



Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of 29 April 2021

Present: Provost (Chair), Vice-Provost/CAO, Bursar, Interim COO, Registrar, Dean of Health Sciences, Ms. N. Holland, Mr. L. Kavanagh, Professor S. Alyn Stacey, President of the Students Union, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) – Secretary to the Committee

In Attendance: GSU President (from Minute 81), Deputy CFO, CFO's Strategic & Admin Support (Minute-taker)

Apologies: Ms. C. Bryce

Statement of Interest: None declared

The Provost welcomed the new interim Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Orla Cunningham, to her first meeting of the Finance Committee.

The Committee noted and approved the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of 04.03.2021.

Section A

**FN/20-21/78
XX** **Conference Travel Scheme 2020/21 – Amendment**

A proposed amendment to the Conference Travel Grant Scheme, which had been outlined in memorandum from the CFO dated 30.03.2021, was approved by the Finance Committee via email and recommended to Board for approval.

In light of the ongoing constraints on travel arising from the pandemic, the Committee agreed to the proposed amendment that will allow academic staff who may still require defined equipment (set out in an accompanying Appendix), to purchase the required items using their FY20/21 Conference Travel Grant allowance as well as unspent allowances from previous years. Purchases may include the previously approved laptops along with specified computer ancillaries, desks and chairs.

The Committee also agreed that where academic staff have already purchased such essential equipment themselves, they may be reimbursed for the expense incurred from their Travel Grant funding, in the normal manner (via iExpenses) and on presentation of receipts. The Travel Grant may also be used



to partially fund a more expensive piece of equipment, for which receipts must also be provided in order to claim the expense.

In approving the proposed amendment, the Committee noted the extent of the University's financial commitment to the Conference Travel Scheme, further noting that while travel may be curtailed, virtual attendance at conferences and seminars attendance had replaced it in some cases, with an associated cost incurred.

Action:

- 78.1** An amendment to the Conference Travel Scheme for FY21 to support the purchase of defined equipment to support remote working was approved. Unspent allowances from previous years may also be utilised.
- 78.2** The Committee further agreed that where academic staff have already purchased such essential equipment themselves, they may be reimbursed for the expense incurred from their Travel Grant funding, in the normal manner (via iExpenses) and on presentation of receipts.
- 78.3** The Travel Grant may also be used to partially fund a more expensive piece of equipment, for which receipts must also be provided in order to claim the expense.

Section B

FN/20-21/79 Old Library Redevelopment Project (OLRP) Stage 2C Update
(Minute FN/20-21/26 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The Bursar advised the Committee that additional analysis was being undertaken to support the business case for the next stage of the Old Library Redevelopment Project, which would now come forward for consideration at the next Finance Committee meeting on 17.05 2021.



FN/20-21/80 The Lir - Draft Loan Agreement

(Minute FN/20-21/27 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The Committee considered the circulated memorandum from the CFO, and the accompanying appendices, dated 22.04.2021, which outlined details of a draft loan agreement between The Lir and the University across the following headings:

- Request for financial support from Trinity
- Summary of Trinity's support for The Lir
- Draft Loan Agreement
- Request

By way of presentation, the Deputy CFO summarised the background to the proposed financial support from the University, originally sought by The Lir in June 2020 as a result of the financial impacts of Covid-19 on its earned income streams.

Following engagement with The Lir, Trinity had agreed to provide a number of financial support measures including accelerated fee drawdowns (based on The Lir's student numbers and fee income projections) to assist with operational cashflow issues, in addition to a Working Capital Loan, subject to approval by the Finance Committee. In considering the terms of the loan, including the value, term, repayment plan and interest chargeable, the Committee noted that the Board of The Lir had approved the Draft Loan Agreement on 04.03.2021.

In supporting the proposed loan to The Lir, the Vice-Provost noted the consultation undertaken and the longer-term strategic benefits to the University in providing the support sought and also welcomed The Lir's strong track record in terms of meeting its financial obligations. Noting that interest-only repayments will be made in Years 1 and 2 of the loan, along with the scheduled drawdown in May 2021, the Committee approved the draft loan agreement as circulated.

Action:

- 80.1** The Committee approved the draft loan agreement, with loan drawdown scheduled for May 2021.



**FN/20-21/81
XX**

E3RI, Trinity East and Grand Canal Innovation District

(Minute FN/20-21/64 of 04.03.2021 refers)

The Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer, Trinity East Project Director and Project Finance Director attended for this item.

