



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

XX = Council relevance

A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 17 January 2017 at 2.15pm in the Board Room.

Present: Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, Professor Gillian Martin (*Chair*)
Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan
Senior Tutor, Professor Aidan Seery
Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly
Professor Elaine Moriarty, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Sarah Smyth, Director of TSM
Professor Alan O'Connor, School of Engineering
Professor Cathriona Russell, School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology
Professor Brian Brewer, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor David Prendergast, School of Law
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Louis Brennan, School of Business
Professor Kevin Mitchell, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics
Professor Imelda Coyne, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Kevin Conlon, School of Medicine
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Pauline Sloane, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Michael Bridge, School of Chemistry
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Mike Brady, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Jarlath Killeen, School of English
Professor Peter Cherry, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Eric Weitz, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Charles Patterson, School of Physics
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Robbie Gilligan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Mr Dale Whelehan, Education Officer, Students' Union
Mr Colm O'Halloran, Student Representative

Apologies:

In attendance: Ms Elaine Egan; Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Student Services; Ms Fedelma McNamara, TEP, for item USC/16-17/029; Mr Sean Gannon, Director, Careers Advisory Service, for item USC/16-17/030

USC/16-17/027 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2016 were approved. References to Nanosciences will be changed to Nanoscience.

USC/16-17/028 Matters arising

USC/16-17/022a The assent of the Fellows for the proposed statutory change to enable examinations to be held outside of Trinity Term will be sought by ballot. This will be sent out on 30 January 2017.

USC/16-17/022b The proposal for the new undergraduate Science Programmes was approved by Council at the meeting of 30 November 2016.

USC/16-17/023 The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer advised that a repository was being created to house information on the role of external examiners in each School. A link to the repository would be circulated shortly.

USC/16-17/029 Trinity Education Project**a) Good Practice in Assessment**

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer invited the Directors of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the Schools of Law, and Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences to deliver presentations that they had prepared on good practice in assessment.

Law School

Assessment Forum meetings were held in the Law School to share new and innovative assessment methods. The most recent meeting had taken into account the graduate attributes and proposed Academic Year Structure and also changes taking place at a programme level. It was recognised at that meeting that the trend of moving away from end-of-year examinations would continue. The Director explained that the Law degree is programmatic in the first two years and offered more choice in the 3rd and 4th years. It was found that some students were inclined to remain within their comfort zone when it came to making module choices and a more diverse range of assessments was found to provide the students with a more diverse range of skillsets.

The Director emphasised the need to align learning outcomes and graduate attributes at the programme level. He acknowledged the need to carefully coordinate across the programme to avoid over-assessment of students and overloading of staff. He highlighted the need for a high level of collaboration to ensure efficiencies in assessment.

He brought the meeting through two examples of modules that fit well with the principles of assessment in the TEP and had proven to be manageable in terms of workload. Part of the first module relied on students to self-evaluate, which provided an opportunity for assessment as and for learning rather than just assessment of learning. Students were given guidance on how to self-evaluate and how to award themselves an authentic and deserved mark. It was found that self-evaluation led to a slight decrease in marks overall for the module. Students' marks were subject to external examination. The second module involved placements to gain legal practice and included a learning journal, projects, self-reflection and a presentation, and was marked on a pass/fail basis. The module is optional and students were found to be motivated and engage well with it.

School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

The Curriculum Committee in the School reviews the assessment practices on an annual basis. The Committee is cognisant of the need to avoid over-assessment, to achieve a balance between continuous assessment and end-of-term papers, to avoid overlap of

deadlines, to provide a mix of individual and group assessments, and to include a variety of assessment types. Assessment is considered at programme and module level and supports acquisition of skills and graduate attributes. Students monitor their own learning and set goals for future learning. Assessment includes peer review and can be either formative or summative. A wide choice of assessments is provided throughout the programme to take account of the various knowledge bases and competencies, degree stage and diverse student needs. In September of each year, students are provided with details of assessment including learning outcomes to be assessed, assessment weighting, grading criteria and feedback mechanisms.

