

The University of Dublin

Trinity College

A meeting of the University Council was held on Wednesday 3 December 2008 at 11.15 am in the Board Room.

<i>Present</i>	Provost, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Registrar, Senior Tutor, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Research, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dr C Laudet, Dr C MacMaolain, Dr C Morris, Professor J Wickham, Dean of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, Dr V Kelly, Dr M Lyons, Dr D O'Sullivan, Dean of Health Sciences, Dr D Brennan, Professor M Radomski, Dr A O'Gara, Professor G Whyte, Mr H Sullivan, Ms C Ní Dhubhda, Mr D Walsh, Ms A Murphy, Mr D Kavanagh.
<i>Apologies</i>	Senior Lecturer, Professor J Fitzpatrick, Professor M McCarron, Dr K Johnson, Ms D Flynn, Mr F Hughes, Ms A Mc Gowan.
<i>In attendance</i>	Librarian, Acting Secretary, Academic Secretary, Chief Operating Officer.
<i>Observer</i>	Secretary to the Scholars (Ms N Cleary).

In opening the meeting, the Provost apologised for his absence from the previous two Council meetings, and thanked the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer for chairing these meetings on his behalf.

SECTION A

- CL/08-09/046 Statutory Declaration A new member of Council (Mr D Walsh) made the statutory declaration.
- CL/08-09/047 Minutes of the meetings of 29<sup>th</sup> October (Personal Chair), the 5<sup>th</sup> November (Personal Chair), and the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2008 were approved subject to noting Mr D Kavanagh in attendance at the meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008.
- CL/08-09/048 Matters Arising (see Actum CL/08-09/023) The Provost informed Council that Dr Jörg Vogel declined the offer of the Personal Chair.
- CL/08-09/049 Provost's Report
- (i) *Academic year structure*: the Provost informed Council that the Fellows approved the statutory change to implement the new academic year structure. These changes will now be put to the Visitors for approval. Any industrial relations issues in respect of implementation of the new academic year structure will be addressed by the Staff Office.
  - (ii) *Funding*: the Provost provided Council with an overview of the current financial situation. He noted that the introduction in 2006 of the Higher

Education Authority (HEA) new recurrent grant allocation model (RGAM) has had an adverse impact on Trinity's share of the state grant. In June 2007, Board approved an action plan to address College's worsening financial situation and a subgroup of the Executive Officers Group (EOG), chaired by the Provost, was established. This subgroup focused on key actions to increase income, which included: (i) increasing the undergraduate student numbers in order to maintain market share of the state grant, (ii) increasing postgraduate research students in line with College's strategic objectives, (iii) accelerating recruitment of non-EU fee paying students, and (iv) pruning base costs. Income generated from these actions would be invested in key academic and administrative staff, in estates, information systems and student service supports to sustain a high level of activity and to maintain quality of programmes and research. This subgroup of the EOG, referred to as the Funding Group, is now chaired by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and is charged with predicting resource needs for the next five years. It is expected that the remit of the ARAM Taskforce will be subsumed into this Funding Group in the future.

The Provost noted that the global financial crisis has worsened in past months, and the recent exchequer figures bode poorly for any upturn in the Irish situation in the near future. He commented on the imperative for universities to be part of the solution to this economic crisis, adding the need for creative responses to protecting, sustaining and developing higher education. Greater collaboration, especially in Dublin, between higher education institutions is necessary. The Dublin Chemistry Graduate Programme and the Institute of Molecular Medicine are good examples of innovative responses where expertise and resources are pooled, achieving greater intellectual capacity and research outputs as well as economies of scale in the deployment of resources. The Provost commented on the more drastic actions of freezing recruitment and promotion opportunities, but added that such instruments of cost-cutting are not prudent responses in the long run. Relative to some other Irish universities, Trinity College's financial position is favourable, the College continues to attract excellent students and staff, and has a strong international standing. The Provost concluded by noting that a vibrant higher education sector is a key determinant of the economic and social wealth of a country, and universities have a responsibility to contribute to the creation of a solution to the current economic crisis.

