

XX = Council relevance

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

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A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)  
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan  
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet  
Dean of Students, Professor Amanda Piesse  
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics  
Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business  
Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Michael Gormley, School of Psychology  
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)  
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Oran Doyle, School of Law  
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
Professor Philip McEvansoneya, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry  
Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics  
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM  
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes  
Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer  
Mr Jack Leahy, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Mairead Brady, Director of BESS  
Professor Gloria Kirwan, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Astrid Sasse, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Ciaran Simms, School of Engineering  
Professor Jarlath Kileen, School of English  
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics  
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science  
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine  
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education  
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Ms Clare Donlon, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative; Professor Tim Savage, Associate Dean of Online Education for item USC/13-14/026.

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**USC/13-14/024 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2013 were approved subject to a correction to a line in minute USC/13-14/017 to read: A member queried whether any supports would be put in place, where necessary, to support students with disabilities who wish to take an online module.

**USC/13-14/025 Matters arising**

USC/13-14/015 The Academic Secretary advised that the Quality Committee would discuss the roll-out of module evaluations in the three faculties at its meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The Senior Lecturer invited members to send him details of any issues regarding the evaluations which they would like raised at the meeting.

USC/13-14/019 The Senior Lecturer agreed that the deadline for submitting feedback on Blackboard Learn could be extended to 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

USC/13-14/013 An online repository for undergraduate course handbooks had been created at <https://www.tcd.ie/undergraduate-studies/course-handbooks> .

USC/13-14/022 The Admissions Forum meeting scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013 had been cancelled. The next meeting will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

**USC/13-14/026 Presentation from the Associate Dean of Online Education**

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Associate Dean of Online Education to the meeting. The position of Associate Dean of Online Education was created following a recommendation from the Taskforce on Online Education. The Associate Dean explained that he was carrying out an engagement strategy to discuss online education and to receive feedback from key stakeholders in College. He gave a presentation to the meeting and a discussion followed.

Online education is necessary to meet the demands of society which are changing with increasing globalisation, internationalisation, and the ubiquitous nature of mobile devices and social media. Online Education would allow College to capture new markets, to deal with increased student demand, to enable people to up-skill and re-skill in their vocations, and to increase revenue. Online education should be integrated into everyday teaching and learning activities. College has invested in technology to allow lecturers to deliver content online, and to ensure that students can access online content on mobile devices. There should be no segregation between distance and face-to-face students: course approval, certificates, etc, should be identical for both. Distance students should be provided with as much of the Trinity student experience as possible.

There is an initial two-year pilot phase for online education which involves the following 3 key activities:

- i) establish and deliver two online postgraduate courses for fee and for credit, to be launched in October 2014,
- ii) engage in Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), which would attract between 8,000-12,000 students,
- iii) Semester Online pilot; an interinstitutional collaboration to offer modules at undergraduate level for fee and for credit. A History module has been created and income generated will be used to allow our students take modules from the other universities involved.

Members raised a number of queries with regard to the structure of online courses. The Associate Dean advised that online courses should embrace the nature of our core courses and involve content delivery, discourse and discussion, working with peers and talking to tutors. There is well-established evidence that demonstrates that video/audio and multimedia enhance understanding and retention of material. Lecture content could be split into smaller units to be viewed online and then followed up with live discourse. Videos should be kept to no more than 15 minutes long and should be updated when necessary. Online lectures cannot be designed in the same way as face-to-face lectures; they should involve a mix of graphics, text and talking heads.

The main risk of online education is reputational damage to College. College will put stringent internal and external quality assurance processes in place to ensure a high standard of course is provided. There is a particular risk associated with MOOCs as they attract such a high number of students, however, Trinity has put in place a rigorous QA process for these. Trinity has partnered with FutureLearn in the provision of MOOCs and they will receive the courses a month before launch to allow them to be tested on their platform and on multiple devices, and to ensure that the timing and content are correct. Two weeks out of the eight-week courses will be rolled out to approximately 50 people who will provide feedback which will be used to refine the courses.

The provision of online education for undergraduate students was discussed. There is a strong demand for more flexible course delivery: taking online and face-to-face modules simultaneously. College should offer the most appropriate form of delivery for the context of the course. The Associate Dean advised that it is vital to embed some of what we learn and create from online education into the undergraduate student experience. The question was raised as to what the financial model for online undergraduate education should be. Online education is not a cheaper option and it can involve greater costs than face-to-face education.