A review takes place at the end of each academic year and plans are agreed for the following year. Assessment processes are usually completely revised every two years. A spreadsheet is maintained to detail the weighting, method, timing, level, and student numbers involved in assessments. The meeting explores the possibility of inter-relating assignments across modules and considers staff resources.

Examples of assessment methods used include problem-based learning, semester essays, group projects with oral presentations, practice reports, class tests and case studies. The assessment processes assist students in gaining lifelong learning skills, allow them space to reflect on their learning and equip them to manage their workload.

A short discussion regarding assessment took place and members looking for further information on the assessment practices in the Schools of Law, and Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences were invited to contact the relevant DUTL.

The Senior Academic Developer advised that Ms Tansy Jessop from TESTA had been invited to Trinity on 9 February 2017 to discuss programme-focussed assessment.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that a series of workshops on assessment had taken place the previous week as part of the TEP. The workshops had shown the diverse range of assessment practices across the university. A number of issues related to assessment had arisen from discussion at the workshops, including the management of group work and students assessing each other and how to manage giving formative feedback. These issues will be discussed at a future meeting of USC. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked the DUTLs for their presentations.

b) General Update

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed Ms Fedelma McNamara, Trinity Education Project, to the meeting. Ms McNamara updated the meeting on the main items in each of the five project strands as follows:

Strand 1: Education Working Group

Strand 1 is chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer. Ms McNamara explained that there was an ongoing exercise around entry routes and submissions had been requested from Schools by 20th January 2017. This would primarily affect the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences area and joint honors programmes in other areas. Work on the fixed timetable was ongoing and further work would take place following identification of the pillars.

The Business Processes and Systems Group had met on a number of occasions and included members from the Academic Registry, Academic Services Division, and TEP. The group was working on identifying additional business processes that would arise as a result of the TEP. The group had met with Tribal who supplied and supported the SITS software.

Strand 2: Internships and Student Mobility

Strand 2 is chaired by the Vice-President for Global Relations. The group had submitted a report to Council in June 2016. However a policy document is now required which will be preceded by the production of an outline interim report for discussion by the Steering Committee. The group had considered the definition of internship, student mobility, study abroad in the Trinity context, and how these would be facilitated and monitored. The group felt that academic areas should have autonomy over how mobility was managed within their programmes. A report is expected to be brought to the meeting of the Steering Committee in the following week.

Strand 3: Communications, Differentiation and Positioning

Strand 3 is chaired by the Registrar. The strand had met on one occasion and would meet next on 23 January 2017. The strand was focussed on appropriate communication and stakeholder engagement both internally and externally, particularly with regard to the incoming cohort in 2018/19. The group was cognisant of the deadline of providing information for the Prospectus and a meeting had taken place with the Student Recruitment Officer. Ms McNamara agreed with a member's comment that it was a delicate balance to demonstrate the improvements the TEP would bring without undermining current courses/structures.

Strand 4: Trinity Electives

Strand 4 is chaired by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer. An interim report of Strand 4 had been circulated to USC. The Vice-Provost and Dean of Research had sent communication to the Research Theme leads asking them to consider the development of a Trinity elective aligned to the themes. The group was also looking at the best modes of delivery of the Trinity electives: whether fully online, face-to-face or blended learning. The group was carrying out a SWOT analysis and would then consider reviewing the associated costs if appropriate.

Strand 5: Co and Extra Curriculum

The group is chaired by the Dean of Students. The strand was considering co- and extra-curricular activities, what was meant by these and whether they should be formally recognised by Trinity. The group was in favour of not offering credit for these activities. The graduate attributes were being mapped to these activities and the group was investigating how they could facilitate students in taking up the activities. The Dean of Students outlined the importance of students reflecting on the attributes they would acquire through these activities and how to best capture that information. An e-portfolio system was being considered as a way of capturing the information and assisting students to engage over the full course of their degree with the attributes they were acquiring.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked Ms McNamara for updating the meeting.

c) Progression and Awards

A memorandum from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer, dated 12 January 2017, had been circulated.

