

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 24th May 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 Irene Walsh, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Eleanor Denny, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Ms Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Dr Jim Quinn, School of Business
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 Ian Sanders, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Stefan Hutzler, School of Physics
Professor David Grayson, School of Chemistry
Dr Clair Gardiner, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Dan Bradley, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Shaun McCann, School of Medicine
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
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL
Ms Jennifer Fox, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Rachel Barry, Student Representative

Apologies: Dr Phillip Coleman, School of English
Dr Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Zuleika Rodgers, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Professor Brian Broderick (for UGS/10-11/049)

UGS/10-11/047 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 19th April 2011 were approved.

UGS/10-11/048 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

UGS/10-11/049 Course proposals for five-year integrated programmes in Engineering and Engineering with Management

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A document containing proposals for two integrated professional programmes in Engineering and Engineering with Management, dated 19th May 2011, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer welcomed Professor Brian Broderick to the meeting to present the proposals noting that he is the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School of Engineering.

Speaking to the document he advised the meeting that both the Engineering and Engineering with Management courses are to be expanded to five-year programmes, in line with new accreditation requirements set by Engineers Ireland, which will require students to amass 300 ECTS credits and to obtain a masters qualification after 2012. He noted that approval, in principle, had already been granted by Council for outline changes to the two courses (CL/07-08/208 and CL/09-10/230). In addition, the proposed changes are also in line with the School's aspirations. For example, the revised structure should help to increase the level of international student exchanges. He noted that the programme learning outcomes have been set by Engineers Ireland and that these must be achieved over the five years of the programme. For practical reasons, he advised that the course would remain in the undergraduate sphere under the remit of the Senior Lecturer and undergraduate regulations. He confirmed there would be no external entry point into year five.

Answering queries he also confirmed the following:

- if students repeat their Senior Sophister year to obtain the required grade for progression into the fifth year, the mark from their original sitting of the Senior Sophister year examinations would be used in the calculation of the BAI result;
- if students do not achieve at least a 2:2 result at the end of the Junior Sophister year it would be unrealistic to allow them to continue to year five as they would struggle;
- students who only achieve a third class result at the end of the Junior Sophister year would be better off exiting with a BAI degree after four years and to explore other routes with Engineers Ireland;
- external entrants to the Junior Sophister year, with a level-seven award, have thus far been entitled to free fees under the Government's remission scheme, however, with greater scrutiny on the part of the Higher Education Authority, this may change;
- there is no entry point into the Senior Sophister year for those with an honors degree from another institution due to limited resources in the School and due to concerns about the availability of free fees for students in the Senior Sophister year, though, this may be reconsidered in the future;
- there is no quota set for the fifth year but the School is committed to accommodating all eligible students who wish to continue;
- students will be asked to indicate their intentions in the Junior Sophister year, especially if they are interested in taking the programme under Mode Two (work placement) or Mode Three (international exchange).
- approximately 160 students out of 180 Junior Freshmen students progress to the Senior Sophister year currently;
- the international student exchange is organised by the School and there are some funds available for students.

It was suggested by a member that further information would be required by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) and Engineers Ireland in relation to the internships and its credit value of 30 ECTS.

The Senior Lecturer advised that rules in relation to students taking Mode Three, which includes an international exchange in the Hilary term of the Senior Sophister year, would have to be tightened to try to avoid cases of students subsequently deciding against continuing to the fifth year. She also noted that an indicative word count for the dissertation might be helpful.

The Senior Lecturer highlighted a significant issue in relation to the proposal concerning the intended degrees to be awarded at the conclusion of the five-year programme. Graduates of the current four-year Engineering programme receive an ordinary BA and the BAI concurrently and the School proposes that three degrees should be awarded at the successful conclusion of the five-year programme, the ordinary BA, BAI and MAI. She noted that the Registrar has indicated that this is excessive and is concerned about the issue of 'double counting' and she advised that the matter of appropriate degree awards is still to be resolved.

The Senior Lecturer thanked Professor Broderick for speaking to the proposal and answering questions. USC endorsed the proposal subject to the inclusion of more information about the internship and the strengthening of regulations to cover the international exchange mode. The meeting noted that the proposal would also be considered by GSC, prior to its presentation to Council, and that the matter of the concurrent ordinary BA degree requires resolution.