CL/08-09/050 Quality Review Provost's reports to Council on the review of the School of English and of the School of Computer Science and Statistics were circulated with papers for the meeting. The Provost introduced these review reports expressing overall satisfaction with the quality of programmes and research in both Schools.

- (i) *School of English* Addressing the review report on the School of English, the Provost commented that the reviewers confirmed the School's positive international reputation and that the School was punching above its weight. The reviewers found that the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes were in high demand, attracting high achieving students, and that there is scope for more development at postgraduate level. Students are enthusiastic about the instruction and overall support they receive. Despite heavy teaching loads, academics maintain impressive levels of research output and are highly motivated. The reviewers note, however, that the prolonged

transition from Departments to School, and the slow implementation of the new resource allocation model, together with the forthcoming semesterisation, have led to something of a planning blight, in which it has been difficult for the School to give consideration to innovations in its curriculum, its teaching methods or its overall organization.

The Provost noted in particular the reviewers' comments on teaching practices and workloads, on career development for postgraduate students, staff development opportunities, and the low quality and quantity of space for teaching and administration. The reviewers recommend that the School explore recent developments in learning strategies which allow courses to be delivered with fewer teaching hours and with more active student involvement outside the classroom. They strongly recommend that some more effective model of staff workload be created as currently staff effort is very dispersed resulting in individuals contributing a small number of lectures over a wide range of courses. It is important that the lack of space be addressed and that the funding allocation model rewards effort and strategic actions.

With respect to research, the Provost highlighted the reviewers' belief that the School has great potential to develop its graduate provision and to increase the number of research students. The reviewers feel, though, that School planning is driven by the needs of the curriculum rather than by the needs of research and comment that planning should take more account of the needs of research if the School is to continue to maintain its international status as being at the very forefront of the discipline in its areas of focus. The Provost welcomed the opinion that the School of English's research matches the best in the UK, and noted the importance of making efforts to increase staff levels from its current base of 21 full time equivalents to reflect more closely the staffing base in equivalent units in British universities, i.e. between 28 and 32.

The Provost drew Council's attention to the list of recommendations in the review report. Council commented on the need for a College policy on workloads and to explore innovative practices and methodologies in teaching and learning. It was clarified that the postgraduate reading room is used by all students, and not just students of the arts and humanities. Council noted the excellence achieved by the School of English in its teaching and research and approved the following recommendations of the review report:

1. *Teaching*
  - (i) *The School should introduce a discipline specific induction course for new Teaching Assistants (TAs) and implement a mentoring program;*
  - (ii) *The School should pay TAs for office hours so that students can have the same access to TAs as to core staff members and provide TAs with suitable office space;*
  - (iii) *The School should organise meetings of all tutors on a course at the start and end of the course to outline aims and objectives of the course and to allow for feedback from tutors to the course organizers;*
  - (iv) *The School should review the teaching methods used to deliver the third year core courses;*

- (v) *The School should provide an earlier indication of acceptance to visiting students and provide detailed reading lists to visiting students in advance of their arrival;*
- (vi) *The School should facilitate earlier provision of class and exam timetables to students;*
- (vii) *The School should monitor the numbers in tutorial groups more closely;*
- (viii) *The Directors of Teaching and Learning should be encouraged to explore recent developments in learning strategies which allow courses to be delivered with fewer teaching hours and with more active student involvement outside of the classroom;*
- (ix) *Thought should be given as to whether it is necessary to run all of the Sophister options in every year.*

