



A meeting of the Undergraduate Studies Committee was held on 19 May 2020 at 2.15 pm online.

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 Stephen Matterson, Director of TSM/Trinity Joint Honors
Professor Áine Kelly, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education
Professor Norah Campbell, Trinity Business School
Professor Nicholas Johnson, School of Creative Arts
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 Sarah Hamill, School of Law
Professor Breffni O'Rourke, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Elizabeth Nixon, School of Psychology
Professor Linda Hogan, School of Religion
Professor Michael Wycherley, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Stan Houston, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Eoin Scanlan, School of Chemistry
Professor Aisling Dunne, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Jonathan Dukes, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Nicola Marchetti, School of Engineering
Professor Frank Wellmer, School of Genetics and Microbiology
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
Professor Valerie Smith, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer, Students' Union
Ms Zoe Cummins, Student Representative

Apologies: Professor Andrew Loxley, School of Education

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 Breda Walls, Director of Student Services; Ms Siobhán Dunne, Library Representative; Professor Kenneth Pearce (for item USC/19-20/064)

USC/19-20/061 Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 21 April 2020 were approved.

USC/19-20/062 Matters arising

USC/19-20/053i

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that an amended proposal for the Management Structure for the

Undergraduate Common Architecture was approved by Council. The amendments were based on the discussion at the last USC meeting and on further comments received from Directors of Teaching and Learning (UG). He advised that he had informed Council of the discussion at USC and the concerns of several members. The Provost will now proceed with nominating the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Common Architecture to Board for approval.

- USC/19-20/053ii** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that Council approved the proposals within the document on Integrating non-Pillar subjects.
- USC/19-20/054** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed Council approved the proposal for the Certificate course in Christian Theology and Practice. He also noted that Council approved two additional joint honors subject proposals, in Social Policy and Linguistics, which had been considered and supported by USC during the 2018/19 academic year.
- USC/19-20/055** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2018/19 had not been presented to Council in May, due to a full agenda, and would be circulated to the June meeting instead.
- USC/19-20/057i** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the revised Admission and Transfer Policy was approved by Council.
- USC/19-20/057ii** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that the procedure on the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications had been approved by Council.
- USC/19-20/057iii** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that the revised GPA requirement for visiting (non-degree) students was approved by Council.
- USC/19-20/059** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that Council approved the establishment of a one-year part-time Certificate course within the two-year part-time Diploma course in Music Teaching and Performance in RIAM.
- USC/19-20/060i** The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Council approved the continuation of the Northern Ireland Feasibility Study by one further year.

USC/19-20/063 Academic Continuity Planning

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies updated USC on the provisions of a memorandum sent to academic staff in the University on post-examination processes, which included guidance on student absences, plagiarism, resits, access to scripts and courts of examiners.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies explained that degree year students taking reassessments in order to improve their performance should be reassessed using the same modality, so that students are not disadvantaged. In response to a query about a scenario in which restrictions are lifted sufficiently to allow in person clinical practical examinations, he acknowledged the merits of face-to-face practical clinical examinations but noted that associated requests would have to be considered in detail.

A member queried whether or not students who are granted resits in a degree year, in order to improve their results, could have their reassessment results considered for the award of Gold Medals this year. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that these reassessment results should be included so as not to disadvantage students. Following a related question about competitive prizes, he confirmed that these should be held over until September with eligibility treated in the same manner.

Following a query about the level of discretion which can be shown by Courts of Examiners, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that explicit centralised guidance could not be given to cover all situations. He advised that each Court of Examiners needs to look at the full profile of module results for a student and consider if their performance was adversely affected in Semester 2. Expanding on one scenario envisaged, he commented that degree year students who are on an overall borderline mark for the year should be shown some level of discretion in relation to poorer performance in Semester 2.

In relation to a query about the Scholarship Examinations, the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Science Education (ADUSE) noted that she is chairing the new Working Group on the Resumption of Teaching which will consider the timing of assessments in the coming academic year, including for the Scholarship Examination. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that some elements of his proposal, discussed previously at USC, may have to be implemented for the coming academic year.

Speaking generally about the resumption of teaching, the ADUSE noted that teaching in the first semester is likely to be blended learning with large lectures conducted online but with elements, such as laboratories, fieldwork and small group teaching delivered in person, if possible. She confirmed that the Working Group will consider capacity on campus, issues around students travelling to Dublin and accommodation. Particular issues related to the resumption of clinical placements, whereby certain placements must start by a certain date and/or where student are carrying placement hours that must be made up, were noted. It was confirmed that details related to clinical placements should be sent to both the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and to the ADUSE. Responding to a question later in the meeting, the ADUSE advised that teaching in September is likely to start two weeks late for all course years, however, the date is to be confirmed.