UGS/10-11/050 Assignment coversheets

Two sample assignment coversheets, one related to individual assignments, and the other related to group assignments, were circulated. The Senior Lecturer noted that the use of coversheets was discussed at a previous USC meeting as part of the discussion concerning plagiarism (UGS/10-11/031). She further noted that the coversheets had been circulated prior to the last USC meeting to ensure consultation at a local level.

During the discussion of the coversheets the following suggestions and observations were made:

- the text on the group assignment coversheet should include a declaration that all group members have contributed to the submitted work;
- making this mandatory for all pieces of coursework would increase the administrative load and printing costs;
- there should be flexibility in relation to the formatting of the coversheet to suit different requirements in different disciplines;
- hardcopy coversheets are not compatible with the electronic submission of assignments;
- electronic submission of assignments acts as a good deterrent to plagiarism as it is easier to cross-check the content;
- the citation for the plagiarism section of the Calendar should be rephrased to avoid using page numbers;
- schools are in the best position to decide which assignments require coversheets and this should be stated at the outset of the year, perhaps through student handbooks.

The Senior Lecturer noted that the wording of the declaration required some further work, following which, the finalised coversheet would be made available online. She confirmed that the online version should be used as a sample with schools and disciplines free to format the coversheet to suit their requirements. She added that the intention is to raise awareness among students and not to increase bureaucracy at a local level, therefore, schools must decide when it is appropriate to require the use of coversheets in the context of the work being submitted.

UGS/10-11/051 Retention of third revision week

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The Senior Lecturer, introducing the item noted that Council, when it approved the additional revision week ahead of the annual examinations, did so for the 2010/11 academic year only. She referred to her memorandum of 5th May 2011, where she asked Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) to discuss with colleagues the desirability, or otherwise, of retaining the third revision week into the future. It was noted that some responses had already been received and these supported the retention of the additional revision week.

During the course of the discussion concerns were expressed in relation to the shorter time available to hold courts of examiners, publish results, hold courts of first appeal and academic appeals before the end of the Trinity term, especially since more examinations are being held in the fourth week of the examinations. A number of members commented that it would be useful to see if any serious issues arise before the end of this year before it is instituted on a permanent basis.

The USC recommended the retention of the third revision week in 2011/12. Any decision related to the third revision week thereafter should be made during 2011/12 to allow for the consideration of any issues arising before the end of 2010/11.

UGS/10-11/052 Availability of supplemental examinations

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Supplemental Examinations', dated 18th May 2011, was circulated along with a summary of legal opinion on examination accommodations and details about the availability of supplemental examinations in undergraduate programmes. The Senior Lecturer notified the meeting that there had been a legal review of College's procedures and accommodations for disabled students in the light of equality legislation and reported that, for the most part, College is compliant. She noted that the lack of an automatic repeat examination opportunity for those students permitted to split their examinations between the annual and supplemental sessions is one area that has been highlighted as possibly discriminatory. She referred the meeting to the summarised legal advice which had been considered recently by the Equality Committee, following which, it recommended that,

'College facilitate a repeat exam opportunity for students who complete their first exam sitting in the supplemental period for medical or disability reasons and who would otherwise have no repeat opportunity.'

She noted that USC is the appropriate committee to consider this recommendation and to respond to the Equality Committee. She commented that the legal counsel may not have had full information about College's examination regulations noting that not all students are entitled to repeat their examinations during a supplemental session. Also students, in exceptional cases, are permitted to split their examinations over two sessions for reasons separate from disability grounds which, in the past, have included short term illness and *ad misericordiam* grounds.