## 2 *Research*

- (x) *The School should arrange for PhD students to be given more training in preparation for an academic or other career;*
- (xi) *The School should communicate the guidelines for the transition to full PhD status more clearly to research students and that there should be a shorter window for progression;*
- (xii) *The School should provide greater clarity to research students about supports available for attendance at conferences;*
- (xiii) *The significant unevenness of workload resulting from amounts of supervision both at PhD and M.Phil. levels should be reduced;*
- (xiv) *Consideration should be given by the School to the suggestion that the potential to increase the number of research students can only be achieved if there is a reduction in the overall teaching commitment to the undergraduate programme;*
- (xv) *If the proposal suggested by the last review panel (one hour per week per postgraduate supervised across the academic year) is not to be adopted, exactly how supervision is factored into workloads has to be addressed by the whole School as a matter of urgency;*
- (xvi) *Planning needs to take more account of the needs of research, if the School is to continue to maintain its international status as being at the forefront of the discipline in its areas of focus.*

## 3. *Resources*

- (xvii) *The School should improve its communication structures and, in particular, make more use of web-based communication;*
- (xviii) *The College must address as a matter of priority the provision of adequate space for the School, its teaching assistants, administrative staff, and graduate students;*
- (xix) *The availability of key books in the Library, especially at writing essay and exam periods, should be reviewed;*
- (i) *The College should give urgent attention to increasing the total number of permanent staff.*

- (i) *Administrative functions and academic roles need to be more clearly specified and, throughout the administration of the school, continuity planning improved;*
  - (ii) *Administrative staff need to be made aware of School procedures for coverage and continuity in the event of absence or illness;*
  - (iii) *A fortnightly planning meeting with all or most of the administrative staff and support team might be a useful innovation;*
  - (iv) *The School needs to develop more effective in-house mentoring for new staff, and junior staff should be aware of what is required in order to advance their career within the institution;*
  - (v) *The School should appoint a deputy head who would be expected to become Head of School in due course.*
- (ii) School of Computer Science and Statistics Addressing the review report on the School of Computer Science and Statistics, the Provost reminded Council of the expansion in the 1900s in the provision of computer science programmes in Irish universities. The government provided generous funding through the Expert Skills Programme in anticipation of increased demand and growth in this area. It was difficult to recruit staff with PhDs in computer science in the 1990s in Ireland, and as a result a high proportion of staff in the then Department of Computer Science were recruited without a PhD qualification. The dot.com crash in the next decade meant that demand for computer science programmes dropped significantly and as a result it was difficult to recruit sufficient undergraduate student numbers not only to the flagship programme in Computer Science but also to the programme in Information and Communication Technology. Taken against this backdrop the review of the School of Computer Science and Statistics is very good and affirms that the School is on the right track. With a staff of 75 and a staff:student ratio of 12, the School is in a good position to expand and develop its undergraduate and postgraduate provision and to exploit greater research opportunities. The Provost stressed that the School is one of the leaders in College in developing spin-off companies, noting in particular, IONA Technologies, and he commented on the increasing importance of commercialisation to the future of higher education. The activities of the School of Computer Science and Statistics are at the heart of the objectives of Science Foundation Ireland and as such the School should harness opportunities to continue to grow its research funding base. The Provost acknowledged that the field of computer sciences in particular is highly competitive, but noted that the new governance structures and the merger of computer science and statistics disciplines into one School provide the platform for the necessary growth and synergies in teaching and research. He informed Council that the Stokes Chair in Statistics was not filled and that this was cause for concern, but added that in the current economic climate there should be new possibilities.

The Provost noted that like the review comments in the report on the School of English, the same issues in respect of workload balance, student evaluation of programmes, and staff development were highlighted as needing attention in this report. While the reviewers suggest that those staff who are not research active should carry a higher teaching load, the Provost stressed that the principle of the Scholar-Teacher is at the heart of Trinity's ethos and the focus should be on developing staff's potential to become both excellent

teachers and researchers. Concluding his comments on the review report, the Provost reiterated that the School of Computer Science and Statistics has made excellent progress in the past few years, and that there is still room for further development.

