Minutes of a meeting of the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee held on 29th November 2005 at 2.15pm in the Conference Room, 6th Floor 1-2 College Green and attended by the Senior Lecturer (chair), Dr Christine Morris (School of Histories and Humanities), Dr Martine Smith (School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences), Dr Gillian Martin (Vice Deanery, Faculty of Arts and Humanities), Mr Michael Brady (School of Computer Science and Statistics), Dr Jacinta McLoughlin (School of Dental Science), Dr Gabrielle McKee (School of Nursing and Midwifery), Dr Donal O’Donovan (School of Mathematics), Dr Daniela Zisterer (School of Biochemistry and Immunology), Dr Paul Kruger (School of Chemistry), Professor Eithne McCabe (School of Physics), Dr Cyril Smyth (in place of Dr Angus Bell) (Vice-Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology), Ms Mary Keating (School of Business), Ms Ruth Torode (School of Social Work and Social Policy), Professor Ray Fuller (School of Psychology), Dr Damian Murchan (Vice-Deanery, Faculty of Social and Human Sciences), Mr Donal McCormack, Education Officer of the Students’ Union, Mr Robert Kearns, Students’ Union Representative.

In attendance: The Academic Secretary, Ms Elspeth Hayes
Professor John Scattergood and Ms Alex Anderson for Item 3
Admissions Officer for Item 4.

Apologies: Dr John Quigley (School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences), Professor Frank Boland (School of Engineering), Dr Ken Irvine (School of Natural Sciences),

Schools in which Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) have not yet taken up position: School of Medicine, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy.

1. Minutes
   The minutes of the meeting of 1st November 2005 were approved as presented.

2. Matters arising
   a) Terms of Reference
      The draft terms of reference had been amended following discussion at the previous meeting and had been circulated with meeting papers. These terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

      The Senior Lecturer noted that the working group on Interdisciplinary and Service Teaching was in the process of being formed and that the Dean of Social and Human Sciences had agreed to chair the group.

   b) Structure of meetings
      The document setting out the structure of meetings of the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee (UTLC) had been updated on the basis of discussion at the previous meeting and had been circulated with meeting papers. The document is attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

   c) Entrance Exhibitioners Receptions
      The Senior Lecturer noted that the Entrance Exhibitioners’ Receptions were taking place on the 28th, 29th and 30th November and he encouraged Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) to attend.

   d) Course Administration
      The table setting out administration arrangements for undergraduate courses had been updated to reflect information returned by Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) and had been circulated with meeting papers. Some information was still outstanding and a final version would be circulated when responses had been received from all Schools / Vice-Deaneries.

      Action: Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) to review table and forward any outstanding information to the Senior Lecturer’s Office.

   e) Foundation Scholarship review
      The working group on the Foundation Scholarship examination was being established and Professor James Lunney, School of Physics, had agreed to chair the group.
f) CAPSL Advisory Committee
The Senior Lecturer noted that the staffing of the Academic Practice section of CAPSL was being consolidated during Michaelmas Term 2005. The CAPSL Advisory Committee will be convened in Hilary Term 2006.

g) Examination Timetabling
A memorandum from the Examinations Officer together with a schedule for the preparation and issuing of annual examination timetables during 2005/06 had been circulated. Similar information regarding supplemental examinations was requested.

**Action:** Examinations Officer to issue a schedule for the preparation and issuing of the supplemental examination timetables in 2005/06.

h) New Course Proposals / Calendar changes
The Senior Lecturer noted that the Heads’ Committee has agreed that proposals regarding new undergraduate courses will be approved in Schools / Vice-Deaneries and will then be presented to UTLC for consideration.

It is also envisaged that Calendar changes for undergraduate courses would normally originate with departments/disciplines or at course committees and would then be considered by Schools and Vice-Deaneries. All Calendar changes for undergraduate courses would be considered by UTLC and not by the faculty committees as was previous practice. The Deans’ Committee will also be consulted in this regard and further information circulated following the Deans’ Committee meeting of 7th December 2005.

**Action:** Senior Lecturer to confirm process for Calendar changes in this academic year following Deans’ Committee meeting of 7th December 2005.

3. Bologna Process
Professor John Scattergood, Academic Advisor on the Bologna Process and Ms Alex Anderson, Bologna Desk, Senior Lecturer’s Office attended for this item and briefed the committee on two memoranda dated 22nd November 2005 which had been circulated. The first memorandum reported on progress in the implementation of ECTS in undergraduate degree programmes, and the second included a paper on Learning Outcomes and Level Descriptors which had been developed by Professor Scattergood.