The Committee noted the circulated document from the Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer, CFO, Trinity East Project Director and Project Finance Director, dated 29.04.2021, which set out an update on the E3RI, Trinity East & Grand Canal Innovation District Pre-Development Projects under the following headings:

- Unique Opportunity for Trinity
- Delivery Pathway
- Trinity-Led E3RI Capital Funding Model – Simplified Summary
- Trinity East & E3RI
- Development Directions – Financial Summary
- Work Programme & Budget (May -Oct)

The Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer advised the Committee that Board had approved the Trinity-led pathway at its meeting of 24.03.2021, providing the University with both control of and flexibility around the site's future development. Board had subsequently approved the preliminary business case for the Trinity-led option on 21.04.2021, starting with delivery of the E3RI building in Phase 1. In his presentation, the Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer summarised the funding model for the Trinity-led E3RI project, noting the various sources of funding.

The Committee considered the options for the E3RI building size, including the research space delivered under each option, noting that the indicative capital costs (which do not include pre-development fees) have been updated to reflect current market conditions. The new workplan will however include a full cost review as one of its key activities, based on the directional recommendations made by the Board and will consider current market trends, the impacts of Covid and Brexit, scalability, fit-out costs and the cost impact of development phasing.

In reviewing the update of the E3RI operating model, including the key income streams, the Committee noted the viability of the building at each of the sizes



under consideration. Having considered the financial summary and options appraisal as outlined, the Committee noted the benefits and constraints of each option, along with the detail provided on the associated capital and funding requirements.

The Committee reviewed the pre-development costs, noting the split between committed and remaining costs, which comprise Academic and Commercial Vacant Possession costs along with programme costs and the variations in these costs by option. In reviewing the progress update on the site value, the Committee noted that a separate business case will be brought to Board on the acquisition of the site freehold.

The Committee noted the budget plan for the 6 months to October 2021, when the next stage gate is scheduled, noting that the costs of the freehold acquisition and commercial vacant possession are separate from these costs and subject to their own business cases and approvals, even if they fall within the 6-month period.

The Committee commended the continued progress made since the last report and welcomed Board's decision on the Trinity-led model, noting the strategic advantage this would give the University in the long term. In this context, the Committee agreed that, if possible, it would be preferable for the University to retain full control of the site in order to maximise this advantage. Thanking the Chief Innovation & Enterprise Officer for his comprehensive presentation, the Committee noted that an update on the Project will come forward for consideration at June's Finance Committee meeting.

Action:

81.1 An update on the Project to come forward for consideration at June's Finance Committee meeting.



FN/20-21/82 Printing House Square Update

(Minute FN/20-21/24 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The PHS Sponsor attended for this item.

The Committee noted the memorandum from the Project Sponsor dated 29.04.2021, which provided an update on the project across the following headings:

- Overview
- Programme and Progress
- Update on Financial Plan
- Commercial settlement

By way of presentation, the Project Sponsor summarised the key points under the following headings:

- Programme update
- Financial update
- Commercial settlement
- Conciliation process
- High level summary

In considering the update provided, the Committee noted the delays to the programme and the revised Project completion date, extended due to contractor delays along with the impact of Covid-related construction site closures from 8 January – 12 April 2021. The Committee further noted the challenges outlined in terms of ramping up work on-site, and the consequential impact on the completion date and unavailability of the accommodation in Semester 1.

The Project Sponsor also provided an update on the Project budget, highlighting the costs in the budget tracker along with excluded costs, and the challenges to the Project budget overall due to the ongoing delays. The Committee noted the current position on the ongoing conciliation process, along with the potential outcomes for the Project and its budget, noting that any proposed settlement process would follow appropriate governance steps in the University



Thanking the Project Sponsor for his report and congratulating him on the high quality, landmark building added to the main campus, the Committee requested an updated report to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Action:

82.1 An updated report to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

FN/20-21/83 Trinity Development and Alumni (TDA) Update

(Minute FN/20-21/32 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The TDA Director of Advancement and TDA Director of Operations attended for this item.

The Committee reviewed the circulated memorandum from the TDA Director of Advancement dated 19.04.2021, which provided an update on TDA's performance versus the approved Business Plan, across the following headings:

- 2020/21 YTD Funds Raised and Income
- Review of Outstanding Pledges
- Ageing of Pledges
- Forecasted Cashflow
- Operating Costs: YTD 2020/21
- Update on 2020/21 Activities

By way of presentation, TDA's Director of Advancement and Director of Operations briefed the Committee on the funds raised and income received to Q2 2020/21 versus the annual target, noting the very positive result versus prior year. The significant value of the funds transferred to the University over the 4.5 years of TDA's approved Business Plan was also outlined.