Council noted the review report on the School of Computer Science and Statistics and approved the following recommendations of the review report:

1. *Staffing*

- (i) *The plan to appoint more senior staff to achieve more leadership and research potential needs to continue, through both new appointments and promotion of suitably qualified junior staff;*
- (ii) *Junior staff need additional welcome/orientation material as newcomers, more mentoring and encouragement in the early years, and a clearer view of their career development potential; it is intended that the career prospects of research fellows are included within this. Proper annual staff development should be put in place, possibly at College level;*
- (iii) *More permanent junior administrative staff are needed; the staff appointed so far have done a wonderful job but they desperately need some assistance, especially to support externally visible activities;*
- (iv) *The new marketing post is crucial but, with so much catching up to do and the scope for a much wider range of potentially fruitful activities, more help needs to be provided, perhaps through (credited) contributions from other academic staff. Websites, in general, should be given major upgrades;*
- (v) *Now that a system of fairly distributed staff teaching loads has been established, the same should be done for administrative and other staff duties;*
- (vi) *Notwithstanding the above-mentioned re-distribution of teaching loads, a strategic view has to be taken about the variable degree of involvement of staff in active research. It seems highly unlikely that the number of research-inactive staff will be reduced to zero and it will be appropriate for this to be reflected in some variability in teaching loads, taking account of research productivity, supervision of M.Sc. theses and Ph.D. students, management of research fellows, and so on;*
- (vii) *The Statistics Discipline must be strengthened to ensure that teaching loads are kept under control, especially for younger staff, to avoid the need for statistics courses to be taught by non-statisticians, and to protect the Stokes Professor from excessive teaching and administrative duties as this new research initiative develops;*
- (viii) *Consideration should be given to the possibility of making joint appointments with other Schools or Faculties, based on existing or potential research contacts;*
- (ix) *Establish a School-based seminar series or seminar-day, perhaps advertised as a Distinguished Lecturer Series, to encourage collegiality;*

- (x) *The School should consider annual retreats, at some level, either for the whole School, or just academic staff, etc. in order to enhance community spirit;*
  - (xi) *Technical staff grades should be reviewed so as to reflect the software content of the work of a technician in the 21<sup>st</sup> century;*
  - (xii) *The management of Systems Support and Technician staff should be integrated without delay.*
2. **Infrastructure/Space**
- (xiii) *Space is a real concern given the expansion plans. The School is distributed too widely and this will be a real inhibitor to developing the research-led culture.*
3. **College Interface**
- (xiv) *The School should publicise its successes more energetically. Its work in interdisciplinary areas in particular should be given greater prominence;*
  - (xv) *The ARAM is not well understood by many in the School. Some priority should be given to explaining how it works and why it works this way. This would save a lot of energy being diverted from achieving the targets rather than arguing about the model;*
  - (xvi) *The situation concerning the use of the Higher Education Authority's £5M capital funding allocated to the Department of Computer Science in 1998 to provide purpose-built dedicated undergraduate teaching space for its ICT programme needs to be clarified.*
4. **Organisation**
- (xvii) *It is far from clear why the notion of a department still exists. This issue should be resolved as soon as possible and any contracts which refer to Head of Department should be clarified to make it clear that the Head of School is now the responsible person;*
  - (xviii) *Staff still do not feel involved with School planning and strategy. There is a need for both Academic Staff and Research Staff fora to be established to ensure that staff are sufficiently involved in planning and strategy, and for full agendas and draft minutes for meetings to be made widely available as promptly as possible;*
  - (xix) *Although it is reasonable to expect that the School will share the worldwide upturn in undergraduate student numbers in Computer Science, consideration might be given to the introduction of a limited number of new degree programmes, probably interdisciplinary; many institutions in the U.S. offer examples of these;*
    - (i) *A uniformly applied practice of gathering student feedback about courses should be implemented;*
    - (i) *First-semester examination results should be made available much earlier, if only as preliminary grades indicated as subject to certification by a meeting of Examiners later in the Session;*
    - (ii) *Annual reviews of Ph.D. progress should be implemented; for an exemplar see*

