



Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings

XX = Board relevance

Trinity College Dublin  
The University of Dublin

**A meeting of the University Council was held on 15 March 2023 at 11.15am in the Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.**

<i>Present</i>	Provost, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Research, Vice-President for Global Engagement, Dean of Students, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Professor P. O'Grady, Professor A. Gibson, Professor D. Romelli, Professor G. Watson, Professor J. Coleman, Professor J. Wyse, Professor L. O'Driscoll, Professor K. Neenan, Ms D. Alexander, Mr M. McAndrew, Dr. O. Gobbo, Ms Z. Cummins, Mr S. Lysaght, Mr C. Reddy, Mr O. Cassidy.
<i>Apologies</i>	Dean of Graduate Studies, Registrar, Dean of Health Sciences, Librarian and College Archivist, Professor B. Daly, Senior Tutor, Professor B. Fitzgerald, Professor L. Carson, Professor AM. Malone, Chief Operating Officer, Ms. E. Sweeney, Mr. E. Gilroy, Mr. O. Horgan.
<i>In attendance</i>	Secretary to the College, Academic Secretary, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs.
<i>Observers</i>	-

**SECTION A.1: Policy Matters**

The Provost welcomed everyone to Council and requested that Council members declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the agenda. The Secretary to the College noted that there were no conflicts of interests reported.

The Provost advised that item C. 15 'Member of the University Council' be considered first, as it relates to the membership of University Council.

**CL/22-23/134 Membership of University Council**

The Provost welcomed the new Dean of Research, Professor Sinéad Ryan, to Council, and requested that Council approve the nomination of elected postgraduate student representatives to Council this academic year in lieu of Graduate Students' Union (GSU) representatives.

**Decisions:**

**CL/22-23/134.1:** Council noted that Professor A. Gibson, Assistant Professor, School of Education has been elected as the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Junior Constituency Representative for University Council until the end of the academic year 2023-24.

**CL/22-23/134.2:** Council noted and approved the nomination of Mr Conor Reddy (Faculty of Health Sciences) and Mr Oran Cassidy (Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to Council to represent postgraduate students for the remainder of 2022-23.

Professor A. Gibson, Mr C. Reddy, and Mr O. Cassidy joined the meeting.

**CL/22-23/135 Declaration by new Members and Observers**

The new members of Council made the required statutory declaration.

**CL/22-23/136 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Council on 8 February 2023 were approved and signed.

**CL/22-23/137 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

The Secretary to the College referred to minutes CL/22-23/107 and CL/22-23/110.2 relating to Trinity governance changes and committee structures advising that an update will be provided under item A.6 'Committee Structures Update'.

**CL/22-23/138 Academic Year Structure 2023-24**

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Speaking to the item, the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed Council that the Irish Universities' Association (IUA) has been advised by the Department of Education that the Leaving Certificate results will be delayed again this year and that it may take up to three years for the results to be issued as previously.

She reported that the outcome of consultation with Heads of Schools, the Planning Group, the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and representatives from the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) was a preference for a staggered start to the 2023/24 academic year. A staggered start will result in condensed teaching for Junior Fresh (JF) in Semester 1, with JF student teaching commencing on 25 September 2023, and continuing undergraduate and postgraduate student teaching commencing on 11 September 2023.

On assessment, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer advised that Schools are being asked to consider relaxing the requirement for formal Semester 1 examinations for JF where practicable, and for course coordinators to place more reliance on formative assessment where possible. Approval of a staggered start will result in formal scheduled Semester 1 examinations taking place prior to Christmas in the scheduled Semester 1 assessment week, apart from courses where alternative schedules of assessment have already been agreed.

Concluding her report, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer extended her thanks to all involved and advised that it is proposed to establish a small working group to plan a mitigation strategy for anticipated delays in the next two to three years.

The Provost thanked the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer conveying her disappointment that the outcome of discussions between the Irish Universities' Association (IUA) and the Department of Education were not more positive in terms of the timing of the issuing of Leaving Certificate results.

Responding to a comment from the Dean of Students on the significant impact of the staggered start on the student experience, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that the disruption caused to students had been communicated to the Department of Education and the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS). The Provost noted the need to consider how best to organise student orientation to address challenges presented by the staggered start.