Professor Scattergood introduced the items, noting that Ireland had signed up to the Bologna Process in 1999. The process aimed to create a European Higher Education Area with more compatible higher education systems, to enable learning and qualifications to be identified and recognised more widely both within and outside Europe and to promote mobility both in work and education.

The implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and the production of the Diploma Supplement for all European higher education graduates are cornerstones of the Bologna Process. The Diploma Supplement will give information on a graduate’s qualification and on the specific modules taken, including the ECTS credit allocations to these modules, and will also state the level of the award, which is defined by the learning outcomes and level descriptors attached to the type of degree award.

The circulated memoranda regarding the implementation of ECTS and the development of Learning Outcomes and Level Descriptors were discussed as follows:

a) Implementation of ECTS in undergraduate degree programmes
A review of the use of the ECTS in undergraduate courses commenced in the academic year 2004/05. The Bologna Desk Report on the outcomes of that review was received by the Academic Affairs Committee in Trinity Term 2005 and a copy of this report had been circulated. Some further progress had been made since that report, but there remains substantial work to be undertaken in order to complete the process, update the College’s course module data and to resolve identified problems particularly concerning significant imbalance in student workload and the mismatch between taught elements, corresponding examination results and ECTS credit weightings.
The circulated memorandum detailed the specific actions required to complete this review. It was noted that much of the outstanding work will need to be completed in order that appropriate Calendar changes can be brought forward in Hilary Term 2006 for the Calendar 2006/07. Professor Scattergood and Ms Anderson will be available to assist Directors of Teaching and Learning, course directors and School Administrators in completing the tasks described. Ms Anderson reported that the Bologna Desk website would be available shortly and would contain resources to support the completion of the exercise.

**Action:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) to work with Bologna desk on completing ECTS review of undergraduate courses in Hilary Term 2006 and addressing issues raised, so that information can be included in Calendar 2006/07.

b) Learning Outcomes and Level Descriptors

The paper prepared by Professor Scattergood sought to establish generic level descriptors for College’s undergraduate and postgraduate degree awards which encompassed learning outcomes for the awards. These are based on the ‘Dublin Descriptors’ approved as the basic generic descriptors for the European Higher Education Area. Professor Scattergood had also referred to the NQAI descriptors and definitions and modified these to suit the College context. Professor Scattergood emphasised that the proposed descriptors were generic and were not intended to be definitive or unalterable. The paper had also been considered by the Graduate Studies Committee and will be considered by the Deans’ Committee, which considered draft proposed descriptors for the Honors Bachelor, Masters’ and Doctorate degrees in Trinity Term 2005.

Professor Scattergood stated that he had not attempted to conduct this exercise for professional degrees as this was more appropriately done by the relevant professional accrediting bodies in consultation with the institutions providing the education programmes. He would however be consulting with Schools running professional courses regarding a descriptor for a Practitioner Doctorate. It was noted that there is a number of EU directives and other legislation regarding professional education.

In discussion it was noted that the descriptor for the Honors Bachelors degree refers to the level of the award and not to the length of time of study involved. The issues in the differentiation of Higher Diplomas, Honors Bachelors and Ordinary Bachelors degrees were discussed, noting that College has particular local issues in this regard that do not necessarily arise elsewhere. For example, in other European education systems there is no concept of a separate Honors or Ordinary Bachelors degree, whereas in College the Ordinary Bachelors degree is viewed as an exit award from an Honors degree programme so it is particularly difficult to differentiate the level descriptor in this regard.

A copy of the Irish Universities’ Association information booklet entitled *The Universities and the National Framework of Qualification* had been circulated for information. It was noted that there were some difficulties in mapping on to this framework the different types of prior learning presented by degree course applicants for degree courses.

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) were requested to bring the proposed descriptors to the attention of their school members and channel any feedback to Professor Scattergood at the Bologna Desk by the end of January 2006. Taking account of feedback received, a final draft will be prepared for Council and, if approved, would be incorporated into College literature relating to awards from the 2006/07 academic year.

**Action:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) to channel feedback from Schools on proposed descriptors to the Bologna Desk by the end of January 2006.