An update on outstanding pledges, including details of balances due to TDA and those that will be paid directly to the University (and their age profile) was also provided and the Committee noted the associated forecasted cashflow. In considering the update on ageing of pledges, the Committee noted that 3 specific pledges account for a large proportion of the outstanding pledges,



along with the additional detail provided in relation to the terms and conditions associated with these pledges and the payment plans in place. Noting the recoverability status of the remaining pledges over 5 years old, the Committee further welcomed details of the monthly monitoring process and the full review of outstanding balances undertaken twice annually.

In considering the update on operating costs, the Committee noted the favourable variance to budget, arising primarily from recruitment delays and travel restrictions in the year to date, with non-pay spend expected to increase in Q3 and Q4.

In considering the update on 2020/21 activities, the Committee welcomed the successful outcome of the Volunteer Hours programme and the Spring Phone Campaign, noting that these initiatives, along with the new Alumni Engagement Strategy, launched in November 2020, are important building blocks in developing a longer term culture of philanthropy in the University, similar to that in US and other international Universities.

The Committee congratulated TDA on its strong performance over the past 18 months, noting that it is expected the Campaign fundraising goal will be achieved in the current year as planned. The Director of Advancement advised the Committee that the Campaign has been very effective at highlighting funding required for capital projects and has also helped to significantly increase the level of steady-state philanthropy income for the University. The Committee thanked the TDA Director of Advancement and Director of Operations for their report and requested that an update on activity be provided in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Action:

- 83.1** An update on TDA activity to be provided in Michaelmas Term 2021.



FN/20-21/84 STEM PhD College Fees

The Dean of STEM attended for this item.

The Committee welcomed the circulated memorandum from the Dean of STEM dated 22.04.2021, which set out a proposal to reduce the fee for an EU PGR student registering for a PhD course in STEM, thus aligning the fee with that of an EU PhD student in FAHSS, across the following headings:

- History
- Student data
- Proposal for Finance Committee to consider
 - o Relevant fee data
 - o Recognition and validation of the consequences
 - o Implementation
- Conclusion

In her presentation, the Dean of STEM summarised the fee equalisation proposal under the following headings:

- Previous discussion
- Rationale
- Consequences of inaction
- Financial considerations
- Risk/benefit analysis
- Post EOG review of FSD considerations

Noting the previous discussion of the issue of PhD fee equalisation, which included Finance Committee's consideration in June 2019, the Dean highlighted that the circulated proposal had been endorsed by EOG on 13.04.2021. In considering the rationale underpinning the proposal, the Committee noted that Trinity's STEM EU PhD fee is the highest nationally and that the differential between the PGR fee charged and the fixed amounts received from funding agencies is increasing annually under the current fee certainty policy, with the resulting funding "gap" being met from within School resources. The Dean highlighted that STEM PGR numbers have remained static as a result and set out the financial and reputational consequences should the matter remain unaddressed, advising that she strongly believes the requested change is a low risk strategy to address the issue and will result in increased student numbers and associated income to the University.



The Committee reviewed the financial considerations as outlined, including the analysis of PhD fee income, the current level of internal funding required to meet the fee differential over a 4-year period along with the cost of the proposed fee reduction. In considering the risks and the financial considerations raised by FSD, the Committee also noted the number of additional students required to match the income foregone, the comparative data for 2019/20 and 2020/21, FEC and overhead analysis along with supporting information to address concerns around future ramifications arising from the proposed change.

The Dean of Health Sciences, welcoming the initiative as outlined, indicated that work was underway within the Faculty of Health Sciences to quantify the impact of a similar change, which due to the complexities of the funding arrangements for HS PhD courses was necessarily delayed, and would come forward for consideration in due course.

Having considered the risks and benefits as outlined, the Committee agreed to the equalisation of STEM PhD fees as proposed and requested that the impact of the change in terms of student numbers and fee income be monitored and analysed to validate its benefits, with a report to come forward for review annually.

Action:

84.1 The Committee agreed to the equalisation of STEM PhD fees as proposed and requested that the impact of the change in terms of student numbers and fee income be monitored and analysed to validate its benefits, with a report to come forward for review annually.



