Coláiste na Trínóide, Baile Átha Cliath
Ollscoil Átha Cliath

Trinity College Dublin, University of Dublin Irish Language Policy

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the commitment of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin [hereafter referred to as "Trinity"] to the growth of the Irish language as a living language amongst its members and in wider Irish society. It details the ways in which Trinity supports the Irish language and will continue to do so. It also details the ways in which the Irish language contributes to Trinity.

The primary purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for future development of the Irish language within Trinity, so that the numbers of active Irish speakers in the university community can increase and those Irish speakers' needs can be met, using methods that are practical, effective and supportive of all staff involved in implementing the policy.

In producing this policy Trinity also recognises that it is in a position to have a positive impact regarding the Irish language as a whole, in its influential role as a major Irish educational and cultural institution.

The creation of this policy fulfils the following commitment in the Trinity Language Scheme 2013-2016, which was approved by Board and the Minister of State with Responsibility for Gaeltacht Affairs, in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003:

> "3.9 Irish Language Policy
> A formal Statement of College Irish Language Policy shall be submitted to Board for its approval. Target: end year one (17th November 2014)."

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or as necessary, as circumstances change.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and students of Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin.

The services described within this document are available for use by all staff and students of the university, unless expressly stated otherwise.

This policy is intended to benefit all in the Trinity community and also the wider local and national community outside Trinity.

Trinity staff will be supported in implementing this policy by the Irish Language Office, and it will be implemented in a collegial manner.

3. GOVERNANCE, PLANNING and LEGAL COMPLIANCE

Trinity is committed to considering Irish language matters at a high level within its structures of governance, and to planning for the development of the Irish language in a strategic way, in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Coiste na Gaeilge is a subcommittee of Board and its chair is an elected member of the Board. Coiste na Gaeilge normally conducts its business through the medium of Irish, though members or guests may of course address the committee in English if they so wish. Coiste na Gaeilge meeting minutes are provided to Board in both Irish and English.

The Irish Language Officer acts as secretary to Coiste na Gaeilge. The other members of Coiste na Gaeilge represent a wide range of areas throughout Trinity, including academic areas, administrative areas and student bodies, as follows:

- Secretary to the College
- Deans
- Council
- Registrar of Chambers
- Administrative and Support Services Area
- Library
- Department of Irish and Celtic Languages
- Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
- Faculty of Health Sciences
- Students' Union
- Graduate Students' Union
- An Cumann Gaelach

Trinity will continue to include specific goals regarding the Irish language in its Strategic Plan, as was done in its Strategic Plans 2009-2014 and 2014-2019. Coiste na Gaeilge will also seek to contribute to the university's other strategic goals, while maintaining the promotion of the Irish language as its primary aim.

Trinity is committed to fully implementing the Official Languages Act and Regulations. The university will continue to include ambitious, effective and achievable commitments in its Language Schemes under the Official Languages Act, and to implement said commitments within the specified timeframe, subject to financial and staffing resources and constraints.

The Irish Language Officer (reporting to Coiste na Gaeilge), the College Solicitor and the Secretary to the College monitor the implementation of language legislation and Language Scheme commitments within Trinity. Any member of the university community

or the public may contact the Irish Language Officer in relation to the implementation of the legislation and the schemes. The Irish Language Officer will deal with queries in a timely and helpful manner, seeking advice from the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga (the Language Commissioner) where appropriate.

The Irish Language Office works with the university community and co-ordinates supports for staff in implementing the national language legislation, including help with responding to Irish language correspondence, producing English-Irish translations, and recording bilingual voicemails on main contact numbers.

If a breach of the language legislation within Trinity comes to light, the Irish Language Officer will gather further information about the situation in the first instance, and will use this information to offer support and assistance to the local area in meeting the requirements of the relevant regulation(s). In such situations, local area staff and the Irish Language Officer will co-operate with each other, and with the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga where appropriate, to reach mutually satisfactory resolutions that ensure that the university is in full compliance with national language legislation.

