them to repeat the year' in the entry for the Diploma in Dental Hygiene. She advised that such permission ultimately rests with the Senior Lecturer and requests should be dealt with through the 'student cases' process.
- She queried the timing of the supplemental examinations in the final year of the Diploma in Dental Hygiene.
- She noted that the entry for the Bachelor in Science in Human Health and Disease refers to the award of an ordinary Bachelor in Science (B.Sc.) for students who do not gain the required mark to progress to the Senior Sophister year. She clarified that the University does not award an ordinary B.Sc. In such situations, students would be awarded the ordinary Bachelor in Arts.

Responding to a query she advised that she would look into use of the phrase 'In order to obtain credit for the year...' in course entries to ensure compliance with the general regulations of the Calendar.

The USC Secretary confirmed that she would contact schools in relation to the issues highlighted at the meeting.

UGS/10-11/034 Trinity Access Programmes**XX**

A memorandum, 'Alternative admission routes', from the Access Officer, dated 28th February 2011, was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer speaking to the item noted that three additional progression routes for under-represented students to undergraduate programmes in Trinity are being proposed. These are:

- Admittance of HEAR/DARE students into Engineering and Engineering with Management on 350+ points, provided they meet the subject requirements;
- Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) entry route to the Nursing and Midwifery programmes from certain courses, provided they have completed specified modules, have completed the course within one year and achieved distinctions (80%+) in at least five of their FETAC modules.
- Entry from an additional CDVEC provider, Rathmines College, of a 'Liberal Arts' pre-university course.

USC recommended the proposed progression routes for under-represented students to Council.

UGS/10-11/035 Broad Curriculum

A document showing proposed revisions to 'Broad Curriculum Cross-Faculty Modules 2010/11, Assessment/Examination Regulations', dated January 2011, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer speaking to the item, noted that a number of changes were merely editorial in nature. However, she highlighted two particular amendments:

- '5. Where a student has passed their BC course but has failed their main course of study, the student will be permitted to carry their Broad Curriculum results.'
- 'B Plagiarism - All Broad Curriculum cross-faculty modules are governed by the College's regulation on plagiarism as stated in the College Calendar'

(paragraphs 76-84, H18 & H19). The head of school of the academic unit which runs the Broad Curriculum module, will contact the student concerned. The head of school of the student's main course of study and the student's tutor will be notified.'

The discussion focussed on the proposed change to the plagiarism rule, following which, the meeting concluded that the school providing the Broad Curriculum module should be responsible for contacting the student in suspected cases of plagiarism and to apply the summary procedure, as relevant. If this fell to the student's home school it could lead to differing outcomes for students suspected of plagiarism within the same BC module.

The Senior Lecturer noted that changes to the Broad Curriculum assessment regulations would keep pace with changes made to the general regulations in the Calendar. The USC approved the Broad Curriculum assessment regulations, as amended.

UGS/10-11/036 Any other business

- (i) The Academic Secretary noted that preliminary CAO applications data has been released and that Trinity has experienced an overall 2% increase in first preferences. However, she cautioned that some courses have experienced a drop in first preferences. She advised that schools would be sent information relevant to their courses in due course.
- (ii) Commenting on the memorandum 'Accessible Examinations Papers', circulated for information, members noted the following:
 - a number of dyslexic students recently asked for documents to be converted to Times New Roman font;
 - certain mathematical symbols must be written using a serif font, otherwise, they become illegible;
 - italicisation of texts is a standard academic convention;
 - the 'one-size fits all approach' is problematic.

UGS/10-11/037 Items for noting

USC noted the following document circulated for information:

- (i) Memorandum, 'Accessible Examination Papers', from the Inclusive Curriculum Development Officer, dated 10th January 2011.

signature

date