FN/20-21/85 Trinity Online Services Update
(Minute FN/20-21/9 of 29.09.2020 refers)

The Committee noted the memorandum from the Interim Chief Operating Officer and Interim Operations Manager, Trinity Online Services Limited (TOSL) dated 29.04.2021, which set out an update on the Project under the following headings:

- Executive Summary
- Update since the last report
- Financial Summary
- Risk
- Sustainability Issues

The Committee noted the update on company activity since the last report, including the continued contribution to the University's Covid-19 response in the current academic year, supporting the development of additional blended learning materials and pivoting developed courses to be run on the FutureLearn platform. TOSL is also playing a significant role in supporting Trinity's Human Capital Initiative – Pillar 3 (HCI) Project in the current year, activity which will continue in FY2022.

By way of presentation, the Interim Operations Manager provided a summary of TOSL's financial position, highlighting income and expenditure for 2020/21, which has increased significantly on prior year and noted the key sources of income, including the HCI project along with directly-charged work and cost/fee share course revenues. He also noted that current year expenditure is higher than prior year, primarily due to HCI recruitment, however the company is expected to achieve a breakeven position for the first time since it was incorporated.

The Committee noted that the Online Education II Project is now complete, further noting the value of the cumulative subvention made to the Project during its lifecycle. In this context, the Interim Operations Manager advised the Committee that TOSL will no longer support legacy loss-making courses, thus reducing its reliance on parent subvention. He provided reassurance that TOSL will continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure the transition of such courses back to the Schools is a consultative and supported process.



Noting that the company expects to play an active role in enabling Trinity’s full spectrum Digital Learning Strategy over the next few years, the Committee requested Planning Group to review any proposals for TOSL’s future strategy, structure and governance as an integral part of the University’s overall Digital Strategy. Having reviewed the risks and sustainability issues as set out, including the reliance on HCI funding and the availability of parent subvention, the Committee requested an updated report from TOSL to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Action:

- 85.1** Planning Group to review any proposals for TOSL’s future strategy, structure and governance as an integral part of Trinity’s overall Digital Strategy.
- 85.2** An updated report from TOSL to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Section C

FN/20-21/86 External Audit 2019/20 - Management Letters

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the Deputy CFO dated 29.04.2021 along with the accompanying documents as follows:

- FY2019/20 C&AG Management Letter
- FY2019/20 KPMG Management Letter

The Committee noted the status of the audit findings of the University’s statutory and commercial auditors in the financial year 2019/20, encompassing the financial risks and control issues facing the University, and the associated management responses set out, in relation to issues identified.

The Committee noted the ratings as follows:

Auditor	No. of audit findings			
	High	Medium	Low	
C&AG	5	1	1	3
KPMG	6	1	4	1



FN/20-21/87 HEA Funding Statements for y/e 30.09.2020
XX

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the CFO dated 22.04.2021 along with the accompanying HEA Funding Statements for the year ended 30 September 2020. The (non-GAAP) Funding Statements were prepared in accordance with the accounting framework agreed with the HEA for all Irish Universities and Higher Education Institutions and demonstrate how the funding received during the year for core activities (Education and Research) has been applied.

The Committee noted the HEA Funding Statements for the year ended 30 September 2020 and recommended them for onward submission to Board for approval.

Action:

87.1 HEA Funding Statements for the year ended 30 September 2020 to be submitted to Board for approval.

FN/20-21/88 Law School Development Project
(Minute FN/20-21/31 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the Project Sponsor dated 16.04.2021, which provided an update on the Project since the last report in November 2020 across the following headings:

- Northern Edge Masterplan
- Student numbers
- Philanthropy
- Conclusion and request

The Committee noted that, as a result of the significant relocation costs associated with the IT Services site, a decision had been reached to amend the Project plans with a focus now on preparation of the Northern Edge Masterplan, in order to identify a possible new site for the Law School, along the Pearse Street side of the campus between the Samuel Beckett Theatre and the Business School. The Committee further noted that work on the Masterplan has been delayed as a result of COVID restrictions since the



beginning of the year however, site access is now possible, and it is anticipated an analysis will be available during the summer.

The Committee also noted the update regarding student recruitment, including the Covid-related uncertainty in the short to medium term, along with the details provided on activities of the Law School Advisory Board's Philanthropy sub-committee.

The Committee noted the next steps as set out and requested an updated report be provided in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Action:

88.1 An updated report to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

FN/20-21/89

Dartry Accommodation Project

(Minute FN/19-20/107 of 15.06.2020 refers)

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the Sponsor of the Dartry Accommodation Project dated 29.04.2021, advising of the decision to cease the Dartry Student Accommodation Project with immediate effect. An update on the Project since that decision was provided under the following headings:

- Current status of the project
- Other considerations
- Cost estimates
- Actions remaining

The Committee noted the cumulative expenditure on the Project to date, further noting that should the project be pursued in the future much of the design work will be lost as new teams will need to be appointed. The Committee also noted the other considerations as outlined along with the cost estimates associated with terminating the project, which have been approved by the Capital Review Group.