<http://www.cs.tamu.edu/academics/graduate/Ph.D-review-Procedures>;

- (iii) *Efforts should be intensified to recruit more postgraduate students from outside Trinity, and even outside Ireland, with notice being taken of the possible need for language training, no doubt a College-level issue.*

In discussing the issue of workload balance, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer referring to the recent meeting of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Science, noted that TDs (Teachta Dála) and Senators expressed concern that research is displacing teaching in the universities. He felt that this is not necessarily the case in Trinity College, but found it interesting that both sets of reviewers highlighted workload balance as an area to be addressed by the Schools. He suggested that this matter be considered by the Undergraduate Studies Committee, and that the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate) be invited to carry out an assessment of teaching workloads in their Schools. It is important that academic staff from lecturers to holders of professional chairs teach at undergraduate level as well as conduct research. The Provost commented on the importance of the IUA (Irish Universities Association) providing leadership in this area by developing a flexible workload model that allows for distinction across disciplines. One Council member commenting on public perception of universities, noted the public believe that the primary objective of universities is to teach, and unless the universities are proactive in showcasing their research and raising public awareness of the connectivity between teaching and research it is unlikely that this perception will alter.

Students' Union representatives commented that students believe that the increasing emphasis on the 4<sup>th</sup> level is displacing 3<sup>rd</sup> level teaching. They proposed that unless there is a more involved system for student evaluation of courses, this belief will continue. The current system of course evaluation is wholly inadequate and even when students are invited to complete an evaluation, there is no feedback on the outcome of such exercises. The Academic Secretary explained that the existing system of module evaluation is voluntary, lecturers are invited to participate, and the outcome of the survey is confidential to the lecturer and the relevant Director of Teaching and Learning. She added that the evaluation of modules is perceived as an evaluation of the lecturer and commented on the necessity to broaden these evaluations to include input from staff. The Students' Union noted their intention to raise the matter with the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT), and noted Council's support to advance a transparent course evaluation system.

In discussing the RAE (Research Assessment Exercise) in the UK, Council noted that staff can designate themselves as research active or as teachers. It was pointed out that some academics in Trinity are not research active and it may be necessary to redistribute teaching workloads within the relevant Schools to reflect this. It was noted that there are also some disciplines that focus almost entirely on teaching to the detriment of research, and this needs to be addressed.

The importance of proper staff development programmes to assist staff develop new teaching methodologies, to complete research applications for funding, to support postgraduates and teaching assistants, and to support research activity was discussed. The Centre for Academic Practice and Student Learning (CAPSL) delivers a range of workshops on supporting teaching, the Staff Office delivers courses on staff development, and the Research and Innovation Office assists staff in completing grant applications. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commented on the need to join up existing services in order to provide the level of staff training and development necessary in an increasingly competitive environment. He noted

*Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings*

provisional plans to hold a symposium on teaching and research in Trinity week 2009, which Council warmly supported. Dr O’Gara commented that there is a workload model in place in the Marino Institute which distributes the teaching load depending on how research active academics are. She welcomed the discussion at Council on achieving a balance between teaching and research, noting that it now behoves higher education institutions to be innovative in their teaching and learning practices.

In response to a query, the Academic Secretary informed Council of the new procedure requiring Schools to produce an implementation plan within four weeks after Council’s consideration of their quality review report. The Provost acknowledged the need to monitor the implementation of recommendations approved by Council.

Council approved the Provost’s recommendations in respect of the School of English and the School of Computer Science and Statistics that:

1. The School of English and the School of Computer Science and Statistics working closely with the Dean of the respective Faculties, and other relevant Academic Officers, should consider the detailed recommendations of the Review Report and draw up an implementation plan<sup>1</sup> for Council approval;
2. College should:
  - (a) ensure adequate support for staff induction and development;
  - (b) develop structures to support and encourage new teaching and learning strategies;
  - (c) review its current system of student evaluation of course modules, and consider introducing evaluation of programmes.

