Table of Contents

1. Foreword 1
2. The New Admissions Route 2-3
3. Trinity Feasibility Study Application Guide 3-6
4. Trinity Application Form (sample only) 7-9
Foreword

"The adoption of broader criteria for college admission – using a process called holistic admissions – will send a clear message to the young people of Ireland that the gates of Trinity and all universities are open wider than ever before to those who bring excellence in all its forms."

Dr William R. Fitzsimmons, Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid at Harvard, speaking at the launch of the feasibility study, 14 January 2013

This is the fourth year of the Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions. Trinity launched the feasibility study to assist in the development of national policy by seeing if there is a fairer and a better mechanism for admitting students to third-level. It is an attempt to ascertain whether, on a small scale and in a strictly controlled and transparent way, it might be possible to admit students using a range of assessments (including the Leaving Certificate). The results of the study will be published and shared throughout the sector. In September 2014, the first cohort of students entered three Trinity College courses, Law, History, and Ancient and Medieval History and Culture, via the feasibility study.

The ‘points system’ was designed by the higher education institutions and has been in operation for some forty years. It frequently attracts criticism as it tends to be a blunt instrument and offers a very narrow gateway through which to admit students to third-level. The greatest strength of the system is its transparency, but it places students, teachers and parents under a great deal of pressure, because everything depends on a single set of examinations. Leading international experts (and universities) suggest that a holistic approach is better, in other words, looking at an applicant in a broader context and moving away from capturing the performance of that applicant at a fixed point in time. Such an approach might also help to identify potential and ‘fit’ with a particular course. The reality is that potential does not always translate neatly into high points.

This feasibility study is Trinity’s attempt to assist in the development of national policy by seeing if there is a fairer and a better mechanism for admitting students to third-level. It is an attempt to see whether, on a small scale and in a strictly controlled way, it might be possible to admit students using a range of assessments (including the Leaving Certificate), with the results published and shared throughout the sector.

The feasibility study recognises the importance of having a Leaving Certificate examination that is fit-for-purpose and supports the reforms that are currently underway at second-level to ensure a more positive educational experience. It also values the great work and commitment of the teachers at primary and post-primary level throughout Ireland.

The new admissions route tested here seeks to complement the role of the Leaving Certificate and the teaching community, by working with the Central Applications Office (CAO) to examine whether some approaches which have succeeded internationally might work in Ireland.

The study is being conducted on behalf of the third-level sector and the results will be shared and published. We encourage parents, teachers, and especially students, to engage with this study and help inform national policy in the area.

Professor Patrick Geoghegan
Trinity Admissions Feasibility Study Sponsor, Trinity College Dublin
The New Admissions Route

'The best approach [in a fair admissions system] is not to use a single indicator or score. It is better to use a comprehensive set of predictors in the hope that the weaknesses of one might be compensated by the strengths of another'.

(Professor Steven Schwartz, author of the UK government’s report on ‘Fair Admissions to Higher Education’, 18 May 2012)

Key points

- There are a total of 25 places available through this new route: 10 in History (TR003), 10 in Law (TR004) and 5 in Ancient and Medieval History and Culture (TR028).
- Trinity is looking to reward potential alongside academic ability, a key factor which is not always recognised in the current system.
- All personal information will be removed from applications before they are considered by the Trinity Review Panel.
- Applicants can opt-out of the feasibility study if they wish.
- A key objective is to encourage students to apply for courses they might never have considered before because they thought the points were too high.
- There are no interviews.
- Applicants are advised not to seek assistance with completing the Trinity Application Form from Guidance Counsellors, parents or other family members to give a clearer sense of each individual. Please note that Trinity College has advised Guidance Counsellors not to draft or edit applications.

The majority of places on the three courses involved will be filled in the traditional way using Leaving Certificate points alone. Applicants to the three courses involved in the study will have the option of using the new admissions route, or opting out of the study, in which case they will be considered for the remaining places in the normal way on the basis of CAO points.

