



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 10 September 2019 at 2.15 pm in the Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School Building.

Present: Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (*Chair*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Professor Kevin O’Kelly, Dean of Students
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor
Professor Aine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM/Trinity Joint Honors
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Brendan O’Connell, School of English
Professor Peter Crooks, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Rachel Hoare, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Breffni O’Rourke, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Stan Houston, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion
Professor Aisling Dunne, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer, Students’ Union

Apologies: Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education
Professor Ailbhe O’Neill, School of Law
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Ms Julia Piaskowy, Student Representative

In attendance: Ms Sorcha De Brunner, Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary, Trinity Teaching & Learning; Dr Ciara O’Farrell, Head of Academic Practice; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

USC/19-20/001 Welcome

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed all members to the first meeting of the 2019/20 academic year.

He briefly outlined the main areas of work for the Committee over the academic year. In particular, he noted that the Trinity Education Project (TEP) is entering the final year of its final phase, and as such, there will be significant work related to embedding TEP and the implementation of new systems, processes and governance structures. He stated that there is a need to examine approaches to assessment and pedagogy and specifically to consider

the interaction between the new academic year structure, assessment practices across Trinity and the new progression regulations. There will be further mainstreaming of timetabling and USC input will be sought in relation to the establishment of a timetabling unit for College. As with other years, members will be asked to consider undergraduate course proposals and policy items.

He referred to a survey of USC members conducted at the end of the 2018/19 academic year. Feedback regarding the running of the Committee was mainly positive but he noted that some issues were highlighted in relation to the late circulation of papers and keeping meeting items within time. He stated that the introduction of a Michaelmas term deadline for the submission of new course proposal documents and specific deadlines for the submission of agenda items for each meeting will help to address the delayed circulation of meeting papers. In relation to the latter issue, he confirmed that stronger efforts will be made to keep the discussion of agenda items to time.

USC/19-20/002 Minutes of the meeting of 12 June 2019

The minutes of 12 June 2019 were approved subject to the list of attendees being corrected to note that Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology, was present for the meeting.

USC/19-20/003 Matters arising

USC/18-19/099 The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the proposal documents for the dual degree programmes in Neuroscience and Geoscience, with Columbia University, would be circulated to the Council meeting scheduled for 2 October 2019.

USC/19-20/004 Trinity Education Project

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 5 September 2019, concerning the phasing-in of the new common programme architecture, the definition of new categories of open modules, and the timing and sequencing of student decisions, was circulated.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies introduced the item by way of a presentation to illustrate the phasing-in of specific pathways and features of the common architecture. Focusing on the single honors, joint honors and common entry courses he summarised the options that would be available to students during the phasing-in period:

- For single honors entry, all students will take 40 credits of their subject in their Senior Freshman year and choose between 20 credits in a new minor subject or 20 credits of a combination of Trinity Electives and open modules.
- New minor subjects will be offered to single honors students only in the first phase of rollout.
- For joint honors entry and common entry students, where a student wishes to achieve a single honors award, they must take 40 ECTS in that subject in their Senior Freshman year.
- Under the common architecture, if students take only 20 credits in a subject in their Senior Freshman year, they cannot exit with a single honors award in that subject.
- Open modules will be rolled out initially to single honors and joint honors programmes. Common entry programmes will offer 'designated' open modules. Professional programmes will offer 'designated' open modules and in some cases can take other open modules.

He explained that the main reason for adopting this approach was due to the limited capacity available in open modules and new minor subjects. In response to a query, he confirmed that full implementation of the common architecture could be achieved from a

timetabling perspective, however, if there were logical reasons to make certain of these alterations permanent, the input of USC members would be sought in the future.