A review of the pilot will take place at the end of the two years and consideration will be given on how to embed activities into core College activities. The online education website is being created and members can email either the Associate Dean ([tsavage@tcd.ie](mailto:tsavage@tcd.ie)) or Teresa Phelan-Logan in CAPSL ([Teresa.Logan-Phelan@tcd.ie](mailto:Teresa.Logan-Phelan@tcd.ie)) with queries and comments. The Senior Lecturer thanked the Associate Dean for joining the meeting to talk to this item.

#### USC/13-14/027 Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies' update

##### i) Open Day

Open Day took place on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013 and was a great success. The Senior Lecturer extended his thanks to David Byrne, the Admissions Liaison Officer, for coordinating and overseeing the event. Approximately 8,000 students attended and feedback has been sought from some schools. Information on the feasibility study in admissions was handed out and two presentations on this were well attended on the day. The Senior Lecturer invited feedback from members and the Committee commended the Admissions Liaison Officer and his team for the success of the event. A member requested that the timetable be circulated in advance to avoid any potential clashes.

##### ii) IUA Admissions Group

XX The Group have found that issues with reducing course codes are more complicated than initially thought and progress has been paused for a year to enable the Institutes of Technology to review their position on this. The new timeline allows for changes to be in place for courses offered in 2015. The Senior Lecturer had outlined to the Group the various options on how College could reduce TSM course codes. It was noted that changes to course codes would not effect any actual change in the courses which students take.

#### USC/13-14/028 Northern Ireland Engagement Programme

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 2013 had been circulated. The Senior Lecturer thanked the following people for their involvement in the engagement programme: the student ambassadors; Norah O'Connor, Vice-Provost's Office; Sean O'Reilly, Department of History; Olivia Waters and Sinead Ryan, Global Relations Office; and the Vice-President for Global Relations. This is a special initiative of the Provost for which he has provided funding for school visits. By the end of the year, 14 schools will have been visited and approximately the same number will be visited next year. The visits involve College staff and student ambassadors talking to pupils, and also building connections with school principals and guidance counsellors. Some of the schools visited have sent very few or no

students to Trinity in recent years. Obstacles to recruitment from Northern Ireland include the requirement for 4 A-Levels; that Trinity does not accept A-Levels in certain subjects accepted elsewhere, e.g. P.E. and media studies; and the additional language requirement. In response to a query the Senior Lecturer confirmed that proportionality no longer applies to students applying to Trinity from Northern Ireland.

**USC/13-14/029 Harmonised Capping Regulation**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013 had been circulated. The proposed changes to regulations were not sufficiently clear and the issue will be brought back to the next meeting of USC for further discussion.

**USC/13-14/030 Any other business**

- i) A delegation from Trinity had attended a session of the Sectoral Dialogue of the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The Senior Academic Developer spoke to the meeting and advised that the session had provided an overview of the Forum's work plan for 2013/14 and the enhancement theme for the year is 'teaching for transitions'.

The Learning Impact Award scheme will be launched in January 2014 to reward excellent teaching practice and scholarship that aligns with the Forum's enhancement themes. There are two strands to the awards:

- a) Fellowship Awards to reward and promote excellence in teaching; and b) Student Endorsed awards. The Students' Union Education Officer explained that the student endorsed awards will be coordinated by the Students' Union and will be based on nominations from students for their 'teaching hero'. A group comprising student representatives and members of the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Union will select two of the nominated staff members to receive the award.

The National Forum, in partnership with the Irish Research Council, will shortly invite applications for 4 National Forum Internships which are projects to engage in research in areas of specific interest to the Forum and the Sector.

The Senior Lecturer thanked those members of the Committee that had attended the session.

- ii) The Senior Tutor noted that the signage in place for Open Day would be very useful during Orientation but that there were prohibitive cost issues involved.

**UGS/13-14/031 Trinity Access Programmes Steering Committee**

The draft minutes from the meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013 were noted and approved.

**USC/13-14/032 Items for noting**

- i) A letter from the Teaching Council, dated 6<sup>th</sup> November 2013, together with details on revised requirements for registration, was noted. The Senior Tutor will send her concerns regarding the language requirements to the Senior Lecturer for forwarding to the Teaching Council.