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UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Undergraduate Studies Committee

A meeting of Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 29th April 2014 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Patrick Geoghegan (*Chair*)
Mr Jack Leahy, Education Officer, Students' Union
Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly
Senior Tutor, Professor Claire Laudet
Professor Oran Doyle, School of Law
Professor Christine Poulter, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
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 Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics
Professor Fáinche Ryan, Confederal School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Jane Farrar, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Graham Harper, School of Physics
Professor Mairead Brady, Director of BESS
Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, School of Business
Professor Martina Hennessy, School of Medicine
Professor Philip McEvansoneya, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Jacinta McLoughlin, School of Dental Science
Professor Ken Mok, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Graeme Watson, Director of Science (TR071)
Ms Cliona Hannon, Director, Trinity Access Programmes
Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer

Apologies: Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Michael Gormley, School of Psychology
Professor Moray McGowan, Director of TSM
Professor Pádraig de Paor, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
Professor Andrew Butterfield, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Michael Shevlin, School of Education
Mr Trevor Peare, Library Representative
Ms Claire Donlon, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Prof. Anne-Marie Healy, Head of School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, for item USC/13-14/065.

USC/13-14/063 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25th March 2014 were approved.

USC/13-14/064 Matters arising

USC/13-14/056 The Senior Lecturer had contacted the four UK universities that were grouped with TCD in the International Student Barometer process to enquire

about their approaches to performance feedback and assessment and he updated the Committee on their responses, noting in particular that 3 out of the 4 have more favourable staff:student ratios to Trinity and that the University of Edinburgh have a 15-day rule for giving student feedback and the University of Warwick have a 20-day feedback rule.

USC/13-14/065 Proposal for new Pharmacy (integrated) programme

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A proposal for the programme from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences had been circulated. The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Head of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences to the meeting for this item. It was noted that the proposal had been approved at the Graduate Studies Committee meeting of 24th April 2014.

The current pharmacy programme consists of a 4-year BSc. in Trinity College, followed by a 1-yr M.Pharm. programme which is offered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. The 1-year programme is essentially an internship and following successful completion of this, students register with the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and are qualified to practise as pharmacists. The proposed integrated programme is in response to a key recommendation that arose out of the PSI-commissioned 'Pharmacy Education and Accreditation Reviews' project that stated that current Bachelor programmes must be replaced with a new 5-year programme structure to commence in 2015 and which would have professional workplace experience integrated throughout the curriculum. The proposed programme meets the regulatory requirements and both its structure and content are controlled by legislation and subject to conditions imposed by the PSI.

The programme has an ECTS credit volume of 240 for the undergraduate years and 90 for the postgraduate year and would admit 60-80 students per year. All students who successfully complete year 4 on the Pharmacy (Integrated) programme would graduate with a B.Sc. (Pharm.) degree and automatically progress to the postgraduate fifth year which has a fee payable by the student. For the first time this course would allow Trinity to develop pharmacy graduates who are fully qualified to register with the PSI and practise pharmacy.

Members raised a concern regarding the fee in the fifth year and the Head of School responded that this issue had been raised repeatedly at the National Pharmacy Forum by all the Pharmacy Schools in Ireland and that the HEA were resolute that funding would not be extended to the fifth year. Members also raised a concern regarding the academic appeals process as students in years 1-4 follow the undergraduate appeals process while students in the fifth year follow the appeals process for graduate students. The Senior Lecturer undertook to consult with Graduate Studies Committee on the appeals process and wondered whether a discrete academic appeals mechanism could be created for students in the fifth year.

The Head of School thanked Professors Astrid Sasse, Sheila Ryder and Lidia Tajber, and Ms Sorcha De Brunner and Ms Ewa Sadowska in Trinity Teaching and Learning. The Head of School and the Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the School left the meeting while the proposal was discussed.

The committee recommended that the proposal should proceed to external review and to Council.