The memorandum set out the aims and guiding principles of the Progression and Awards Working Group. A number of members of USC were also members of the working group. The memorandum also set out a number of preliminary recommendations that members of USC were being invited to discuss. The feedback from the discussion would inform the work of the group and future iterations of recommendations which would be brought forward.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer acknowledged that some of the initial recommendations would require more significant cultural change than others. She drew the committee's particular attention to the following recommendations:

Recommendation 4: *students should be required to have a balanced credit load across two semesters and the number of credits to pass a year should be 60. All modules must be passed in all years and compensation would not be permitted.*

The group had considered the recommendation in the context of progression across years of a programme and progression through the various pathways. The recommendation would give parity of esteem to all modules and ensure that the status of optional modules would not be compromised. The recommendation should be viewed alongside the recommendation that states that students should be allowed to repeat all years of a programme and that supplemental examinations would be available in all years of a programme. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer acknowledged that not permitting compensation would involve a significant cultural shift and would likely increase the amount of reassessment at the supplemental examination session.

A member noted that this would further embed a progression-by-year model, rather than a more flexible model. It would put more pressure on individual module markers if failing one module could have the consequence of a student failing an entire year.

Some members commented that tightening compensation regulations would be a better option than removing compensation as it would allow students who had achieved good marks in all areas bar one to progress by passing through compensation.

Recommendation 5: *Years 1 and 2 of all undergraduate degree programmes should be graded on a Pass/Fail basis.*

This recommendation was intended to allow students to refocus their learning away from the dominant approach at second level and to help them move to the type of learning that is valued by College. It would give priority to the process of learning and would encourage students to take greater risks with module choices. It could be problematic, however, for courses that used Senior Freshman grades to allocate moderatorship choices.

A member suggested that Senior Freshman examinations should be graded on the usual grading scales to allow the students to have an understanding of how marks are achieved prior to the Sophister years. It was clarified that modules could still be fully graded if a course wished to do so, but that a year would be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. This would permit some modules being graded satisfactory/non-satisfactory where that was deemed to be appropriate. A few members commented that grading on a Pass/Fail basis in the Freshman years was effectively already in place as the actual grades do not count towards the degree award. Some members stressed the usefulness of providing grades as they were used internally for prizes and scholarships and progression into particular moderatorships, and externally they were used to differentiate students for employment and research opportunities. Members urged for the potential external consequences of this to be further considered by the working group.

Recommendation 8 *Students should be allowed to repeat all years.*

Currently regulations for repetition of years differed across courses so this recommendation would represent a significant departure for many programmes. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer highlighted that the recommendation also stated that consideration should be given to different types of repetition.

A number of members did not agree with allowing repetition of the final year in all courses, with one member commenting that students would allow this opportunity to influence their approach to their studies. A member also noted that their School did not allow first year students to repeat the year and that to implement this recommendation would require extra resources in the School.

Recommendation 9 *Supplemental assessment should be available in all years. Students should only be required to re-sit examinations or re-submit coursework for failed modules. Where supplemental assessments are taken as a result of failure in the final year, marks would be awarded as usual but the degree classification would be capped at Pass.*

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer acknowledged that this also represented a significant departure from the current practice in a number of programmes. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer clarified that this did not mean that a student would exit with an ordinary BA. A member commented that College should not punish students for passing modules within a different timescale to those who pass them at the required time, and felt that capping the degree award at a Pass was unnecessary and unfair. Other members agreed with the proposed cap and felt that it would prevent students from benefitting by strategically delaying studying for a particular module.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer confirmed that only failed components of modules would have to be repeated and that the finer details of repeating where continuous assessment had been failed required further consideration.