A number of comments were made through the course of the discussion which included:

- special examinations could be considered the repeat sitting, however, this could cause a steep growth in the number of special examination sittings;
- the legal opinion relates only to splitting of examinations due to a disability or illness where other students get a chance for a repeat sitting, therefore, it would not apply generally to final year students;
- a possible inference from this recommendation and the splitting of examinations across two sessions is that disabled students are not required to do as much work as non-disabled students;
- the splitting of examinations across two sessions for disabled students is only granted in exceptional circumstances taking into consideration the nature of the disability and the number of examinations required of the student concerned;
- there is a need to be fair both to those students with a disability and those without;
- there is growing ambiguity in relation to the special examinations;
- the recommendation from the Equality Committee includes both those students with a disability and those who are ill during the annual examinations, therefore, it would not be particularly limited in its application;
- not all disabled students register with the Disability Service or inform College of their disability but it was also noted that accommodations could only be provided if students disclose their circumstances;
- medical certificates are possibly being used strategically to split examinations;
- there would be implementation issues, related to timing, in offering a repeat sitting after the supplemental examinations or treating the special examination session as such since these examinations would have to take place during the Michaelmas teaching term;
- academically, it would be questionable to permit or require students to undergo a heavy examination load whilst attending classes during Michaelmas teaching term, especially if they had previously been granted permission to split their examinations for reasons of disability relate fatigue;
- a clearer definition of disability is required;
- conditions such as dyslexia, which can affect language processing ability, can also cause severe fatigue;

- Deaf students must register with the Disability Service in order to gain accommodations even though many argue that they are members of a different linguistic group rather than disabled;
- cases concerning repeat sittings of this nature could be dealt with through the appeals system, however, it was stated that students in this category should not have to initiate an appeal case as they should have certain accommodations granted as a right.

The Senior Lecturer noted that the matter contains many complicated and interrelated issues and advised that the issue would be returned to during the next academic year.

UGS/10-11/053 Calendar changes

A revised section on Fitness to Practice in the General Regulations was circulated. The USC Secretary speaking to the document noted that a number of amendments to the section were made to take account of the revised Fitness to Practice Policy which was approved by Council on 18th May 2011. She noted that the main changes relate to improving the administrative procedures of the school fitness to practice committees whereby they are empowered to make recommendations to the Senior Lecturer or Dean of Graduate Studies, as appropriate, and distinguishing between the power to suspend a student immediately from his/her placement, subject to the matter being immediately considered by the school's fitness to practice committee, and the school committee's general power to recommend that a student be suspended from his/her course.

The Senior Lecturer noted that the revised policy had been approved by Council and would also require the approval of the College Board. Following Board approval the document will be available on the College website.

UGS/10-11/054 GeneSIS: programme terminology

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer, 'Course-related terminology', dated 18th May 2011, was circulated.

Speaking to the memorandum the Senior Lecturer noted that the GeneSIS project is underway. In relation to course terminology she noted that there needs to be an agreed and shared understanding of certain terms, which are aligned to the new information system, to ensure the efficient use of the purchased product. She advised that consultation will take place over the summer months in College in order to produce a glossary terms.

The meeting noted the approach being taken in relation to establishing clear course terminology.

UGS/10-11/055 Any other business

- (i) ECTS: It was noted that the Medical Council has queried the ECTS value of certain modules in the Medicine course. The Senior Lecturer commented that Council has approved a minimum value of five credits for modules. She suggested that the School of Medicine should get in touch with the Office of the Vice-Provost for advice in relation to this matter.
- (ii) New Lecturer contracts: responding to a query, the Senior Lecturer commented that the USC is not the appropriate committee to discuss proposed changes to Lecturer contracts. She noted that the matter had been discussed by the Fellows of the College, Faculty Executive Committees and the Heads of Schools Committee, and would be discussed at the next meeting of Council. She advised that any issues could be raised with the relevant Faculty Dean, with the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) representatives, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer or with Faculty representatives on Council.
- (iii) The Students' Union Education Officer noted that this was her last meeting of USC and advised that Ms Rachel Barry had been elected Education Officer for

2011/12. She thanked the other members and commended the work of the Committee. The Senior Lecturer noted that this too was her last meeting of USC. She thanked the members and the Committee Secretary for their input and work over the years.

UGS/10-11/056 Items for noting

USC noted the following:

- (i) Memorandum, 'Checklist for Revising ECTS Credit Weighting and Learning Outcome Sets for 2011/12', from the Learning Outcomes Triage Group, dated 19th May 2011.

signature

date