All areas in Trinity will receive at least one direct communication per year from the Irish Language Office informing them of the provisions in the Irish language legislation that apply to their area. Information on the language legislation, including the full texts of the Trinity Language Schemes, is also available on the Irish Language Office website (www.tcd.ie/gaeloifig/en/acht-na-dteangacha-oifigiula) and directly from the Irish Language Officer upon request.

Heads of areas should ensure that their staff are informed of the relevant language requirements, and take appropriate measures to implement the language legislation in their area. The general policy is that local areas are responsible for any costs associated with implementing language legislation in their own areas, such as in the production of signage and stationery. It is fully recognised that local areas must prioritise their primary activities when budgeting.

Most language requirements incur no financial cost for local areas, who are encouraged to avail of the free English-Irish translation service for staff offered by the Irish Language Office. The Irish Language Officer is happy to advise on specific compliance queries, and resources such as individual staff training will be made available to local areas where appropriate. As an overall principle, the Irish Language Office works closely with local areas to achieve compliance in a co-operative and mutually beneficial way.

It is also acknowledged that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with language legislation in the university lies with the university itself.

4. SERVICES

Trinity will continue to improve the amount and standard of services that it offers through Irish, and to maximise the visibility of its Irish language services, while giving due support to staff in providing these services.

Trinity students and staff are made aware of their entitlements under the national language legislation by information provided on the Irish Language Office website, www.tcd.ie/gaeloifig. Irish language services offered by Trinity are publicised online and in hard copy publications.

Subject to available resources and continuing relevance, all Irish language services currently offered by Trinity will be maintained, and the range and quality of Irish language services offered will be expanded and improved.

Key Irish language services which Trinity aspires to maintain and improve include:

- Seomra na Gaeilge, the Irish language common room and events space
- An Scéim Chónaithe, the Irish language student residency scheme
- Free Irish language classes for all staff and students
- Customer Service in the Library, Enquiries Office and Provost's Office
- Other Library services including catalogue access and guided tours
- Communications such as certain publications, press releases and social media
- Free English-Irish translation for staff by the Irish Language Office

Trinity is committed to increasing awareness of its Irish language services by further publicising the available services and by encouraging students in particular to request services where they are offered.

Students, staff and members of the public may enquire as to the availability of customer service in Irish in any area throughout Trinity, and all parties to such a request are expected to act respectfully and in a spirit of mutual co-operation. University staff are under no obligation to provide customer service in Irish where such a service has not been advertised, and where such a service does not form a part of their personal work programme. However, all staff are welcome to do business in Irish at their own discretion. The Irish Language Office offers advice and practical tools, such as physical signs indicating competence in Irish, to individual staff members who would like to do business in Irish on a voluntary basis.

Where a service in Irish has been advertised, the policy is that it will be provided promptly and not at a lower standard than the equivalent service in English, allowing for unavoidable fluctuations in staffing levels and staff mobility.

While Trinity is committed under legislation and its Language Schemes to deliver specified bilingual customer services, this does not mean that staff who do not feel able to deliver direct services in Irish, whether in verbal or written form, will be obliged to do so. Staff delivering front-line bilingual services will be sourced on a voluntary basis.

Trinity staff who are involved in provision of services through Irish will be supported in this task by their local management and by the Irish Language Office. Staff will be facilitated wherever possible in attending the free in-house Irish language classes. They may also undertake further Irish language training where local management consider it to be appropriate. All those who undertake the in-house Irish language classes will be supported in working towards a TEG (European Certificate in Irish) qualification if they so wish.

The Irish Language Office and the Department of Irish and Celtic Languages are considered to be Irish-speaking departments. This means that proficiency in the Irish language is an essential requirement for employment in either, and they can be expected to use the Irish language as their preferred working language where possible, allowing for the fact that colleagues and the general public may choose to interact with those units in either Irish or English. There is no requirement for either office to maintain records in English. However, these offices will happily conduct business through English. The Irish Language Office is available to provide English translations of Irish-language working documents where appropriate.