The three modalities which will be used to assess applicants in the study are as follows:

(a) Leaving Certificate results.
(b) Relative Performance Rank (RPR) – the performance of the applicant relative to other applicants from their school. This scale looks at the performance of the applicant in the Leaving Certificate compared to every other Leaving Certificate candidate in their school in that year.
(c) Personal and Contextual Data – provided via supplementary materials submitted by the applicant.

Names of applicants, any identifying information, and the names of schools attended, will be made completely anonymous before being evaluated by the review panels.

What Trinity is looking for

Trinity is looking for students with academic ability and potential from all over the country – students whose real, overall ability is not always captured in a single points total. The key advice to applicants is to be honest in their application, and write it themselves. Trinity is not evaluating grammar, vocabulary, or writing style. It is looking for an honest piece of self-reflection by the applicant, what they would like to study, and why. If an applicant gets a relative, teacher, or friend, to write the application for them it breaches the terms of the application. In addition, it would not be in the best interests of the applicant as it would not be what the review panels are looking for and so would prove counter-productive.

How the applications will be evaluated

All applications will be evaluated at a number of stages, including by a formal review panel which will include external and independent observers.

Applicants must submit the personal statement online. The personal statement will be evaluated by expert reviewers and used as a qualifier. Qualifying personal statements will be those which the expert reviewers score a 1, 2, 3 or 4 on a scale of 1 to 6. Applicants whose personal statements qualify according to the above will proceed to the next stage. It is not possible to inform applicants that they have or have not proceeded to the next stage until such times as all place offers have been made.

In the scoring process, the Leaving Certificate results and the Relative Performance Rank will be weighted equally to rank the candidates in order. The process will also be reviewed at each stage to ensure that it has been anonymous and free from any external influence.

Who can apply

The Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions is for Irish Leaving Certificate applicants under the age of 23 as of 1st January 2017.

Admissions requirements

To qualify for admission to a course through the TAFS study, applicants must meet the University's minimum entry requirements. The minimum entry requirements can be found in the University’s Undergraduate Prospectus 2017 at https://www.tcd.ie/study/assets/pdf/TCD-Prospectus-2017.pdf and at https://www.tcd.ie/study/eu/undergraduate/assets/world/02790-TCD-AdmissionsRegs-2017-Proof#01.pdf

Courses within the Study

The courses involved in the study are: History (TR003) – 10 places; Law (TR004) – 10 places; Ancient and Medieval History and Culture (TR028 – 5 places).

Applying to the Study

Applications to the Study comprise (a) a CAO application and (b) a completed Trinity feasibility Study Application Form. The Trinity Application Form can be changed at any time up to 17:15 on 1st March 2017. Applicants should avoid use of characters such as &, * or similar in the online application as they will not be visible for assessment. Neither should any reference be made to personal, identifying information in Sections 1, 2 or 3, such as school name or place of residence.
Trinity Feasibility Study timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From November 2016</th>
<th>Read the Trinity Feasibility Study Application Guide. Make a CAO application at <a href="http://www.cao.ie">www.cao.ie</a></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fill in the online Trinity Application Form at <a href="http://www.cao.ie">www.cao.ie</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st February 2017</td>
<td>Apply to CAO by 17:15, selecting one or more of the courses involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st March 2017</td>
<td>Complete all elements of the Trinity Application Form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April-June 2017</td>
<td>Trinity Feasibility Study Application Screening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2017</td>
<td>Leaving Certificate exam results. CAO offers. Successful Trinity Feasibility Study Applicants notified by CAO. Accept CAO offer.</td>
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Trinity Feasibility Study Application Guide

When you have read this application guide, you are ready to complete your online Trinity Feasibility Study application at www.cao.ie.

1. Set up your CAO account

Before proceeding with a Trinity Feasibility Study application, set up your CAO account and then log into the account to select your course choices. Click the ‘Add Level 8 Course Choice’ button on the My Application page.
2. Enter your course choices

Enter your course choices in order of preference 1-10.

Click ‘Continue with Course Choices’ button once your course choices are entered.
3. Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions Application Form

If you select any of the courses that are part of the Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions (History/TR003, Law/TR004 or Ancient and Medieval History and Culture/TR028) you will immediately be automatically brought to a page to decide if you wish to take part in the Study.