USC/13-14/066 Scholarship Issues

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 23rd April 2014 was circulated. The memorandum detailed the number of Scholarship applicants, attendees, absentees and awardees for the years 2008-2014. The number of Scholarships awarded in that period had increased from 71 to 99, with fluctuations along the way. 2013/14 was the first year that the examination was only open to Senior Freshman students (some Junior Sophister students can take it in exceptional circumstances) and

grade-profiling had been applied in all courses. The 99 Scholarships had been awarded to 47 female and 52 male candidates which would imply that the work carried out last year to address the gender imbalance had been largely successful.

The Senior Lecturer expressed concern about the high number of Scholars and emphasised that the Scholarship examination must be a rigorous and searching examination which is marked in a consistent way across College and identifies candidates of exceptional ability. The Faculty Deans will meet to review the Scholarship process in the coming months in order to see how the examination is conducted elsewhere and to share best practice.

The cost of Scholarship to College is extremely high and steps must be taken to ensure that it is awarded consistently across all courses. The Senior Lecturer will work with the Central Scholarship Committee and the Scholars Committee on these issues and will bring recommendations to the Board by the end of the academic year.

A number of possible solutions were discussed such as including one general examination paper that would be the same across all courses; appointing external examiners for all Scholarship papers; imposing quotas on the number of Scholarships that can be awarded (although the Senior Lecturer noted his own unwillingness to go down that route); holding Faculty Courts of Examiners with Faculty Deans presiding; establishing grading criteria for the examination to ensure that only exceptional candidates are successful.

In response to a query on whether to report Scholarship results prior to Trinity Monday, most members were in favour of continuing the tradition of announcing results for the first time on Trinity Monday.

USC/13-14/067 Draft Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2012/13

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 23rd April 2014 had been circulated, together with the draft Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2012/13. The report comprises admissions data for 2013/14 and data on the student population and College activities for 2012/13. The structure of the report had been changed to incorporate data that was previously placed in the appendices into the relevant section of the main report. The Senior Lecturer brought the meeting through the report and highlighted the following items:

- Data on student origin is now based on domicile rather than nationality; for country data this provides a better indication of a student's fee status,
- data shows that a far higher percentage of female applicants than male applicants apply to Trinity,
- 67% of TCD new entrants were registered to their first preference CAO choice,
- the provinces of Connaught, Munster and Ulster have a relatively lower number of students admitted to TCD.

The Senior Tutor noted the growing number of examination sittings and commended Ms Mary McMahon and the other members of the examinations team in making a special effort to accommodate these.

A few requests were made for further data in the report and the Senior Lecturer will endeavour to include these in the final version which will proceed to Council for its meeting on 14th May 2014.

USC/13-14/068 Trinity Education - results of academic staff survey

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 23rd April 2014 had been circulated, together with results of the survey. To provide some context, the Trinity Education document had been presented in draft format to USC in April 2013 and to Council in May 2013 and has been discussed at a number of fora with Trinity staff, students and alumni. A survey comprising questions central to the Trinity Education was sent

to all academic members of staff and by 23rd April, 267 responses had been received (and 280 in total by the time of the USC meeting). Results could be analysed by Faculty or other academic unit (namely the library) and proved to be broadly similar across areas. Further comments and suggestions were received from 118 members of staff. Feedback indicated that staff were supportive of the Trinity Education document as a mechanism for demonstrating Trinity's beliefs and aims to prospective students.

The Senior Lecturer brought the meeting through the results of the survey, with some questions receiving an in-depth discussion. With regard to the question on every student completing a project or dissertation in one of their final two years (q4), the Senior Lecturer noted that the policy would be for every student admitted in September 2014 to complete a project over the course of their undergraduate degree; this would allow areas sufficient time to make any required changes. The results showed that 88% of academic staff were in favour and a number of members expressed strong support for the idea of every student doing a project, whereas it posed difficulties for other Schools with members noting that providing the resources for this would result in a reduction in the options students could take.

The results for the question on adopting a rule on the timeframe of the return of work and provision of feedback to students (q10), showed that 70% of respondents had been in agreement. A member noted that providing feedback was different to returning students' work and advised that useful feedback could be given to a class prior to individual pieces of work being graded and returned. The rule would allow for exceptions, but in that case students must be informed that there is an appropriate academic reason for a delay in returning work.