The Department of Irish and Celtic Languages will continue to conduct its teaching and assessment on Modern Irish modules through the medium of Irish. Teaching and research in the Irish language will be supported where practicable. Submission by students of academic work in the Irish language is welcomed where the assessing department can facilitate it and where this has been agreed with the assessing department in advance. Research into Irish language matters from any subject background is welcomed in principle, and Trinity will investigate options for new Irish-language modules in departments other than the Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, subject to sufficient demand, resources and academic justification.

5.   THE LIVING LANGUAGE

Trinity will continue to increase the number and impact of its Irish-language events and publications, always striving to maintain a natural network of speakers throughout all areas of university life.

Trinity is committed to increasing the number and impact of Irish language social and cultural events that it holds, as well as to extending these events outside the main campus and throughout the student body.

Trinity appreciates the great contribution made by An Cumann Gaelach and the Students' Union in creating a natural Irish-speaking community among students. The Irish Language Office will continue to co-operate with these groups to run Irish language events, such as the annual week-long Éigse na Tríonóide festival.

Trinity aspires to continuously encourage and facilitate an increase in the numbers of its students speaking Irish socially on a daily basis, by running informal events such as conversation circles. Non-fluent learners of Irish will be expressly welcomed to suitable events, and every effort will be made to maintain a welcoming and inclusive approach to the Irish language.

Trinity hopes that very many of its graduates will continue to use the Irish language in their daily lives after they leave the university. Trinity will welcome alumni to many of its Irish language events, and some Irish language events will be arranged specifically for alumni.

Trinity is also committed to creating an Irish-speaking network among its staff, across all areas. Irish language events will be held for staff. Staff members' awareness of each other's willingness to speak Irish will be raised by "Tá Gaeilge Agam" ("I speak Irish") badge functionality on People Finder, by keeping a directory of Irish-speaking staff, and by physical signage in offices. All of these are offered on an entirely voluntary basis.

Trinity produces various Irish language publications and online communications, including student publications. The amount, quality and general awareness of the university's Irish language publications will be increased as resources permit. Rigorous standards will continue to be applied to any Irish language texts which Trinity produces, including signage, stationery and official documentation.

6. OUTREACH and CONTRIBUTION

Trinity engages with local Irish speakers and with the national Irish-speaking community in several ways. At the same time, the Irish language contributes to Trinity in many ways.

Trinity's Irish language events are made open to the public where possible. For example, the weekly Irish language conversation circle in the Buttery is an important element of the university's outreach to the wider Dublin community. It is the intention that awareness of public Irish language events will continuously be increased, through cost-effective avenues such as social media and targeted advertisement.

Visits to *gaeltacht* areas by Trinity staff and students are encouraged, as time spent immersed in an Irish-speaking environment can greatly improve a person's skills and confidence in using the language. At present, students of Modern Irish in the Department of Irish and Celtic Languages spend time in the *gaeltacht* as a compulsory part of their undergraduate degree, and trips to the *gaeltacht* are arranged on occasion by An Cumann Gaelach. Staff involved in Irish language service provision should be facilitated in studying in a *gaeltacht* area where appropriate and where resources and schedules permit.

Trinity maintains a list of spokespersons for Irish language media, and regularly places advertisements in national Irish language newspapers. Trinity also collaborates with national Irish language promotion organisations where relevant, and the Irish Language Office will continue to develop mutually beneficial partnerships with these organisations.

Trinity values the Irish language as a key element of its cultural diversity. Trinity is an increasingly multi-lingual institution, and its facilities will be maintained and developed with due consideration for speakers of languages other than English. For example, university computer systems should be able to work with special characters (such as "á"). All students and staff should be able to have their name spelled correctly, including special characters, on university databases, without experiencing undue inconvenience. Both SITS and the CoreHR system can facilitate the use of a "síneadh fada" or upwards accent mark on a personal name.

