

Trinity College Dublin Quality Committee

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 20th March 2014 in the Boardroom, House 1.

Present: Senior Lecturer (Chair), Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science, Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Secretary, Quality Officer, Professor John Walsh, Professor Simon McGinnes, Professor Catherine Coxon, Professor Sheila Ryder, Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Education Officer of the Students' Union, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union.

In attendance: Professor Eoin O' Sullivan (Head of School, Social Work & Social Policy), Professor Brian Foley (Head of School, Engineering), Dr. Liz Donnellan (Secretary to the Committee).

Apologies: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Dean of Health Sciences, Professor Ciaran Brady.

The Senior Lecturer chaired the meeting on behalf of the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer who tendered her apologies.

QC/13-14/023 Minutes of the meeting of the 6th February 2014

The minutes of the meeting of the 6th February 2014 were approved.

QC/13-14/024 Matters arising

With regard to the options for staff mentoring discussed at the meeting of the 12th December 2013 (*QC/13-14/011ii*), the Academic Secretary reported that the response from Human Resources in relation to staff development opportunities for administrative staff and to a review of current mentoring service for academic staff, was that there are currently no resources to provide these services.

In relation to the TR071 Programme Review of (*QC/13-14/019*), the Academic Secretary reported that the project is progressing well and that the site visit for the review is being planned for December 2014.

The Quality Officer reported that the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) (*QC/13-14/020*) had been administered in Trinity between the 17th February and the 7th March 2014. The final response rate was 12%, down 0.5% on the pilot survey in 2012/13. The complete data set will not be released to the university until April, as rolling implementation of the survey is ongoing in other universities until the end of March. The Committee agreed that while the response rate was disappointing and fell short of the target of 25% participation, there were a number of lessons to be learnt in relation to the timing of the review, the way in

which it was marketed to students and the incentive adopted. The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences provided the view that it was the number of responses rather than the response rate that was important.

QC/13-14/025 Quality Reviews - Review report for Social Work & Social Policy

The Chair welcomed Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, Head of the School of Social Work & Social Policy to the meeting and invited him to speak to the Reviewers' report and the School's response, which had been circulated with the papers. Professor O'Sullivan reported that the School had found the review to be a very positive exercise and he outlined the School's progress to date in implementing the seven key recommendations.

The Reviewers identified as critical the need to replace retiring staff with full-time academic posts in order to maintain the quality of both the research and teaching activities in the School. They recommended short-term contracts, PhD teaching stipends and redeployment of staff as an interim measure to ensure that teaching commitments are met. The Head of School reported that the interim measures have been implemented but their impact is short-term. He advised that the School is close to reaching a point of no return, after which it will not be possible to maintain the existing range of courses without additional staff.

The Head of School reported that a more focussed research strategy will be developed over the next six months, in line with the new strategic plan and vision for the University. He also reported that the School is committed to implementing the Faculty Sabbatical Policy but is constrained both financially and in terms of resources to replace staff who teach on mandatory courses. To develop greater efficiencies in the delivery and management of its educational programmes, the School has implemented joint teaching of modules across its postgraduate taught programmes and has also progressed new forms of delivery through on-line teaching of existing modules and the development of the on-line Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Social Studies. In relation to the streamlining of arrangements for student-placements, the School is currently working to develop stronger relationships with the HSE (Health Service Executive) and it is hoped that transfer of the Children & Family Services functions of the HSE to the Child and Family Agency, Tusla, will help in the negotiations for placements. The School plans to use the upcoming 80th anniversary of the Social Work programme as a mechanism to develop stronger alumni relations and to raise the profile of the School. However, it is not envisaged that financial support from alumni will be sufficient to fund academic posts in the School. The School is currently participating in the space audit of the Arts Building and hopes to be able to secure some unused space. The Head of School reported, however, that many of the teaching spaces require redesign and reinvestment to ensure that they are fit for purpose. He concluded by advising that the quality of facilities available to the School was impacting on their ability to recruit and attract international students.

In the Committee discussion which followed, the following points were made:

- It is imperative that College takes a clear strategic decision to support the School or there is a serious danger that the School's reputation and performance will be irreparably damaged;

- In spite of the critical shortage of staff, the School has maintained a commitment to delivering high quality teaching, and this is commended by the Reviewers;
- The decrease in the number of research centres associated with the School has shifted the focus of research work away from contract research and resulted in an increase in academic output in the form of publications;
- Some opportunities for collaboration with cluster partners have been explored e.g. joint training for doctoral students with UCD. While this might make more efficient use of teaching resources, it will not solve the long-term problem.

The Faculty Dean recommended that College's Strategic Plan should commit to supporting a School of Social Work & Social Policy at Trinity, as staffing levels will drop within the next three years to a point at which courses cannot be maintained without financial support from College.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Committee members for their input to the discussion and it was agreed that the Faculty Dean and the Head of School would work to address the recommendations in relation to resources and space. The School is on track to address the remaining recommendations.