It was noted that some schools deliver integrated UG/PG course. The School of Engineering requested that the resumption of teaching should occur at the same time for undergraduate and postgraduate students, with a preference for an earlier start to accommodate internships.

Responding to a query about transcripts the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies confirmed that where students are granted reassessments in degree years to improve their performance, the better of the results should appear on the transcript.

It was noted by members that there were significant numbers of suspected plagiarism cases in a few schools. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that where students do not display originality then a lower mark can be awarded for a piece of work, however, if plagiarism is suspected, students must be allowed to defend themselves. Where plagiarism occurs in the context of an examination, the whole examination is inadmissible. It was commented by a member that the honor code declaration was a welcome addition this year and the whole issue of plagiarism and cheating in examinations must be considered for the coming years, if online assessments are to become the norm. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies highlighted that cases of cheating in online examinations should be reported to the Junior Dean but acknowledged that College must implement better quality control and prevention measures for future academic years. It is likely that open-

book examinations will be retained into the future, since they allow students to display a greater level of conceptual understanding than in unseen examinations.

A concern was raised about the wholesale release of marks and reasons for marks to students through Turnitin. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that students have a right to see their scripts and agreed that the preferred way to enable this is via an online meeting with the relevant lecturer.

In relation to year-long 10 ECTS modules, he confirmed that aggregation would apply to the whole module and not only to the portion that occurred in Semester 2

XX **Decision USC/19-20/063i:** For this year, where students have been granted reassessments in order to improve their performance in degree years, USC supported the inclusion of reassessment results to determine eligibility for Gold Medals and for competitive prizes.

USC/19-20/064 Course Proposal: Dual degree programme in Philosophy, with Columbia University

XX A proposal from the School of Social Science and Philosophy, dated 12 May 2020, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed Professor Kenneth Pearce to the meeting.

Professor Pearce provided a brief summary of the proposed programme, noting that it follows the same structure as the other undergraduate dual degree programmes delivered in conjunction with Columbia University, whereby students spend their first two years in Trinity, followed by their final two years in Columbia, during which time students also complete an additional 30 ECTS of Sophister modules for Trinity. Students would receive the BA (Mod.) as a single honor in Philosophy and a BA from Columbia, with a major in Philosophy.

He advised that some adjustments would have to be made to the Junior Freshman year to enable students to meet curriculum requirements in Columbia. Speaking about the additional 30 ECTS for Trinity, he noted that this would comprise a 10 ECTS conference project and a 20 ECTS co-supervised capstone project, the Trinity assessment component for which would be a literature review. He noted that the co-supervision of student dissertations was a particularly attractive aspect of this collaboration and should lead to deeper links between the respective departments in each institution. Responding to a question about the small student quota, Professor Pearce advised that the Philosophy programme makes use of small group seminars and the Department of Philosophy does not want to disrupt this feature. Answering a question about the revision of assessment practices in the first two years, he confirmed that plans are afoot to introduce a greater range of assessment types over the next academic year.

Decision USC/19-20/064: USC recommended the proposal for a dual degree programme in Philosophy, with Columbia University, to Council and noted that it is due to commence in September 2021.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked Professor Pearce, who then withdrew from the meeting.

USC/19-20/065 Course proposal: Dual degree programme in Religion, with Columbia University

XX A proposal from the School of Religion, dated 8 May 2020, was circulated. Professor Linda Hogan introduced the proposal noting that it shares similar features with the preceding proposal on the agenda.

She advised that the proposal, as circulated, contains mappings to three majors in Columbia: Religion, Philosophy and Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies (MESAAS). However, in order to prevent unintended competition with another dual degree programme being delivered in Trinity she confirmed that the major in MESAAS is being removed.

She noted that the first two years of the programme would be very similar to the underlying course in Religion, with additional breadth introduced in the first year to meet certain requirements of the Columbia core curriculum. She highlighted the strong complementarity of the first two years in Trinity with the majors of Religion and Philosophy in Columbia. Of the additional 30 ECTS, she confirmed that the capstone project (20 ECTS) could be taken in one of two modes, with either the full dissertation completed for the School of Religion or under co-supervision between the two institutions where the dissertation would be completed for Columbia and a related extended essay of 6,000- 8,0000 words would be completed for Trinity. The remaining 10 ECTS module would be based on an existing summer school hosted by Trinity.

Responding to a question from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Professor Hogan confirmed that students who carry on to the Philosophy major in Columbia, through this programme, would be required to choose modules in Columbia that would support the conferring of the single honor degree in Religion from Trinity. Such students must agree their elective choices with their Academic Advisor in Trinity.