Council also noted the role of the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer in coordinating teaching and research, and approved the proposal that the Undergraduate Studies Committee address the issue of workloads across the Schools and make recommendations to Council.

#### CL/08-09/051 Any other business

- (i) Council noted and approved a tabled memorandum dated 1<sup>st</sup> December 2008 from the Dean of Graduate Studies on the recommendation of the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students. The Council upheld the decision of Graduate Studies Committee to approve the recommendation of the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students.
- (ii) A student representative drew to Council’s attention the perceived disadvantage that graduates of Trinity’s nursing programmes have because of the classification of the University of Dublin degrees. The Provost advised the student to discuss this matter with the Academic Secretary.

#### SECTION B

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<sup>1</sup> See *Procedures and Protocol for Quality Review of Schools 2008/09* at <http://www.tcd.ie/yp-cao/qu/qopdf/adrpack2.pdf>

- CL/08-09/052 Graduate Studies Committee The Council noted and approved the recommendations as set out in the minutes of the Graduate Studies Committee from its meeting of 23 October 2008, which had been circulated.
- CL/08-09/053 Undergraduate Studies Committee The Council noted and approved the recommendations as set out in the minutes of the Undergraduate Studies Committee from its meeting of 4 November 2008, which had been circulated.
- CL/08-09/054 Student Services Committee The Council noted and approved the recommendations as set out in the minutes of the Student Services Committee from its meeting of 28 October 2008, which had been circulated.
- CL/08-09/055 Research - Matters for Information The Council noted the following documents, which had been circulated:
- (i) Policy on Research Groupings within Trinity College Dublin December 2005 (see RS/05-06/32 of 6 April 2006);
  - (ii) Funding of Trinity Research Institutes (see RS/07-08/41 of 8 May 2008);
  - (iii) Indirect Costs Policy (see RS/07-08/52 of 19 June 2008).

#### SECTION C

- CL/08-09/056 Membership of the University Council - University Senate Representative The Council noted that Ms D Flynn has been elected as a representative of the University Senate in place of Ms F M Haffey, who had resigned.
- CL/08-09/057 Higher Degrees—Reports of Examiners - Higher Degrees by Research Alone The Council noted and approved the reports of examiners on candidates for higher degrees, approved by the sub-committee of Board and Council on 28 October 2008 and noted by Board on 19 November 2008.
- PhD David Oliver Bourke; Claire Donnellan; Vivienne Mahon; Emer Máire Ní Bhrádaigh; Honor Margaret Nicholl; Andrew O'Regan; Giorgos Papantoniou; Julia Annegret Richter; Jacqueline Marie-Ann Ryan; Paul David Sutton.
- MSc Amgad Ashour; Karl Fahy.
- CL/08-09/058 Student Cases The Council noted and approved the request of the Senior Lecturer to permit two named students to repeat a year of their courses in the academic year 2008-2009, constituting a third attempt.
- CL/08-09/059 School of Engineering - Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) The Council noted that Professor B Basu has resigned from this position, and to approve his replacement with Professor B Broderick, from 1 January 2009 to 12 July 2011.
- CL/08-09/060 School of Biochemistry and Immunology - Headship of Discipline of Immunology The Council noted and approved the nomination of Professor C O'Farrelly as Head of Discipline for 2008-2011.

CL/08-09/061 Senior Promotions Committee - The Council approved the nomination of Professor C Normand as the Council nominee to the *Ad Hoc* Appeals Committee for Senior Promotions 2008, chaired by the Senior Dean, and with Professor J Whiston as the IFUT/ASA representative.

SECTION D

In compliance with the Data Protection Acts this information is restricted.

Signed .....

Date .....