Turning to the matter of open modules, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies asked USC to note that approved modules have been renamed as open modules. He confirmed that the original definition still holds but that two further categories of open modules are being proposed, designated open modules and bespoke open modules. He defined the new categories and provided examples of each.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that the allocation mechanisms for new minor subjects and open modules would come to a future meeting of USC for discussion. In the meantime, he invited USC to consider the types of decisions students must make in terms of pathway options and the timing of these decisions. He noted that functionality was being built into SITS to facilitate student decision making and that they will also require strong academic guidance during the academic year. It is proposed that they will make the necessary choices after the publication of their end-of-year assessment results.

The following comments were made during the course of the discussion:

- students should make their choices earlier in the academic year;
- SITS may not be able to cope with hundreds of students logging on at the same time;
- random selection should be considered instead of allocating open modules on a first come, first served basis;
- consideration should be given to quotas for visiting students;
- consideration needs to be given to students who defer to the supplemental session in the design of the allocation mechanism.

In response to a query about academic guidance on pathway choices, minor subjects and open modules, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that this advice should come from a mixture of online/handbook information, course offices and designated contact persons for new minor subjects. He noted that the system, in the way that it is being built, would prevent students from making wrong choices. He confirmed that functionality to take co- and pre-requisites into account was being included in the creation of course 'diets' and that schools will have to ensure that this information is correctly entered into SITS.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, noting concerns in relation to the sequencing and timing of decisions to be made by students ahead of their second year, advised that this item would come back to the next meeting of USC to be considered alongside proposals for the allocation of places on new minor subjects and open modules.

Decision USC/19-20/004i USC noted the phasing in of pathways under the common architecture.

Decision USC/19-20/004ii USC noted that approved modules are now referred to as open modules and approved the new categories of bespoke and designated open modules.

Decision USC/19-20/004iii USC noted that matter of the timing and sequencing of student pathway choices (the decision 'tree') would be deferred to the next meeting of USC to enable these matters to be considered along with proposals concerning the allocation mechanisms for minor subjects and open modules.

USC/19-20/005 Request for derogations to progression and award regulations

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The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted two derogation requests from the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies related to the programme, Middle Eastern and European Languages and Cultures (MEELC), and the subject, Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations (MEJIC), respectively. Both requests concerned a

small imbalance of credit in the first and second semesters in specific course years and relate only to the 2019/20 academic year, after which the situation will be rectified.

Decision USC/19-20/005 USC supported the requested derogations, as circulated, for 2019/20 only.

USC/19-20/006 Any other business

i. National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Funding Initiative

The Assistant Academic Secretary drew the attention of the Committee to the funding initiative administered by the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and referred to an e-mail sent to schools and disciplines from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, in August 2019, inviting proposals. She noted that schools and disciplines are encouraged to submit proposals under the first category and that any such proposals should address priorities for Trinity, such as embedding aspects of TEP or meeting objectives in the Strategic Plan, and should be submitted by the internal Trinity deadline of 16 September 2019. She advised that further information and details about the funding criteria could be found online on the Trinity Teaching and Learning website and that she would be available to answer queries. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Assistant Academic Secretary and encouraged the submission of proposals from schools.

ii. The Senior Tutor voiced his deep concern in relation to the publication of some sets of supplemental assessment results late on the previous Friday, at a time when no support services were available for distressed students. It was commented by a member that the marking and publication of results are squeezed into a one week period between the supplemental assessment week and the start of the teaching term and it was difficult for many areas to publish results any earlier. It was requested that this issue be considered as part of the review related to assessment and academic year structure referred to earlier in the meeting by the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

USC/19-20/007 Items for noting

USC noted the following items:

- 1. Calendar changes 2019/20: regulations for Engineering, Engineering with Management and the B.Mus.Ed.,** as previously approved under Vacation Procedures in August 2019.
- 2. Update to the Progression and Awards Derogations,** memorandum and document from Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning, dated 4 September 2019.
- 3. Trinity Employability Award Progress Report,** memorandum from the Director of Careers, dated 4 September 2019.
- 4. Deadline for Undergraduate Course Proposals for 2019/20,** memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 30 May 2019.
- 5. Guidelines for submitting items for the USC agenda for 2019/20.**