4. Establishing Equivalences between EU Second-Level Qualifications for Competitive Entry to Undergraduate Programmes

The Admissions Officer attended for this item and spoke to the circulated memorandum dated 28th November 2005 on establishing more equitable equivalences for competitive entry purposes between the A-level and Leaving Certificate (LC) examinations. The need to review the system of equivalences between these examinations had been emphasised at the previous meeting of UTLC. The Admissions Officer rehearsed the background to the discussion and the impact of the existing equivalences between the two examinations on the process of filling places on high-demand courses in College.
In 2003 a UK Expert group benchmarked the LC with A-Levels and recommended that a higher grade at LC be equal to two-thirds of an equivalent A-Level grade. This gave rise to the introduction in 2005-06 of the requirement to present four instead of three A-levels for entry to high demand courses at Trinity College, and a revision of the CAO points awarded for A-level grades. While this change reduced the advantage that A-level applications have over LC applications, it did not equalize the conditions of the competition. The lack of differentiation in A-Level grades remains a central problem, as unlike the LC where grades are subdivided (e.g. B1, B2, B3), it is not possible to distinguish whether or not, for example, an A-level grade is high or low. The A level student presenting four grade As receives the maximum 600 points, whereas a LC student presenting six A grades receives points within the 540 to 600 range, depending on whether these are A1 or A2 grades.

Further statistical data is also now available as the LC is now included in the UCAS tariff (points) which operates for UK higher education admissions. Under this tariff, a student presenting six LC A1 grades is allocated more points and deemed more competitive than an A level student with four A grades.

The Admissions Officer proposed that based on the UCAS Tariff for Leaving Certificate, Trinity should align the points it awards to A Levels grades relative to the points it awards for Leaving Certificate grades. In doing this, it will be necessary to take account of the sub-divisions of grades within Leaving Certificate. She explained the operational issues relating to this proposal, noting that places would be distributed proportionally based on the number of competitive A-level and LC applications for a course.

The meeting discussed the proposal at length. The method of establishing equivalences in the scoring of grades was queried and it was felt that the proposed grade and points alignment should be based on the equivalent percentages awarded rather than the alphabetical grade. It was recommended that the allocation of a points range to A-level grades should reflect more accurately the percentage range allocated to LC grades.

It was noted that if this proposal were approved it would be necessary to announce it at early as possible so as prospective A-level applicants would be aware of the changes. In response to a query, the Admissions Officer confirmed that it was not recommended that College reconsider the award of extra points for specific Leaving Certificate subjects such as higher Mathematics nor should it entertain the A* grade in the A-levels.

The UTLC approved the proposal to align the points that Trinity awards to A Levels grades relative to the points it awards for Leaving Certificate grades subject to a more accurate alignment of the A-level points range with Higher LC grades.

The Senior Lecturer spoke to the circulated report on Broad Curriculum activities during 2004-05 and on enrolments on Broad Curriculum cross-faculty courses for 2005-06.

The College’s Broad Curriculum Policy was approved in 1999, and funding to support specific elements of the initiative was obtained from Atlantic Philanthropies in 2001. This funded twelve five-year Broad Curriculum lectureships to support departments offering cross-faculty courses and sixty Postgraduate Teaching Studentships to support the provision of small-group teaching.

Six of the twelve cross-faculty courses funded were launched 2002-03 and a further four in 2003-04. In 2005-06 thirteen courses are on offer, including a course offered in Economics for which the department secured external funding.

Current credit and substitution arrangements for cross-faculty courses were documented in the report. It was noted that the ECTS credits allocated to a cross-faculty course has been confirmed by the Academic Affairs Committee at 6 ECTS. Data on student numbers were also included, indicating that numbers of students registering was reasonably steady at around six hundred. Retention of these students to the end of the courses had improved as more students are undertaking cross-faculty courses on a substitution basis.

Of the sixty three-year postgraduate teaching studentships funded, twenty were awarded in 2001, twenty in 2002 and twenty in 2003. Evaluation reports on the activities supported by the postgraduate teaching
studentships are submitted each year by the departments involved and a report on the 2004/05 evaluations was included in the appendices to the circulated report.

In 2005-06 language modules in French, German, Italian, Spanish and Irish are available. Under Broad Curriculum substitution arrangements, language modules may, in many cases, be substituted on the same basis as a cross-faculty course.

The funding agreement with Atlantic Philanthropies required that mid-term review of the Broad Curriculum be undertaken and this took place in Trinity Term 2005. A number of the comments made by the reviewers in their report were summarised in the circulated report and were generally very positive. The full report has been forwarded to Atlantic Philanthropies as this is a specific requirement of the donor.

The Senior Lecturer noted that funding issues regarding cross-faculty courses in the ARAM will be considered by the Heads’ Committee.

In answer to a query as to whether there were plans to expand Broad Curriculum courses in the future, it was noted that the funding for this initiative had been fully allocated. The desirability of offering more courses in the Science and Engineering area was noted, and the Senior Lecturer indicated that he is in favour of generally creating more flexibility in course curricula to enable students to read outside their main discipline(s).