Trinity recognises that the Irish language is an asset for attracting prospective international students, and will promote it accordingly. The Irish Language Office and the Office of the Vice-President for Global Relations will continue to collaborate on ways to enhance the international student experience of Irish language and culture.

The Irish language has a contribution to make to Trinity in terms of awareness, student recruitment and income generation, which will be further explored in future. The Irish Language Office will support Irish language-related entrepeneurship and innovation, including by part-funding student projects or business ventures, where possible. Irish-speaking alumni will be re-engaged with Trinity life through events and communications.

Current Irish-speaking students of the university, who may or may not be taking Modern Irish as a degree subject, will be made aware of job and business opportunities relating to the Irish language, through co-operation between the Irish Language Office, the Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, and the Careers Advisory Service.

Legislation and Policy

Under the Irish Constitution (1937), "the Irish language as the national language is the first official language" of Ireland. Irish has also been an official and working language of the European Union (EU) since January 2007.

The Universities Act 1997 lists amongst the objectives of a university, "to promote the official languages of the State, with special regard to the preservation, promotion and use of the Irish language".

The Official Languages Act 2003 and Regulations (2008) aim "to increase and improve in an organised manner over a period of time the quantity and quality of services provided for the public through Irish by public bodies." Trinity has certain duties under the Official Languages Act, including the production of a Language Scheme approximately every 3 years, detailing the specific ways in which the university will improve its services and facilities for Irish speakers.

In the 2010 Consolidated Statutes of Trinity, it is a reserved function of the Board to consider, and where it so decides, to approve, each Language Scheme. In the Chapter on Wider Community in the Statutes, it states: "Nuair is cuí, déanfaidh an Coláiste a dhícheall an méid sin a dhéanamh as Gaeilge agus an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn." Translation: "Where appropriate, College will endeavour to do these things in Irish and to promote the Irish language".

The Twenty-Year Strategy for Irish 2010-2030 states that "[t]he objective of Government policy in relation to Irish is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language." The role of third-level institutions in this process is described in the strategy as follows:

> "The accessibility of Irish language classes and activities and the creation of an atmosphere on campus, which recognises that the language is an integral part of college social as well as academic life, is important to normalisation of its use. Third level institutions have an important role in influencing whole of life language choice and use among students and in supporting local language initiatives in the wider community […]" [p. 16]

Trinity's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 includes specific goals relating to the Irish language, in the areas of legal compliance, promotion, service provision and staff training. Trinity's commitment to the Irish language is stated as follows in the Strategic Plan 2014-19:

"We are committed to the Irish language as a central aspect of college life and as a valued element of college diversity. We will continue to support the use and promotion of the Irish language, and to improve Irish language services." [p. 73]

Society and Culture

The Irish language has a key role to play in the continuous development of Ireland's national identity. Knowledge of the Irish language allows untranslated access to certain elements of Irish culture, in the areas of literature, history, song and more, both for personal enjoyment and academic inquiry. The language itself is considered to have intrinsic value and beauty by many people, within Ireland and internationally.

The Irish language is a minority language which is "definitely endangered" according to UNESCO. The language is particularly endangered within the rural *gaeltacht* areas in which the language has survived continuously as the main community language. This represents a significant challenge for the Irish state.

At the same time, the Irish language is undergoing a revival in urban areas such as Dublin, particularly in the area of Irish-medium education. In the 2011 census, 41% of respondents identified themselves as being able to speak Irish. In Trinity, this figure can reasonably be supposed to be higher, as the majority of the university population have only recently stopped learning the language formally as part of their second-level education.

