

**THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

The Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of 9th May 2007

PRESENT: The Provost, the Bursar, the Registrar, Professor J. Parnell, Mr D. Quinn, Professor T. Brown, the Senior Lecturer, the Treasurer (Secretary of the Finance Committee)

IN
ATTENDANCE: Deputy Treasurer

APOLOGIES Mr Henry Kearns, the Secretary

(PRESENT
FOR)

The Minutes of the Meeting of 11th April 2007 were approved and signed.

FN/06 - 07/68 **Student Service Charge**
(Minute FN/06-07/64 of 11.04.2007 refers)

The Deputy Treasurer reported that he had met as requested with the President of the Students Union, the Dean of Students and Director of Sport. At the meeting there had been no queries or issues to be addressed in relation to the detail of the Student Charge or detailed operational matters and related charges in the new Sports Centre however matters in relation to the possible introduction and level of a student levy were discussed. The Student Union President indicated that a referendum in relation to the levy would be held on 10th/11 May.

FN/06 - 07/69 **Research - TCIN**
(Minute FN/06-07/59 of 11.04.2007 refers)

A member of the Finance Committee requested that confirmation be sought from the Director of the Institute that financial monitoring, control, oversight and reporting to exacting standards would continue to be achieved during any absence of the Executive Director of TCIN.

Action:

69.1 The Treasurer to request confirmation from the Director which should accompany the Business Plan for TCIN to be submitted to the June 2007 Finance Committee meeting.

Section A

FN/06 - 07/70 **Faculties – Budgeting and Governance**
(Minute FN/06-07/54 of 24.02.2007 refers)

The Committee had been circulated with papers on the following

- Budgeting arrangements for new Faculties
- Role and Responsibility of the Faculty Dean
- Guiding Principles for new Faculty Governance

The Committee had also been circulated with comments received in relation to each of the papers above along with Board minutes of 28th February 2007 and 4 April 2007 and Council minutes of 7 March 2007 and 11 April 2007.

The Senior Lecturer presented the papers and outlined for the Committee the interconnection between the various papers. Arising from some discussion the Committee recommended minor amendments to the papers to reflect the role of the Board. The Committee considered the comments received in respect of the individual papers and agreed the extent to which the comments had already been considered elsewhere and been reflected in the papers.

The Treasurer again brought to the Committee's attention the risks associated with the lack of provision of appropriate management information systems, (with particular emphasis on financial information systems for Finance Committee consideration), and the consequences for financial planning, monitoring, control, oversight and reporting of large activities and for Deans and others in the new environment of devolved budgeting and financial decision making. The Committee noted that the issue of financial information systems (to include not just hardware and software but also procedures, processes and principles associated with the underlying activity) had been raised as part of the Treasurer's Office annual Risk Review over the last 4 years and had also been an issue which the Committee had requested should be brought to the attention of the Board following its last meeting. (Minute FN/06-07/59 refers). The Committee requested that the urgency for appropriate management information systems be highlighted to the Board as part of its consideration of papers on academic restructuring being brought to the Board meeting of 23 May 2007. It was agreed that the Board member would specifically draw Board's attention to the issues in relation to management information systems.

The Committee noted that it would be receiving a memorandum in relation to the costs of academic and administrative restructuring for its meeting of 30 May 2007.

The Committee approved the papers as presented subject to two minor amendments.

Action:

70.1 Professor J. Parnell to draw Board's attention to the urgency associated with implementation of new management information systems.

Section B

FN/06- 07/71 Financial Situation

The Treasurer indicated that she wished to brief the Committee on future financial uncertainties for the University in the context of Estimates for 2007 which show a deficit of €7m of which €5m is in respect of FTWA obligations and €2m in relation to State grant withheld on foot of the introduction of the HEA RGAM. While the HEA RGAM is being introduced, over-funded Colleges will continue to have incremental grant cuts subject to an annual 2% cap until the recurrent grant differentials arising from changed student number profiles are equalised. The Committee noted that previous HEA data were based on unaudited student numbers and would have resulted in a significant adverse impact on the university's grant income. The Committee noted that following detailed work/negotiations of the IUA Registrars group and the carrying out of a detailed audit by the HEA new student numbers were likely to be available in the coming weeks. There continues however to be considerable uncertainty in relation to the financial situation both in the current year but more so in future years. While considering the financial situation the Finance Committee also noted that the additional costs associated with academic recruitment for 2007/08 showed costs in excess of targets released of some €2m thus increasing even further the future deficit position of the university.

Given the ongoing uncertainty in relation to student numbers and the potentially significant financial impact the Strategic Planning Task force will need to be particularly mindful of the current uncertainty during any consideration of recruitment proposals for 2008/09. In this context the implications of section 37 of the Universities Act in relation to incurring expenditure in excess of budget were rehearsed. The Committee was briefed that the Provost had outlined some options at a recent Board meeting which included

- a) Increasing student numbers (both undergraduate and postgraduate)
- b) Increasing international students
- c) Fundraising and
- d) Reducing the College's cost base

which would have to be considered as soon as finalised student numbers are available and the financial implications associated therewith are identified in order to ensure early response to the potential grant reduction.

The Committee also heard that in the recent publication of the State Estimates the allocations in respect of the Universities and the IOTs had been amalgamated under one heading and noted the issues associated therewith. The Provost indicated his concerns in relation to a disconnect between stated national policy and the HEA RGAM as currently applicable. It was agreed that a copy of the College's submission to the HEA in relation to the RGAM along with IUA correspondence in relation to many funding issues in general would be brought to a future Finance Committee meeting.

Action:

71.1 The Treasurer to bring TCD submission to the HEA and IUA paper re funding issues to a future Finance Committee meeting.

FN/06- 07/72 Finance Committee – Self Evaluation

The Committee had been circulated with a memorandum from the Treasurer dated 1 May 2007 along with a copy of the Terms of Reference of the Committee which had been considered at its meeting of 17 February 2007 (with the related minute) and a copy of a draft evaluation questionnaire for consideration. The Treasurer addressed the documentation that had been circulated and requested any proposed changes to the draft evaluation questionnaire be submitted by 16 May 2007 following which the evaluation process would proceed.

Action:

72.2 FC members to submit changes to a draft evaluation questionnaire to the Treasurer by 16 May 2007.

FN/06- 07/73 Residential Charges 2007/2008

The Committee noted and approved a memorandum from the Accommodation Officer dated 19 April 2007 setting out details of Residential Charges for 2007/2008 which showed a 4% increase.

FN/06- 07/74 Miscellaneous Charges 2007/2008

The Committee noted and approved a memorandum from the Accommodation Officer dated 19 April 2007 setting out the charges in respect of College Guest Rooms, Accommodation Rates and Hire of Halls for 2007/08.

Section C

FN/06 - 07/75 Treasurer's Office - Information Day and Research Workshops

The Committee noted the memorandum from the Deputy Treasurer dated 2 May 2007 along with the attached programme of events for information. The Committee noted that there had been good attendance particularly from support staff. The Committee made some proposals which may be helpful in planning future similar outreach events.

The next meeting of the Finance Committee has been arranged for 30 May 2007 at **2.00 pm**, in the Board Room.

PROVOST.....

DATE.....

fmin 9 05 2007