The TCDSU Education Officer highlighted that engagement of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) with the Department of Education and DFHERIS on the timing of the issuing of the Leaving Certificate results had a similar outcome. Acknowledging the challenges presented by the staggered start to the academic year, she noted that this was the preferred option of the three options presented for consideration, as holding examinations post-Christmas, or forfeiting Reading week in Semester 1 neither of which would not work well for students.

**Decisions:**

**CL/22-23/138.1:** Council approved a staggered start date for the academic year 2023/24 with (i) Junior Fresh student teaching commencing 25 September 2023, (ii) condensed teaching for Junior Fresh in Semester 1, and (iii) continuing undergraduate and postgraduate student teaching commencing on 11 September 2023.

**CL/22-23/138.2:** Council approved the establishment of a small working group including staff and student representatives to plan for anticipated delays in the next 2-3 years, with the inclusion of the Transition to Trinity Officer on the group.

Ms. Fedelma McNamara, Executive Director, Academic Services Division joined the meeting.

**CL/22-23/139 Admissions Strategy Update: 'What should our student body look like and how do we make it happen?'**

Reporting on the initial consultation undertaken on the Admissions Strategy over a five-week period from 19 January to 22 February 2023, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer provided a summary of the engagement to-date. Academic, research, and professional staff were invited to participate in six in-person and one online townhall meetings focusing on Trinity's vision for where it wants to be in terms of student composition. Parallel to this, the same questions were posed at the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC), the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), with the Heads of Schools, Fellows, Directors of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate (DUTLs) and with the Directors of Teaching and Learning, Postgraduate (DTLPs). The Students' Union President and Education Officer have agreed that conversations with students will be organised by Faculty and they will revert with suitable dates for the conversation.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commended the high-level of engagement and participation of professional staff in townhall meetings and identified the need for further engagement with the academic community to ensure their voice is heard and their input incorporated.

Speaking to the initial analysis of feedback from the consultation, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer summarised the themes that had emerged to-date, namely, (i) a sense that the university had reached capacity regarding student numbers and that the current ratio split of 70 (undergraduate):30 (postgraduate) was not aligned to the ratio in other research-intensive universities; (ii) the need for Trinity to distinguish itself nationally and internationally without compromising on the quality of research and teaching; (iii) a desire for flexible pathways and programmes and modes of delivery to reflect the different cohorts of contemporary learners that Trinity wishes to attract; (iv) consideration of access and diversity of the student body to reflect society; and (v) for decision-making to be cognisant of logistical factors such as IT systems and infrastructure, and government policy, funding, and geopolitical contexts. However, the initial discussions have deliberately focussed on the community's aspirations unhindered by logistics to get a sense of the collective vision.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commented on the appetite amongst some participants for flexible pathways that are responsive to the needs of life-long learners and for the optimization of space across the university outside of teaching terms and during evenings and weekends.

The Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) outlined the proposed next steps, which included further consultation with the academic community through two distinct

surveys; one to the wide community (which will collect general vision) and the other to Heads of School (which will allow for more nuanced responses). There will be separate meetings at each of the Faculty Executives. Once the data are collected, the next step will involve modelling of the consequences of any potential changes in the student composition, and an analysis of different models of learning across other research-intensive universities. She explained that a fledgling vision for the composition of the student body will be presented to Council for consideration and approval by the end of this academic year. On approval of the vision, a draft strategy will be developed with consultation taking place during the Michaelmas term 2023/24, with the intention to present the Admissions Strategy to Council for consideration and approval by the end of Michaelmas term 2023/24.

The Provost invited questions and comments.

A member welcomed the notion of increasing postgraduate student numbers but highlighted the lack of available and affordable accommodation coupled with existing stipend rates as barriers to achieving greater research student numbers. The Provost emphasised the need to initially focus on achieving a consensus on what the student body should look like and to then address the logistical challenges. Responding to concerns about general funding and capacity, the Provost advised that the overall funding from government covers less than 40% of costs and while there had been an increase in student income in recent years there had also been an increase in costs. These patterns are likely to continue to rise due to inflation, the energy crisis, and the current geopolitical situation. She stressed the necessity for Trinity to plan and to be intentional about the choices it wants to make about the future composition of the student body, and to pursue the type of funding opportunities that support these choices. The Provost acknowledged the need for the government to also plan, especially in the area of postgraduate requirements, for future skill needs. Recognising the challenge presented by the absence of a national strategy on postgraduate education, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer emphasised the importance of Trinity establishing and communicating the direction it wishes to take so that it might inform the national discussion.