FN/20-21/90 School of Medicine Business Expansion Plan
(Minute FN/20-21/34 of 24.11.2020 refers)

The Committee welcomed the circulated memorandum from the Head of School of Medicine dated 12.04.2021, which set out an update on the School of Medicine business expansion plan across the following headings:

- Executive Summary
- Update
- Risks
- Sustainability Issues

The Committee noted the update provided on progress made against the School's expansion plan in FY19/20 along with the outline forecast versus plan for FY20/21 and welcomed the increase in non-EU UG students in Medicine in the current year as reported. The Committee further noted the update on expenditure, including capital and equipment spend and the ongoing caution being exercised in the context of the potential risks as outlined.

Having noted the planned recruitment, the updated budget position, the performance against target for 2020/21 along with the risks as outlined, the Committee requested a further update to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

Action:

90.1 An updated report to come forward for consideration in Michaelmas Term 2021.

FN/20-21/91 Borrowing Framework & Loan Guarantees
XX

In considering the circulated memorandum and accompanying documents from the Project Appraisal Manager dated 29.04.2021, setting out the Borrowing Framework template for the academic year 2019/20 along with projections for 2020/21 (no projected new framework borrowings for the year to 31 December 2021), the Committee noted the University's compliance with the current framework, approved the framework template and supporting documents and requested that the Borrowing Framework template be forwarded to Board for noting.



Action:

91.1 The Borrowing Framework template to be forwarded to Board for noting.

FN/20-21/92 Federal Aid Loan (Stafford Loan) Program – Auditors Report y/e 30.09.2020

The Committee, having been circulated with a memorandum from the Head of Student Finance, Academic Registry dated 20.04.2021 along with the Report of Independent Auditor, Bender, Ciccotto & Co. for the year ended 30 September 2020 in relation to the University's compliance with the Federal Family Education Loan Program (Federal Aid Program), noted the unqualified audit opinion received and the absence of any audit findings in the year under review.

FN/20-21/93 Provost's Expenses

The circulated memorandum from the College Secretary dated 29.04.2021, setting out the report of the Provost's expenses for the period 01.01.2020 to 31.12.2020, was noted. Furthermore, the Committee noted that, as indicated, all expenses incurred were approved in line with relevant University policies, no exceptional items of expenditure were incurred and that reimbursement claims (and associated supporting documentation) were available for review, if required.

FN/20-21/94 Minutes of Sub-Committees including quarterly performance summary of the Trinity Endowment Fund q/e 31.12.2020

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the CFO dated 22.04.2021 and the accompanying draft minutes of the Investment Committee meeting dated 23.03.2021, which included the following items:

- Endowment Fund – 31 December 2020
- Private Credit Allocation
- Update on Portfolio Review and Restructure
- Endowment Fund Financial Statements 2019/20 (draft)



The Committee also noted the quarterly performance summary to 31.12.2020 as circulated.

FN/20-21/95 Minutes of the Audit Committee

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the CFO dated 22.04.2021 along with minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 16.02.2021, which included the following items:

- Statements of Interest
- Report from Trinity Foundation Audit and Risk Committee
- External Audit Procurement Process
- Internal Audit Annual Report
- Covid-19 Impact Questionnaire
- Governance Statements
- Audit Committee Annual Report 2020/2021
- Audit Committee / Internal Audit Documentation
- Board Papers

FN/20-21/96 Minutes of the Estates Policy Committee

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the CFO dated 22.04.2021 along with draft minutes of the Estates Policy Committee meeting of 05.03.2021, which included the following items:

- Matters arising: TTEC Early Activation space and Historic Accommodation Buildings project – updates
- Adaptable Framework of the Trinity East Masterplan
- Pre-Draft Submission: Dublin City Development Plan



FN/20-21/97 Minutes of the FIS Oversight Group (FOG)

The Committee noted the circulated memorandum from the CFO dated 22.04.2021 along with draft minutes of the FIS Oversight Group meeting of 23.02.2021, which included the following items:

- FIS Operations Update
- FOG Terms of Reference

The Committee noted the next Finance Committee meeting is scheduled for **17 May 2021 at 3.00 pm** in the Provost's Library via Zoom.

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