Recommendation 10 *Special examinations should be discontinued.*
Members expressed their support for this recommendation.

A member outlined that recommendation 2 (*progression should be on an annual basis, students should be allowed to carry failed modules from semester to semester but not from year to year*) could raise issues for their students as modules continued from semester to semester and that providing a provisional result in semester 1 would create extra work.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer outlined that the group would be looking at the appeals process. This would be brought for discussion at a later date.

d) Trinity Electives

The Interim Report of Strand 4 Trinity Electives, dated 12 January 2017, had been circulated. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer noted that TEP was looking at different ways in which the Trinity electives might be delivered. The leads of the research themes had been asked to provide feedback by 20th January 2017 on ideas for Trinity Electives within the context of the themes.

She outlined that it was proposed that Trinity Electives would be weighted at 5 ECTS credits, that students would take them in their Senior Freshman or Junior Sophister year, and that the electives would provide students with the opportunity to engage in multi-disciplinary work and to work in heterogeneous groups. Students would take electives up to a maximum credit value of 10 ECTS and may have to take a minimum number of electives depending on their pathway. She highlighted the difficulty in predicting how many students would choose to take Trinity Electives.

She noted that electives were based on student choice, whereas approved modules would be approved at programme-level. The Strand 4 group was still considering whether students should be permitted to take a module within their own subject area as an elective, recognising the potential conflict between breadth and student choice.

A template would be created that would assist Schools with creating electives. It was proposed that electives should be stand-alone modules, of a multi-disciplinary nature, that they should not be progressive or have pre-requisites and should be available to students across the university. A number of members queried why the elective modules should be of a multi-disciplinary nature as against a student being permitted to take a single-disciplinary module that was from a different area as an elective. It was noted in response that the research themes tended to have a multi-disciplinary focus and that the electives would tap into that. Strand 4 was also considering the status of the language modules under the TEP.

A member queried how the administration of the electives would work and where they would be housed. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer replied that Strand 4 was currently considering this issue and it was likely that central administration would be involved. The member outlined his concerns regarding the challenges of successfully coordinating the electives given their multi-disciplinary nature and was assured that these challenges were being carefully considered by Strand 4. Members were invited to send further comments on TEP items to Elaine Egan (elegan@tcd.ie).

USC/16-17/030 Careers Advisory Service Annual Report 2015/16 and First Destination Statistics

The Careers Advisory Service Annual Report 2015/16 and First Destination Statistics had been circulated. The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer welcomed Mr Sean Gannon, Director, Careers Advisory Service (CAS), to the meeting.

The Director reported that CAS carried out the First Destination survey of graduates on an annual basis on behalf of the HEA. The response rate for 2015 graduates was 72%. The survey showed that for 2015 graduates, 73% of primary degree graduates had gained employment, 22% had continued to further study and 1% were completing unpaid internships. Unemployment in the cohort was at 3%, compared to the national average of 5.7%. Seventy four per cent of postgraduates had gained employment with a higher percentage going abroad than in the primary degree cohort. Fifteen per cent of postgraduates had continued to further study and 1% were completing unpaid internships. Eight per cent of postgraduate students were unemployed which suggested that additional careers support was required for this group.

The Director highlighted the emerging importance of internships and noted that they were viewed by employers as a lead-in to graduate employment. Employers were increasingly offering internship opportunities to students at an earlier stage in the student life-cycle. He advised that internships could prove expensive for students and reported that two members of the alumni community had contacted CAS in relation to setting up a bursary scheme (worth €750 per student) for Senior Freshman students of any discipline securing an internship and meeting the bursary selection criteria. In 2015/16, 7 students had received bursaries under the scheme. The alumni will continue to fund the scheme for a further 5-10 years.

The Director reported that the Trinity-Intel Employability Award had been launched and that 47 students from the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science were taking part. He noted that the award process encouraged students to articulate their engagement with co- and extra-curricular activities and encouraged self-reflection.