Speaking to the growth in Trinity student numbers, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that to-date this has been largely predicated on financial models rewarding growth rather than on intentionality and that it is timely to reconsider this approach. She acknowledged the different external demands on Schools, especially professional Schools, and emphasised the imperative to accommodate diverse needs in the development of our Admissions Strategy.

The SU Education Officer stressed the need to factor funding of the Student Services into developments to ensure that these Services can adequately support the student population, whatever the composition.

A discussion on student recruitment and marketing took place and the need for Trinity to establish a more coherent approach to promoting its offerings to attract postgraduate taught and research students. There was also a recognition for the need to improve marketing of postgraduate offerings to the existing undergraduate student population to encourage greater progression within Trinity. The Vice-President for Global Engagement speaking to her consultation with Schools on the next Global Engagement Strategy, acknowledged the lack of a structured mechanism to attract postgraduate research students and the need to devote time for consideration of this.

Concluding the discussion, the Provost commented on the need to reconcile the autonomy of Schools with increased student numbers and the capacity of the university to accommodate additional students, noting that a collective decision on establishing capacity is required.

**Decision:**

**CL/22-23/139.1:** Council approved the report on initial consultation and the proposed approach for strategy development.

The Executive Director, Academic Services Division and the Vice-President for Global Engagement left the meeting.

Mr Michael Slevin, HCI Project Director, and Ms Arlene Folan, HCI Project Manager joined the meeting.

#### **CL/22-23/140 Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Update**

The HCI Project Director provided an update to Council on the Human Capital Initiative (HCI). The Initiative, launched by Government in late 2019 invested €300 million over five years to increase the capacity of higher education to meet the skills needs of the future. Trinity's vision of HCI has been to transform its teaching provision through innovation and to pivot towards flexible learning options providing graduates with the skills to adapt to a changing employment landscape.

Reporting on HCI Pillar 1 which relates to graduate conversion programmes, the HCI Project Director informed Council that three postgraduate programmes were funded following the first call in early 2020, and a further three proposals have been submitted in response to the 2023 call. A decision on Trinity's application is expected from the Higher Education Authority (HEA) in the second quarter of 2023. Speaking to Pillar 2, which funded additional places on full-time undergraduate programmes, he explained that this initiative saw an additional 47 places created across four undergraduate degree programmes with a total of €470,000 received from 2019-2023.

The HCI Project Manager reporting on HCI Pillar 3, which focused on innovation in delivery and agility, saw €21 million awarded to Trinity across 24 individual work packages. The initiative supported the creation and delivery of 29 micro-credentials, 13 new postgraduate courses, three new undergraduate streams/pathways, and a suite of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and Masterclasses. She highlighted the establishment of a new work package in response to interactions with the HEA in January 2023 to develop an Enterprise Eco-system to develop sustainability within the HCI construct by creating a centralised Enterprise Engagement Organisational Model. The impacts of Pillar 3 to-date have been to develop a suite of sustainable industry-focused programmes and micro-credentials and to deliver modular based learning. Speaking to the challenges presented by Pillar 3 to Trinity, the HCI Project Manager cited the delayed HEA announcement on funding by six months, legacy systems issues, and a lack of flexibility in traditional programme structures. The next six months will see the establishment of the Enterprise Eco-system, the delivery of an intensive marketing campaign to recruit students, and the gathering of feedback from students participating in HCI programmes.

The Provost referring to page 3 of the report, namely student numbers not matching targets set by the project in 2020, emphasised the importance of a coherent vision underpinning decision-making when availing of funding opportunities and the importance of ensuring demand for programmes before they are approved. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer explained that many factors may have influenced the submission, including but not limited to the tight turnaround required in making the application to the HEA; the delayed announcement of funding by six months with no change to the delivery timeline; a reduction in funding from €24 million to €21 million; and a limited time to market course offerings which had presented impediments to the achievement of the overall HCI Pillar 3 commitments. It was acknowledged that more work needs to be done on developing robust market campaigns and that Trinity had not effectively engaged with traditional media to attract greater student numbers.