The results of the survey will influence the final version of the Trinity Education document which will be brought to Council and if approved will inform the Education chapter of the new Strategic Plan. A few members expressed concern that the survey results would be used to inform policy and opined that the results may have been different if members had been more clearly aware that the results would be acted upon. Members suggested that there should be a recognition that Schools will need resources to implement some of the recommendations and that without knowing what these resources were, the survey results should not be used in a formal manner. The Senior Lecturer noted members' concerns and reiterated the extensive consultation period that had gone into the document both at USC and with the wider College community and alumni.

The Trinity Education document will proceed to the Council meeting of 14th May 2014.

USC/13-14/069 Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies' update

Due to a lack of time this item was deferred.

USC/13-14/070 Northern Ireland Engagement Programme (NIEP)

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer dated 23rd April 2014, together with a draft report on the 'Trinity Northern Ireland Engagement Programme', was circulated. The report summarises the activities of the NIEP for the academic year and will be circulated to Council and Board.

The NIEP was established by the Provost with the support of the Senior Lecturer in September 2013 in order to form connections with Northern Irish schools, teachers, and students with the intention of increasing the number of NI applicants to Trinity College. Student numbers from Northern Ireland had significantly declined in recent years and a number of barriers to recruiting these students had been recognised, including: the requirement to present with 4 A-levels, the high cost of living, a lack of information about Colleges in the Republic, and unfamiliarity with the CAO process. In the previous academic year, Council had approved a policy change which allowed Trinity to treat equally all Leaving Certificate and A-Level students on the island of Ireland.

To boost student recruitment, the Senior Lecturer had appointed student ambassadors from Northern Irish Trinity students, whose role is to visit their old school, or a school in their locality, with a member of staff, and give an honest account of life at Trinity. The role of student ambassadors has proved vital to the programme and the Senior Lecturer thanked the ambassadors for their time and enthusiasm in making the programme a success. The Senior Lecturer also thanked Dr. Sean O'Reilly for helping to co-ordinate the programme. By the end of May 2014 the programme will have visited 24 schools and given talks to approximately 900 students. NIEP attended Northern Ireland's major careers fairs and also smaller careers fairs with a school or area focus. On 6th June 2014 a deputation of 15 NI guidance counsellors will come to Trinity and will meet with the Vice-President for Global Relations and others.

Media coverage and feedback on NIEP had been very positive and the Senior Lecturer emphasised the importance of the continuation of the programme in the following academic year in order to maintain the strong connections built up in Northern Ireland this year.

USC/13-14/071 Mathematics for Access to Honours Bachelor Degree STEM Programmes

A memorandum from the Director of Trinity Access Programmes, dated 24th April 2014, together with a paper from QQI, dated 24th February 2014, was circulated. Many higher education institutions, including Trinity College, have established progression opportunities from FETAC Level 5 awards into degree programmes. Concern has been expressed, however, about the adequacy of the FETAC mathematics modules to effectively prepare students for a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme. TAP and CDET B Colaiste Dhulaigh approached QQI about the possibility of creating a further education mathematics module, as part of an overall Level 5 award, that would serve as vigorous preparation for degree courses in STEM subjects. QQI formed a group of experts, which included Trinity's Professor Donal O'Donovan and Ms. Clodagh Byrne, to develop a new standard at NFQ Level 5 entitled 'Mathematics for STEM'. The Director brought the attention of USC to the draft specifications of the award which had been circulated and noted that this matter would be brought back to USC when it had progressed further.

USC/13-14/072 Student Recruitment

Due to a lack of time this item was deferred.

USC/13-14/073 Any other business

There was no other business.

USC/13-14/074 Items for noting

USC noted the following items:

- XX (i) Proposal for new Two Subject Moderatorship subject in Catholic Theological Studies
- (ii) End of semester 1 examinations for Senior Sophister Engineering & Engineering with Management, memorandum dated 27th March 2014