



**A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 29 October 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 Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education  
Professor Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM/Trinity Joint Honors  
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School  
Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education  
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 Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Paschalis Karageorgis, School of Mathematics  
Professor Mark Hennessy, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Derek Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor John Walsh, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer, Students' Union

Apologies: Professor Ailbhe O'Neill, School of Law  
Professor Aisling Dunne, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry  
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering  
Professor Paul Eastham, School of Physics  
Professor Joe Harbison, School of Medicine  
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; Director of Academic Registry, Ms Leona Coady (for Item USC/19-20/010 i) & ii); Mature Student Officer, Ms Clodagh Byrne (for Item USC/19-20/011).

---

**USC/19-20/008 Minutes of the meeting of 10 September 2019**

The minutes of the meeting of 10 September 2019 were approved.

**USC/19-20/009 Matters arising**

**USC/19-20/003** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the dual degree programme proposals in Geoscience and Neuroscience were approved by

- Council.
- USC/19-20/004** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Trinity Education Project items related to the phasing in of pathways and the new categories of designated and bespoke Open Modules were approved by Council.
- USC/19-20/005** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the derogations requested by the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies were approved by Council.
- USC/19-20/006** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the application for funding under the National Forum for Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Funding Initiative was submitted and that details of the outcome were awaited.

**USC/19-20/010 Trinity Education Project**

**XX**

**i) Allocation of students to options to progress through pathways on the Common Architecture**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 26 September 2019, was circulated. The Director of the Academic Registry, Ms Leona Coady, was welcomed to the meeting.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies brought the meeting through proposals in relation to:

- a) The selection and allocation mechanism for New Minor Subject:
  - Allocation to be based on Junior Freshman final results, on a highest mark basis, descending until all places for a minor subject are filled.
  - This allocation mechanism will apply uniformly to all New Minor Subjects.
  - If there is more than one New Minor Subject available to pick from, students would select a minimum of 1 and up to a maximum of what is available, with ranked preference.
- b) The allocation mechanism for Open Modules
  - To be allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- c) Default pathways for non-engaging students
  - Single Honor students are put onto the Subject 1 (40 credits) + Trinity Electives/Open Modules (20 credits) pathway. They are asked to select from available modules.
  - Joint Honors students are put onto Subject 1 (20 ECTS) + Subject 2 (20 ECTS) + Trinity Electives/Open Modules (20 credits) pathway. They are asked to select from available modules.
- d) Change of mind process for (i) pathway choice; (ii) New Minor Subject; (iii) Open Modules.
  - That a change of mind process be facilitated on structural (pathway) decisions and module choices up until the end of the second week of the first semester.
  - That it be requested via Digital Trinity 2 that the means of requesting change of mind be built into the online system.

During the ensuing discussion, concerns were raised about the timing of student choices after the publication of their annual assessment results, as well as making Open Modules available on a first come, first served basis. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that these issues had been considered carefully and that there is currently no other way to facilitate students' second year options. The Director of the Academic Registry commented that the Director of the IT Services has confirmed that work is being carried out to improve the IT infrastructure in Trinity and that he is confident that SITS will cope with the expected volume of student online choices.

A member noted specific programmes and subjects in the School of Creative Arts have additional entry requirements which will have implications for those who wish to take up Music or Drama as a New Minor Subject in their Senior Freshman year.

The issue of different marking practices across College was highlighted given the competitive allocation method for accessing a New Minor Subject. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that there was no obvious way around this but that an exercise could be completed to look at the spread of Junior Freshman marks from 2018/19 in the applicable single honor programmes.

The Associate Dean for Undergraduate Science Education, as chair of the TEP Open Modules Subgroup advised, in response to a query, that consideration is currently being given to the governance and mainstreaming of processes related to the availability of new Open Modules.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the scope of the IT project for online module selection includes core optional modules. Responding to a query about students who have been granted permission to defer to the reassessment period, he confirmed that mechanisms related to their module/subject choices are being considered.

The Senior Tutor cautioned that regulations around New Minor Subject and Open Module choices must be developed, and be tightly written, so as to minimise student cases and appeals in this area.

**Decision USC/19-20/010 (i)** USC approved the proposals in relation to the selection and allocation mechanism for a New Minor Subject, the allocation mechanism for Open Modules, the default pathways for non-engaging students and the change of mind process for (i) pathway choice, (ii) New Minor Subject, (iii) Open Modules, and recommended these to Council.

**ii) Guidance to students on pathway choice within the Common Architecture**

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 26 September 2019, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Assistant Academic Secretary would give a presentation on resources that are currently in development to assist staff in providing guidance to students. He added that the online system, which will manage module and subject choices, will only provide students with options for which they are eligible. He stressed the importance of accurate curriculum and module information in SITS to enable online module/subject selection.

In her presentation, the Assistant Academic Secretary outlined the resources which are being developed to assist schools in providing guidance to students on the common architecture. She outlined the format of upcoming workshops for staff and brought the meeting through specific resources such as examples of interactive pathway infographics for students, FAQs and advised that case study videos were also in development. She noted that the workshops would take place from November 2019 through to February 2020.

The workshops and infographics were widely welcomed by members, however, the following points were made:

- Not all programmes lead to the full array of degree outcomes available under the common architecture;
- The importance of designated advice givers was highlighted;
- The diagrams are quite complicated;
- Diagrams for common entry programmes would be welcomed;
- Students are likely to require significant guidance on the structural pathway decisions as these will have an impact on available award outcomes;

- Guidance for students going out on study abroad should be included;

The discussion also turned to the responsibility for providing guidance to students and concern was expressed that this will fall predominantly on the Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG). Other members suggested that Directors of Teaching and Learning might be able to give guidance on the structural pathway choices but that more detailed guidance, for example, on module choices and picking up a second subject would be more useful coming from someone closer to the curriculum, such as course directors.