Decision USC/19-20/065: USC recommended the proposal for a dual degree programme in Religion, with Columbia University, to Council and noted that it is due to commence in September 2021. USC noted the removal of the Columbia University major in MESAAS.

USC/19-20/066 Preparing for Online Teaching, Learning and Assessment

A survey, dated 30 April 2020, from the Academic Secretary and others, was circulated. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that given the expected use of online means of teaching, learning and assessment in the coming academic year, planning for this must start as soon as possible.

The Academic Secretary noted that several members had sought an extension to allow time to discuss the questions with colleagues in their schools; she confirmed that it would be helpful to receive responses by the end of May. Finding out what did and did not work over the last few months will assist staff in CAPSL who are preparing resources to support academic staff over the coming year.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commended the remarkable efforts of staff in continuing with the delivery of programmes to students since March, following the closure of campus. Whilst the crisis caused by COVID 19 will still be present come September, it should be possible to identify those areas in which improvements can be made easily, while more fundamental improvements are planned.

The following information and comments were provided:

- The School of Nursing and Midwifery is conducting a risk assessment in relation to their curricula to identify which aspects can and cannot be delivered online.
- The version of Blackboard used in Trinity could be improved.
- The experience of first year students in 2020/21 is a concern in terms of their grappling with remote learning and the lack of opportunities for socialising with peers; specific support pathways must be designed for these students.
- Certain forms of learning cannot be facilitated well on Blackboard such as peer-to-peer learning and embodied practice.
- The file size capacity for uploads needs to be increased.

- Staff have varying experience in teaching and assessing online and further training would be welcomed in this area.
- Problem based learning works quite well on Zoom.
- The student experience in the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science has been largely positive.
- Focus groups should be used to gain further insights into the student experience of online teaching and learning.

In terms of the support of staff and students, the Academic Secretary confirmed that CAPSL and Student Learning Development have already started to develop resources for different groups of online users. She also referred to Trinity's membership of the IUA's Digital Capacity Group through which a related MOOC is being developed.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that IT Services are looking at the capabilities of the online platform. He noted that online delivery of teaching and assessments will have an impact on the way in which modules are taught. He commented on an e-mail he received from a student who indicated that take-home examinations provided a more positive experience than simply cramming for unseen examinations. He also noted that there has not been a deluge of student complaints, indicating that other students may have found the assessment methods positive too. He noted that feedback sent in response to the survey will be forward on to the appropriate areas.

Action USC/19-20/066: USC members noted that survey responses should be returned to the Academic Secretary by the end of the month.

USC/19-20/067 Sophister Timetabling within the Block Structure

A proposal document dated 24 April 2020 was circulated. Speaking to the document, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies explained the linkages between the block structure for timetabling, the common architecture, the subject pillars, the combining of subjects, and the facilitation of TEP features like open modules. He noted that each subject block would be assigned 10 hours per semester.

He advised that the Sophister years are more complicated than the Freshman years, with increased levels of optionality and varied pedagogical formats. Thought had been given to diverging from the block structure in the Sophister years by allowing some cross-year teaching, however, analysis has shown this to be unworkable as it would disrupt features of the common architecture, such as the provision of open modules across the second and third years, and would prevent subjects being combined.

During the discussion specific issues were highlighted in relation to a number of subjects and programmes. It was commented by a member that it appeared that the logistical and systemic issues related to TEP were driving pedagogical changes in some schools. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies agreed that logistical issues should not drive pedagogy but, in this instance, the pedagogical underpinnings of TEP are driving the design of the timetabling system. Therefore, the academic principles of the Trinity Education are having an impact on some pedagogical practices at a local level. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented on the huge challenges presented by teaching modules across year; this effectively breaks the pairing with other subjects under the common architecture. He also acknowledged the difficulties in a number of schools in relation to staffing and the provision of module optionality to students within their disciplines.

Another member requested that further thought be given to increasing the number of two-hour lecture slots within each block.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies commented that timetabling cannot be a reactive process anymore, it must be structured in a way that enables student pathway choices within the common architecture. He noted that, as with the Freshman years, timetabling according to the block structure will be phased in for the Sophister years as the first student cohorts progress through the common architecture. It was commented by a member that the constraints of the block structure need to be considered in relation to other courses, like Computer Science and Engineering, given that Computer Science pairs with other joint honors subjects. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies advised that work will continue on this into the coming academic year.

Specific issues were noted during the discussion in relation to the Schools of Creative Arts; Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies; Law, Mathematics.