Before you continue, you must decide if you wish to complete the Trinity Feasibility Study.

Trinity Feasibility Study

What is The Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions?
The Trinity Feasibility Study aims to identify and admit students who are enthusiastic and passionate about learning, motivated and suitable for their chosen courses, and with the academic ability and potential to be inspired by everything that Trinity College Dublin has to offer. It uses a range of materials to make an assessment about the academic ability and potential of each applicant, aiming to match the right person to the right course. It is very important that you complete this application independently of your school Guidance Counsellor, parent or other family member so that the Trinity College Assessment Panel gets a clearer sense of you as an individual. Trinity College has advised Guidance Counsellors not to become directly involved in drafting or editing individual applications. All applications will be made completely anonymous before evaluation.

The majority of places on each course will be filled in the traditional way using CAO points alone. Twenty-five places are set aside for this study and these places will be filled using a combination of Leaving Certificate results, Relative Performance Rank (RPR), and information provided in the Trinity Application Form. The courses involved in the study are: History (TR003) – 10 places; Law (TR004) – 10 places; Ancient and Medieval History and Culture (TR028) – 5 places. Relative Performance Rank refers to your academic ranking within the Leaving Certificate cohort in your school when results are published. Further information on the study and guidelines for applicants are available at: https://www.tcd.ie/study/eu/undergraduate/apply/feasibility/

Who can apply?
The Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions is for Irish Leaving Certificate applicants under the age of 23 as of January 1, 2017.

Should I apply?
Applicants to the three courses in the Feasibility Study (TR003, TR004, TR028) in 2015 have the option of taking part in the study, and submitting the Trinity Application Form, in which case they will compete for all of the regular places on the course filled in the traditional way, as well as the places set aside for the study, or opting out of the study, in which case they will compete for all of the places allocated in the traditional way.

When applying for TR003, TR004 or TR028 applicants will be required to opt in or out of the Feasibility Study. Once the course is listed a Yes/No tab will appear and they must indicate ‘yes’ or ‘no’ before they can proceed. Once they have submitted their course choices applicants will log back into ‘My Application’ where they will be able to submit the information required for the Trinity Application Form.
When the terms and conditions link is clicked, a ‘pop up’ will appear:

You must answer “Do you wish to be considered for the Trinity Feasibility Study in Admissions?”

Once you click the ‘Update Selection’ button, you will be brought back into the ‘My Application’ page.
A section will appear under the Qualifications and Assessment Section on the My Application page.

If you answer 'Yes' to the Feasibility Study, you must scroll back down to the Feasibility section and click on the 'Complete Study' button that will bring you into the Feasibility Study Page. Up until the 1st March 2017, you will have the option to change your mind if you wish to opt in or out of the Feasibility Study by clicking the 'Edit Option' button in the Feasibility Study section.

If you answer 'No' to the Feasibility Study, you will be brought back to the My Application page. You will have until the 1st March 2017 to change your mind and complete the Feasibility Study and you can do so by clicking the Edit Option button.

The Application Form may 'time out', so please draft your content outside of the form and paste it in when it is completed, to avoid loss of content.
Q3. Choosing Your Course

Please provide some information about what you think makes you suitable for these courses.

Characters left: 300 (You may enter up to 300 characters.)

Q4. Study at Trinity

Please tell us in order the courses you would like to study at Trinity and what interests you about them.

Characters left: 300 (You may enter up to 300 characters.)

Section A - Applicant Information

Q5. About You

In the space provided, please submit a short, self-reflective essay on yourself, outlining your interests, ambitions, and experiences, and any other relevant information.

Characters left: 2000 (You may enter up to 2000 characters.)
You must click the declarations before you can submit.

If you have saved but not submitted your Trinity Feasibility Study Application, a message will appear at the top of the My Application page when you log into your application. Once the Feasibility Study Application has been submitted, there will be no more notes or prompts to complete or submit the study. The Feasibility Study section will remain visible on the My Application page until the 1st March 2017.