QC/13-14/026 Annual Institutional Report (AIR)

The Quality Officer introduced Trinity's draft Annual Institutional Report (AIR) which is due to be submitted to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) at the end of March 2014. She clarified that the report requires detail on activity for the calendar year 2013 rather than the 2013/14 academic year. The current template for the AIR is very similar to that used previously by the IUQB (Irish Universities Quality Board), and as such does not strongly reflect the changes envisaged by the implementation of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act 2012. A working party is currently looking at how the template for the report can be updated in order to add value and reflect the changes required by the Act. The Quality Officer advised the Committee that this year there is a requirement to provide a greater level of information on taught course collaborative arrangements and partnerships with linked providers. In 2014 it is envisaged that information on research partnerships will be required and the College will be seeking guidance from QQI with regard to the level of detail required.

A brief discussion followed during which it was agreed that in the section on quality enhancement, reference should be made to the Post-Graduate Diploma/M.Ed. in Higher Education.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Quality Officer for her report and closed the discussion.

QC/13-14/027 Quality Reviews:

A. Review report for BioResources Unit (BRU)

The Senior Lecturer invited the Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science to speak to the Reviewers' report for the BioResources Unit. The Dean reported that the review had taken place immediately prior to the retirement of the BRU Director and that a new Director had been appointed and would take up position in April 2014. He informed the Committee that the BRU facility supports over 200 researchers and 10 Schools across the College.

The Dean addressed the Reviewers' recommendations and highlighted the following key points:

- The Reviewers' recommendation that *'a clear organization, with clear responsibilities and direct management lines from the Director to the senior management of the College should be established'* has been achieved by bringing the Unit under the direct oversight of the Faculty Dean; a small management group, the BioResources Executive Group (BEG), has been put in place by the Dean and a draft strategic 5-year Plan has been prepared in anticipation of the arrival of the new Director;
- The budgetary, financial and staffing structure of the Unit will be reviewed by the BEG and the new Director, as will the location of the Hazardous Materials Facility;
- The operational and financial structure of the Core Transgenic Facility (CTF) will be discussed by the Director of BRU and the Director of the CTF, in consultation with the BEG;
- In relation to the recommendation that *the Director should be a Faculty member at the professorial level (chair) with responsibilities for Comparative Medicine or Laboratory Animal Science and Welfare*, the Dean reported that this would not be appropriate given the current structure of the role but that the new Director will have academic status, possibly an adjunct academic position;
- The importance of consulting with BRU veterinary and management personnel during grant planning and writing was emphasised in order to ensure that the capability of the facility matches the requirements of the researchers;
- With regard to the role of the Animal Research Ethics Committee, the Dean clarified that the Committee has responsibility for evaluating all research proposals and procedures to ensure that they comply with the criteria set out by Trinity's Research Ethics Policy Committee and with the requirements of the Irish Medicines Board in relation to licences for animal testing.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Dean and a discussion followed during which it was acknowledged that considerable work has already been done to address the Reviewers' recommendations. It was agreed that the Dean's response would be updated to note that

the new Director would be in place from April 2014 and that the covering memo to Council would highlight the key points arising from the Quality Committee discussion.

B. Implementation Plan for School of Engineering

In welcoming the Head of School of Engineering to the meeting, the Senior Lecturer reported that the review report was first considered by the Quality Committee at its meeting on the 10th October 2013 and then by Council on the 23rd October 2013. He invited the Head of School to speak to the Implementation Plan which was now circulated for consideration by the Committee.

The Head of School reported that the majority of the School-level recommendations had already been implemented but that implementation of recommendations 1 and 3 is on-going. The Committee was advised that in relation to recommendation 1, which suggests that the School should '*seek to achieve critical mass in all major research activities*', the up-scaling of the School's research activities and size has been incorporated into the academic business plan for the E3 project. Recommendation 3 deals with the distribution of research overheads and this is being addressed by the School Research Committee and the School Resources and Staffing Committee. A joint proposal will be submitted to the School Executive in mid 2014. Implementation of the three College-level recommendations is on-going.

In response to a query from the Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Head of School reported that an E3 Planning Committee had been put in place, chaired by the Provost, and that in his opinion this was preferable to having responsibility for the project invested in one key person.

The Senior Lecturer queried whether a financial staffing and equipment plan was in place for the 5-year MAI. The Head of School confirmed that a plan had been developed and would be considered as part of the Annual Budgeting Cycle process. The Senior Lecturer commended the Review Reports' very positive comments on the School's teaching and learning, and the broader skills that are developed by students in the School. He suggested that best practice emanating from quality reviews should be shared with colleagues across College.

QC/13-14/028

There was no other business and the meeting closed. The next meeting will take place on the 22nd May 2014.