The Senior Lecturer/ Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Director of the Academic Registry and she withdrew from the meeting.

### **iii) Proposal for Trinity Electives**

XX

A memorandum from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE), dated 14 October 2019, was circulated along with module descriptors and information on the principles underpinning the Trinity Electives. Speaking to her memorandum, the ADUSE noted that 32 Trinity Electives have already been approved, 26 of which are already running. She asked USC to consider an additional four Trinity Electives for delivery in 2020/21:

- Becoming Human: The Science of Us
- Ancient Culture Lab: Homer's Experience and the Greek Language
- Latin: One Language, Many Cultures
- How to Live Long and Prosper – A lifespan approach

She advised that these modules were considered by the TEP Trinity Electives Sub-group prior to being circulated to USC.

**Decision USC/19-20/010 (iii)** USC approved the new Trinity Electives, as circulated, and recommended them to Council.

### **iv) Bespoke Open Modules for 2020/21**

A memorandum from the ADUSE, dated 16 October 2019, was circulated with appended module descriptors. The ADUSE advised that the TEP Open Modules Sub-group recently reviewed two bespoke Open Modules for delivery in 2020/21:

- Regulations and Governance
- Living through War and Revolution: Ireland 1912-23

She advised that as bespoke Open Modules, these are standalone modules and require the approval of USC.

**Decision USC/19-20/010 (iv)** USC approved the two Bespoke Open Modules, as circulated.

### **USC/19-20/011 Expansion of Alternative Entry Routes**

XX

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the Mature Student Officer, Ms Clodagh Byrne, to the meeting to speak to her memorandum, dated 21 October 2019, concerning the expansion of entry routes to particular Trinity programmes for applicants holding certain Further Education and Training (FET) awards.

The Mature Student Officer advised that the proposed new routes and specific entry requirements had been agreed with schools in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and with the School of Natural Sciences in the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science. She noted that entry would become competitive in the event of there being more applicants that places, subject to minimum entry requirements being achieved.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate advised that data on the uptake of places on FET entry routes would be circulated to USC in the future. He thanked the Mature Student Officer, who then withdrew from the meeting.

**Decision USC/19-20/011** USC supported the proposed new entry routes, as circulated, for holders of specific FET awards and the associated minimum entry requirements, and recommended these to Council.

**USC/19-20/012 Proposal for a Minor Subject in Statistics**

XX

A proposal for a new minor subject in Statistics, from the School of Computer Science and Statistics, dated 16 October 2019, was circulated. The Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from that School, Professor Johnathan Dukes, spoke to the proposal. He noted that students in the single honor Mathematics programme already have the opportunity to take up to 85 ECTS of Statistics modules, however, this fact is only recognised via their transcripts rather than as a degree outcome. The new programme architecture affords the opportunity to have Statistics noted as minor subject on their degree.

Responding to queries, the Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from the School of Computer Science and Statistics confirmed that students would have to actively choose this as a minor, that is, Mathematics students would not default into the minor subject accidentally. In relation to assessment methods, he explained that the use of examinations is in line with Mathematics but that the discipline has introduced other assessment types, where possible, and will continue to look for further opportunities to do so. He explained that the majority of the Statistics modules in the proposal are designed for Mathematics students, meaning that other student groups are unlikely to have the mathematical ability to take this up as a minor subject, therefore, it would not be made available widely. On this latter point, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that it is hoped that a subject in data science would be developed in the future for broader delivery.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that the proposal had been positively reviewed by Dr Alan Kimber, Reader in Statistics, Mathematical Sciences, in the University of Southampton.

**Decision USC/19-20/011** USC recommended the proposal for a minor subject in Statistics to Council, noting that it would be available to single honor Mathematics students only.

**USC/19-20/013 Any other business**

- i) The discussion at the meeting returned to the appropriate level of advice to give to students. The Academic Secretary noted that Heads of Schools had been contacted and feedback will be sought from schools. She added that whilst College tutors are not responsible for providing advice on pathway options, it is imperative that they are aware of the common architecture and choices students are expected to make.
- ii) A query was raised in relation to the overall reassessment result defaulting to 'Pass at Supplemental'; it was suggested by a member that this should now read 'Pass at Reassessment' instead. Ms De Brunner noted that a related query had been received in Academic Affairs and had been forwarded to the Academic Registry. Under the approved TEP progression regulations, students should receive the grade corresponding to their overall mark rather than 'Pass at...'. The fact that students have taken reassessments should be clearly indicated on their transcripts.
- iii) Ms De Brunner referred to the changeover from BoardPad to Diligent Boards for the circulation of USC meeting papers, as notified to members by e-mail, and requested that all members download the software and activate their accounts ahead of the next meeting. She confirmed that past papers will be made available via the new software in due course.

**USC/19-20/014 Minutes**

USC noted and approved the following sets of minutes:

- i) Marino Institute of Education, Associated College Degrees Committee, minutes dated 15 November 2018.
- ii) Royal Irish Academy of Music, Associated College Degrees Committee, minutes dated 25 October 2018.
- iii) Royal Irish Academy of Music, Associated College Degrees Committee, minutes dated 21 February 2019.