Acknowledging the challenges, the Dean of STEM emphasised Trinity's successes, which included all HCI programmes going through the rigor of Trinity's approval process. It was also noted that several programmes are performing well and recruiting large student numbers, and the development of micro-credentials has provided the opportunity to embrace this new type of taught offering. A member noted that Trinity is just beginning to build a reputation in this space, working with enterprise and government agencies in the delivery of programmes and

further commenting that the HCI timeline is too short to assess real progress. The Academic Secretary highlighted that HCI Pillar 3 was set up as an experiment and the need for Trinity to build on this experience, especially in relation to designing new micro-credentials, engaging with industry, testing different pedagogical approaches, and establishing the logistical changes that are needed to support the delivery of flexible education offerings. She commended the approval of a policy on micro-credential award pathways, and the establishment of an Enterprise Eco-System as important developments arising from Pillar 3.

The HCI Project Director and HCI Project Manager left the meeting.

#### **CL/22-23/141 Committee Structures Update**

The Secretary to the College advised that a document on College governance will be brought to the next Council meeting for discussion. Changes to Board composition and the principal committees of Board were proposed in response to the recommendations of the Board Review Working Group, the Higher Education Authority Act, 2022, and the new Supplemental Charter. He reported that changes to the Statutes were approved by Board on 14 February 2023, and now require the assent of Fellows and approval of the Visitors.

Speaking to the reform of the Principal Committees of Board, the Secretary to the College highlighted the establishment of four principal committees, namely (i) People and Culture Committee, (ii) Critical Infrastructure Committee, (iii) Risk and Compliance Committee, (iv) Environment and Sustainability Committee, and four sub-committees – Coiste na Gaeilge, Safety sub-committee, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sub-committee, and the Remuneration sub-committee. Next steps are for the membership and terms of references of the committees to be brought to Board for consideration, with the aim for the new structure to be in place by September 2023.

The Provost extended her appreciation and thanks to the Secretary to the College and the Registrar for their significant work on the governance structures and the changes to the Statutes.

#### **CL/22-23/142 Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer's Report**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer advised Council that discussions are being held with the IUA and DFHERIS on a number of issues including, (i) access to free fees and students' supports for Ukrainian students for the coming academic year, (ii) the inclusion of Travellers and Roma in the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) for the 2023/24 admissions cycle, (iii) the future funding of Higher Education as recent pay awards have offset the increase granted under Government's Funding the Future Project, (iv) the IUA MicroCreds national project is working on recognition of micro-credentials across Europe through inclusion in EUROPASS. She advised that the Higher Education Authority (HEA) has requested that institutions create additional student places in several Health Sciences courses. However, there are concerns relating to the capacity of programmes to take on additional students and the Health Services' Executive (HSE) to accommodate such students on clinical placements.

Responding to a query from a member on IUA lobbying on research funding and infrastructure, the Provost advised that the IUA is coordinating a structured approach to this, and that Presidents are tasked with delivering a consistent message on this matter to the HEA, DFHERIS, and government ministers.

#### **CL/22-23/143 Provost's Report**

Speaking to Trinity's decision to increase PhD stipends for its three internal funded postgraduate research schemes to €25,000 with effect from September 2023, the Provost

acknowledged that while not all students will benefit from the change it is a step in the right direction. Referring to fee differentials, she advised that Board approved that Incoming PHD students funded by the HRB and SFI from September 2023 will now be charged the fee covered by these bodies on a pilot basis. These two changes are important steps in changing current practices and the next step is to develop a College-wide policy on postgraduate research fees. She expressed her thanks to the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Programme Director - Postgraduate Renewal, and Schools for their work on this. She noted that a national review of funding supports for PhD researchers is being undertaken by DFHERIS and Trinity is engaging in the process.

Students broadly welcomed the increase in PhD stipends noting that this also presented an equity issue among peers. The elected postgraduate student representatives noted they are engaging with the DFHERIS review and enquired about Trinity's position with respect to the status of PhD students, whether they were students, employees, or some hybrid between the two. Responding, the Provost advised that deeper discussion on this is required at College-level taking into consideration the implications of a change in status relating to taxation, and changes in conditions on visa access, and maternity leave. She noted there isn't a College position on this, but there are many issues to be considered as there are different requirements if one is categorised as a student or an employee. In terms of Trinity's submission to the DFHERIS review group, she advised that it will not be recommending workers' rights for PhD students but will be advocating fair conditions to enable students to complete their PhD.