Decision USC/19-20/067: USC supported the principles for Sophister timetabling within the block structure, as circulated, but noted that additional discussion and work is required in relation to a number of subjects.

USC/19-20/068 Assessment: Procedures for the non-submission of course work and absence from examinations

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A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 14 May 2020, was circulated with an updated procedural document. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies noted that Ms Sorcha De Brunner had worked on the document following the USC meeting in February 2020. He noted that this procedure would apply to online methods of assessment too.

Speaking to the amended document, Ms De Brunner noted that that most significant changes to the procedure concerned clarifying the respective roles of the course offices and the Student Cases team in relation to granting deferrals. This had been brought into closer alignment with the recommendation from the Appeals Working Group, as approved by Council in February 2016. The procedure now allows for the granting of a deferral at the local course office level on medical grounds only, provided that the medical certificate is submitted within three days of the missed examination and/or missed terminal module assessment. Deferral requests made at other times of the year, or for different serious reasons, should be sent to the Student Cases team as normal.

USC also noted, through the memorandum, other amendments made to the procedure.

Decision USC/19-20/068: USC supported the revised procedural document, as circulated, and recommended it to Council.

USC/19-20/069 Calendar Changes 2020/21

i Calendar Changes 2020/21

A memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies dated 15 May 2020, was circulated.

Decision USC/19-20/069(i): USC noted and supported the approach being taken this year in relation to the review, revision and approval of the faculty, course and Foundation Scholarship sections of the Calendar.

XX **ii General Regulations 2020/21**

The General Regulations for 2020/21 were circulated showing amendments via tracked changes. Ms Sorcha De Brunner highlighted the proposed main changes.

The first related to the inclusion of a paragraph on Fitness to Study and the deletion of outdated text that had been superseded by the Fitness to Study Policy, as approved by Council in 2018. Ms De Brunner confirmed that she would follow-up with the Dean of Students following the meeting to ensure that the wording was appropriate.

The second set of changes concerned the implementation of the assessment procedure from the previous agenda item, as supported by USC, and the disentangling of course work from the regulations on non-satisfactory attendance.

Decision USC/19-20/069(ii): USC noted and approved the proposed changes to the General Regulation for 2020/21, as circulated.

iii Validated Course Section

Decision USC/19-20/069(iii): USC noted and approved the changes to the Validated Courses section, as circulated.

USC/19-20/070 Any other business

A memorandum from the Head of the School of Engineering dated May 2020, was circulated. The Director of Teaching and Learning (UG) from the School of Engineering provided a summary of the proposed collaboration with Columbia University. Students in the programmes in Engineering and Engineering with Management would have an opportunity to complete their fifth year in Columbia undertaking an appropriate engineering stream at postgraduate level. Such students would receive the appropriate undergraduate degree in addition to the MAI (St) from this institution as well as an MS degree from Columbia. Students who intend to take this option must complete the capstone project in their Senior Sophister year, rather than undertaking the internship, and would then start on their postgraduate research project for Trinity in the summer preceding the fifth year, completing it over the course of the academic year whilst in Columbia.

In response to a query, Ms De Brunner confirmed that this collaboration was separate from the undergraduate dual degree programmes with Columbia University, already in place in Trinity, and advised that the School of Engineering would provide the administration for this area of the partnership.

During the course of the discussion, USC advised that the document should be clarified with respect to:

- Financial information.
- Student quota, whether the 10 places are additional to the Engineering and Engineering with Management quotas or would come from within existing quotas.
- Nature of the collaborative programme, whether this is a joint or a dual degree programme.

Decision USC/19-20/070: USC supported the collaboration, subject to the proposal being revised to clarify the areas of finances, student quota and the nature of the collaborative programme, confirming whether it is a joint or dual degree programme.

USC/19-20/071 Minutes (Section B)

USC noted and approved the following set of minutes from the Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE).

- i Minutes of the meeting of 13 February 2020.
- ii Draft minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2020.

USC/19-20/072 Items for noting (Section C)

USC noted and approved, where necessary, the following documents.

- i Undergraduate Admission Deferral Requests**
Memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 30 April 2020.
- XX ii New FET Routes and Updates**
Memorandum from the Mature Student Officer, dated 11 May 2020.
- iii Submission of Course Proposals Deadline (Reminder)**
Memorandum from the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, dated 14 May 2020.
- iv Appeals Policy (Revised)**
Memorandum from the Assistant Academic Secretary, dated 15 May 2020, with revised policy document.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies closed the last USC meeting of the year by thanking members for their dedication this year and their inspirational response to the campus closure in terms of teaching, assessment and supporting students. He also thanked Ms Linda Darbey and Ms Sorcha De Brunner for the organisation of USC during the year.