The Irish language is an important element of the personal identity of many members of the Trinity community. Some of the university's staff, students and alumni are native speakers of Irish. Many others choose Irish as their preferred first language. Others still do not speak Irish fluently, but support its promotion and development, and may be learning the language.

An increasing number of Trinity students have been educated at primary and/or secondary level through the medium of Irish. It is also envisaged in the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan that an increasing number of Trinity students will come from countries outside Ireland – these students may be interested in learning the Irish language and experiencing traditional Gaelic culture.

Transferable skills acquired by students in extra-curricular activities are increasingly recognized by employers. The official status that the Irish language enjoys in both Ireland and the EU means that there are many job opportunities for graduates with a high standard of competency in the Irish language.

Irish in Trinity

Since the Chair of Irish was founded in 1840, Trinity's Department of Irish and Celtic Languages has been teaching and researching the Irish language. Staff in the Department formerly ran the Irish language student residency scheme and other services.

An Cumann Gaelach was founded in 1907 by Trinity students to promote the Irish language, and today it is one of the largest student societies in the university, with over 1,000 members in 2014/15.

The Irish Language Office was founded in 2008 to co-ordinate the implementation of the Official Languages Act 2003 in Trinity, and to co-ordinate Irish language services and promotion in the university more generally.

Trinity has been linked to many eminent supporters of the Irish language, such as Douglas Hyde, founder of the Gaelic League and first President of Ireland, and Máirtín Ó Cadhain, renowned author who was Professor in the School of Irish.

A significant portion (around 40% in Autumn 2014) of those who sign up for Trinity's free Irish language classes are international students. The module in Irish Language and Literature offered by the Department of Irish and Celtic Languages has also proven very popular with international students.

Trinity is fully committed to the continuing development of the Irish language, as is evidenced by its many Irish language services, events and publications, and the creation of this policy. Respectful debate and dialogue on Irish language issues is most welcome within Trinity, in the spirit of free speech and intellectual inquiry.

APPENDIX 2 - STAKEHOLDERS

- Coiste na Gaeilge / The Irish Language Committee
  - A subcommittee of Trinity's Board whose primary role is to promote the Irish language in university life
- Oifig na Gaeilge / The Irish Language Office
  - Enacts the decisions of Coiste na Gaeilge, monitors compliance with relevant language legislation, and administrates certain Irish language services
- An Cumann Gaelach
  - The student society for the Irish language, who represent the largest single body of Irish speakers in Trinity

- The Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Union
  ◦ The representative bodies for all students in the university. The Students' Union has a dedicated Irish Language Officer. All students can avail of various Irish language services in Trinity, and may become involved in Irish language promotion during their studies in the university
- Roinn na Gaeilge agus na dTeangacha Ceilteacha / The Department of Irish and Celtic Languages
  ◦ The Department of Irish and Celtic Languages, who teach the Irish language, research Early and Modern Irish language and literature, and perform academic, social and administrative activities through Irish
- Staff in other academic and service departments
  ◦ Insofar as they locally implement the national language legislation, and as they may also perform some academic, social and/or administrative activities through Irish, on an agreed or voluntary basis

APPENDIX 3 – CONSULTATION PROCESS

Coiste na Gaeilge, which is made up of nominees from various areas in the university, was consulted on this policy in the first instance. The Students' Union, An Cumann Gaelach and The Department of Irish and Celtic Languages were then specifically invited to consult their members and provide submissions. Coiste na Gaeilge approved the draft policy at its meeting of 19th February 2015. The draft policy was then presented to the Executive Officers for their consideration and it was recommended that the draft policy should be put to the entire university community to ensure an appropriate level of consultation. Prior to this general consultation, specific areas mentioned within the policy were directly consulted to ensure accuracy and practicability in the policy's content.

APPENDIX 4 - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

In the event that you feel that this policy is not being implemented in full, you may bring your complaint to the Irish Language Officer, who will record your comments and co-operate with the relevant departments to endeavour to reach a satisfactory resolution for all concerned.