The Provost responding to a question on increased departmental funding, commented that a College-wide policy on this is required and that student numbers should reflect the funding available within Schools to support students.

**Action:**

**CL/22-23/143.1:** PhD stipends and funding to be brought to Council for discussion at a later meeting.

**CL/22-23/144 Any Other Urgent Business**

The Secretary to the College informed Council that he will be retiring at the end of October 2023. The position of Secretary to the College has been advertised and it is expected that a successor will be in place prior to his retirement providing the opportunity for a transition programme to be implemented. The Provost acknowledged the contribution of the Secretary to the College to Trinity and expressed her appreciation of the support he provided to her when she took on her role as Provost.

**SECTION A.2: Policy Matters which have already been considered by Committees**

**CL/22-23/145 Trinity College Dublin Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Guidelines**

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**Decision:**

**CL/22-23/145.1:** Council approved the Trinity College Dublin Reasonable Accommodation Policy and Guidelines.

**CL/22-23/146 Postgraduate Course Proposal for a Framework-Based Masters Course in Statistics and Data Science (Online)**

**CL/22-23/146.1:** Council approved the proposal for the new three-year part-time framework-based Masters course in Statistics and Data Science Online (NFQ level 9, 90 ECTS) from the School of Computer Science and Statistics consisting of (i) the retention of the existing Postgraduate Certificate Online with a change of title from 2023/24 from 'Statistics' to 'Statistics and Data Science Online' (30 ECTS), (ii) a new Postgraduate Diploma Top-up in Statistics and Data Science Online from 2024/25 (30 ECTS), (iii) a new Masters (MSc) Top-up in Statistics and Data Science Online (30 ECTS) from 2025/26.

## SECTION B

### **CL/22-23/147 Academic Appeals Committee**

The minutes of 30 November 2022 were noted and approved

### **CL/22-23/148 Graduate Studies Committee**

The draft minutes of 23 February 2023 were noted and approved

### **CL/22-23/149 Undergraduate Studies Committee**

#### **Decision:**

**CL/22-23/149.1:** Council noted and approved the draft minutes of 21 February 2023 and appendix: Proposal for Trinity Electives.

## SECTION C

### **CL/22-23/150 Membership of the University Council**

This item was taken earlier in the meeting. See CL/22-23/134.

### **CL/22-23/151 Higher Degrees – Reports of Examiners**

The Council noted and approved the reports of examiners on candidates for higher degrees (Higher Degrees List) dated 15 March 2023.

#### **(i) Professional Higher Degrees by Research Alone**

**M.D.** Padraic McDonagh; Chithra Varghese.

#### **(ii) Higher Degrees by Research Alone**

**Ph.D.** Omar Alelweet; Elisabeth Wilhelmina Bijkerk; Brian Considine; Philip Darragh; Kristine Locmele; Claudia Mary Efstathiou; Alan Eustace; Coralie Guy; Katie Hill; Carl Friedrich Kreuser; Stacey Li Hi Shing; Connor Peter Mahaney McCabe; Rachel Sarah McCole; Caroline McKeon; Eavan Ciara McLoughlin; Elliott Mills; Shardul Shashikant Mukim; Carlos Rafael Oliveras; Ke Ren; Daniel Joseph Ringis; Niti Saini; Kapil Sharma; Stefanie Lola Sprong; Sarah Swoboda; Cian White; Xianwu Zhang.



**M.Sc.** Lenart Celar; Samuel Geraghty.

**CL/22-23/152 School Director**

The Council noted and approved the nomination of Professor Margaret Walshe as Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate), in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communications Sciences from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.

**CL/22-23/153 Head of Discipline**

The Council noted and approved the nomination of Dr Fiona Wilson as the Head of Discipline of Physiotherapy, School of Medicine, for the period from 1 November 2022 to 7 April 2023.

**CL/22-23/154 Postgraduate Student representation on Committees of Council**

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Registrar dated 8 March 2023.

**CL/22-23/155 Change to Micro-credential (MC) enrolment end dates**

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Director of Careers and Micro-credentials Programme Lead dated 7 March 2023.

**SECTION D**

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

Signed .....

Date .....