Surveys measuring the success of CAS had been carried out by external bodies and the results demonstrated a very high level of usage by and satisfaction from students. 70% of students had used the service and gave it a satisfaction rating of 7/10. International students had rated the service at 89%, relative to 84% for a group of benchmarked European institutions.

The Director emphasised the importance of systems in managing the activities of CAS and reported that a career management system was being put in place. The system would aid interaction with students and allow measurement of learning gain. Learning gain was described in this instance as monitoring career readiness and work preparedness of students from Junior Freshman to Postgraduate level. Gathering data at the School level would allow for more targeted interactions with students.

During the review of CAS in 2015/16, the reviewers had endorsed the view that College should adopt an integrated approach to employability. The Director explained that employability referred to not only gaining employment but continuing in and being successful in employment. The model of employability that had been adopted by CAS emphasised a student's discipline as being central, but supported by career development learning, experience (whether work based, research based or service learning based), generic skills and emotional intelligence. These elements were reinforced by the self-reflection that students would engage in throughout their College career and ultimately build self-confidence and self-efficacy and assist with gaining and keeping employment.

The reviewers had also recommended that College invest in employer engagement. The Director noted that while employer engagement was currently extensive through sectoral careers fairs, presentations and employer led skills sessions, there was significant room for growth. He emphasised the importance of employer engagement in creating internship and employment opportunities for students and graduates.

In response to a question, the Director advised that it would be possible to extract a breakdown from the First Destination survey results of the level and type of awards that had been achieved by the cohort of unemployed postgraduates. He noted that CAS had in place a career planning and job search programme for research postgraduate students and aimed to establish a similar level of engagement with all taught postgraduate students.

In response to a member's query regarding the level of scrutiny that employers gave to a student's qualifications, the Director noted that when employers were recruiting large numbers of graduates, the level of scrutiny was high and academic results (including results for the Freshman years) were used to differentiate between candidates. In other areas, conversely, there was a move to viewing the graduate as a whole and a focus on looking at what they had made of the opportunities available to them throughout their College experience.

The Director referred to a programme to measure learning gain that was in place in the UK. CAS would be asking students to register on the career management system each year and answer a small number of questions regarding their degree and their work experience. The system would produce a large set of data and trends would be analysed to assist the Service in further targeting students in particular courses and years. The Director outlined that the Service ran a personal development programme in a number of Schools in conjunction with academic staff.

The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer thanked the Director of CAS for his contribution to the meeting.

USC/16-17/031 Cessation of Comparative Biology programme within TR071

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A form proposing the cessation of the Comparative Biology programme within TR071 had been circulated. The Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning in the School of Natural Sciences spoke to this item. The programme combined elements of Zoology and Botany and was one of the moderatorship choices at the end of the Senior Freshman year of the TR071 programme. The Director outlined that the programme consistently failed to attract sufficient numbers of student preferences. In the 2016/17 year, there were four

students on the programme, none of whom had chosen it as a first option. A significant level of staff resources were used for a very small number of students. Under the TEP, elements of Comparative Biology will be combined under the Botany, Zoology and Environmental Science Programmes.

If the proposal is approved, the Comparative Biology route of TR071 would not be offered to the Junior Sophister class of 2017/18. The Director confirmed that the proposal had been approved by the relevant committees. USC agreed for the proposal to proceed to Council. A memorandum from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer is attached to these minutes.

USC/16-17/032 Any other Business

Calendar Changes: The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded members that Calendar changes were due in February 2017.

Plagiarism: The Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer reminded members that all students were currently required to complete a tutorial on avoiding plagiarism, 'Ready, Steady, Write', and that the option of subscribing to external software (Epigeum) was being looked at in conjunction with IS Services and the Library. The software was interactive, covered examples of plagiarism across a range of disciplines, and would allow students to produce a certificate of completion, something that was not possible with the current tutorial. She also reminded members of the importance of recording cases of plagiarism in SITS.