The difficulties for professional courses in allowing for curricular flexibility were raised, and the Senior Lecturer noted that the Irish Universities’ Association (IUA) Registrars’ Group is discussing the Universities’ relationship with the various professional accreditation bodies in the country.

It was agreed to add percentage values to the table in Appendix 5 which indicated the ‘home’ faculties of students taking cross-faculty courses in 2004-05. The report will then be published on the Broad Curriculum website.

The issue was raised of how substitution of a Broad Curriculum course worth 6 ECTS credits can be facilitated where there is not a similarly weighted optional course on a programme’s curriculum. The current disparities in the weighting of courses for which Broad Curriculum courses can be substituted was noted, and the recommendation to the Academic Affairs Committee in the Progress Report on the Review of the use of ECTS in undergraduate degree programmes of 25th April 2005 was also noted, that schools and departments should ensure that all courses should feature, in the relevant year of a course, a ‘credit slot’ equivalent to 6-8 ECTS which could be used by a student either for a Broad Curriculum course or an elective module within the School or Department.

Action: Senior Lecturer’s Office to amend Appendix 5 and publish the report on the Broad Curriculum website. (The report is available at http://www.tcd.ie/Broad_Curriculum/init.html)

6. Other business
No other business was raised.

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signature date
The Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee (UTLC) is a sub-committee of the Heads’ Committee. Its membership includes the Senior Lecturer, all Undergraduate Directors of Teaching and Learning, the Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning, and two student representatives, one of whom is the Education Officer of the Students’ Union. The Senior Lecturer chairs the UTLC and the Academic Secretary is secretary to the Committee.

The main functions of the UTLC are:

1. To consider all matters of academic policy relating to undergraduate teaching and learning, including matters that might be referred to it by the Heads’ Committee, by the University Council, or by other committees in College.

2. To oversee the College’s suite of undergraduate degree programmes, including cross academic unit programmes and to discuss matters of common interest regarding course administration.

3. To develop and implement rigorous processes to assess existing and new undergraduate degree programmes, including procedures for the achievement of professional accreditation of such programmes, where appropriate, and to recommend the discontinuation of existing programmes and/or the initiation of new programmes.

4. To monitor, evaluate, and report on the CAO admissions procedure and non-standard admission procedures in College, to make proposals regarding course promotion, and to initiate discussion of new policies and procedures for non-standard admission, including lifelong learning, mature students, part-time admissions and the TAP programme.

5. To monitor, review and report on all aspects of the Bologna process as it relates to undergraduate teaching and learning programmes, including the European Credit transfer system (ECTS).

6. To consider and propose appropriate changes and updates to the College Calendar.

7. To oversee the examinations process, including procedures, regulations, internal assessment and external examiner processes and to monitor the maintenance of academic standards in undergraduate programmes.

8. To promote a scholarly approach to teaching and learning.

9. To promote excellence in teaching with the support of the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning.

10. To oversee the implementation of quality processes, including course reviews and teaching quality reviews, and to initiate discussion of new quality processes.

Updated 29th November 2005
Appendix 2

Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee

Structure of Meetings

Status of committee
The Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee is a sub-committee of the Heads of School Committee, which is a principal committee of the University Council. Other sub-committees of the Heads of School Committee are the Graduate Studies Committee, Deans’ Committee, International Student Affairs Committee, Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning – Advisory Committee, and the Quality Committee.

Membership
Membership of the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee includes all Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate), the Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (ex officio) and two student representatives, one of whom is the Students’ Union Education Officer (ex officio). It is chaired by the Senior Lecturer (ex officio). The Academic Secretary will act as secretary to the committee.

Agenda
The agenda for the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee will be structured as follows:

Section A Items for discussion

Section B Items for noting

Circulation of Papers
Papers will be circulated at least three working days before the meeting.

Frequency of meetings
For 2005-06, meetings have been scheduled to take place twice a term. The frequency of meetings will be reviewed at the end of the year.

Quorum
The quorum for a meeting will be eleven members.

Attendance at meetings
For 2005-06, where a Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) is not available to attend a meeting, it will be possible to nominate a representative to attend in his/her place. The need for consistency in attendance at meetings is acknowledged however, and meeting dates for each academic year will normally be planned in Trinity Term of the previous year, to facilitate Directors in ensuring their availability for meetings.

Minutes
Draft minutes of the Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee will also be circulated to the Heads of School Committee.

Updated 29th November 2005