

**Trinity College Dublin
Quality Committee**

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 30th October 2014 in the Boardroom, House 1.

Present: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer(Chair), Chief Operating Officer, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Senior Lecturer, Dean of Graduate Studies, Quality Officer, Professor Simon McGinnes, Professor Sheila Ryder, Professor John Walsh, Mrs Jessie Kurtz, Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley.

In attendance: Professor Sinead Ryan (Head of School of Mathematics), Professor Juliette Hussey (Vice-President for Global Affairs), Ms Leona Coady (Head of the Academic Registry), Mr Paul Coote (Financial Services Division), Professor Kevin O'Kelly (Dean of Students), Mr Adrian Neilan (Director of Commercialisation), Dr Liz Donnellan (Secretary to the Committee).

Apologies: Academic Secretary, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science, Education Officer of the Students' Union, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union.

QC/14-15/007 Minutes of the meeting of the 9th October 2014

There were no changes to the minutes of the meeting of the 9th October 2014

QC/14-15/008 Matters arising

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that in relation to the review of the Department of Sport & Recreation (QC/14-15/005), the Provost will make recommendations on who will chair the Task Force. The person appointed to the role will develop the terms of reference for the task force in consultation with the Head of Sport & Recreation and the Chair of DUCAC, and these terms of reference will be approved by Board.

In relation to monitoring of and reporting on attendance of members at Committee meetings (QC/14-15/004), a query arose as to whether pro-Deans should be allowed to attend Committee meetings when Faculty Deans are unable to do so. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the convention is that there are no Pro-Deans for Principal Committees of Council or Board. She reported that she had spoken to the Faculty Deans on previous occasions about the critical need for attendance and now gave a further undertaking to write to them in her capacity as Chair of the Committee to highlight the importance of regular attendance. The Committee agreed to keep the issue under review and to monitor attendance more than once an academic year.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Head of the School of Mathematics and invited her to outline the key issues arising from the review and how they have been addressed by the School. The Head of School reported that she found the review to be useful and noted that the Reviewers were very well informed and engaged with the process.

In relation to the Reviewers' recommendation that the two vacant School Chairs be filled, the Head of School reported that the Accenture post is now philanthropically funded and that the School is aiming to advertise and fill the post in 2015. The filling of the Erasmus Smith's Chair, which has been vacant since 2008, is of strategic importance to the School and the School is optimistic that the calibre of candidates for both positions can be maximised with support from College.

The Head of School supports the recommendation to increase the number of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Until recently a significant number of staff were on short term contracts and consequently could not supervise graduate students or apply for research grants. This situation has improved with the appointment of new permanent staff but there is an on-going difficulty finding long-term, sustainable funding for graduate students, particularly since SFI has ceased to fund pure mathematics. This has reduced the School's ability to build the critical mass needed for an active research environment. The School will actively campaign for basic research to be funded by the Irish Government and in the interim the School has been working with Trinity Foundation to identify fund-raising opportunities based on the School's well regarded international profile.

The Reviewers expressed concern in relation to student retention in undergraduate programmes. The School shares these concerns and has put in place a number of supports for students including a maths help-room, exam revision sessions and new modules in practical problem-solving for JF students. Additionally, staff members have been briefed on the impact of Project Maths on the quality of incoming students. The Reviewers identified a low completion rate in Theoretical Physics (TP). A School study conducted in 2013/14 revealed that reduced completion rates in TP may be explained by students opting to transfer out of Theoretical Physics to either pure Maths or pure Physics.

A business case has been developed to see whether the reviewers' recommendation regarding the development of a second, taught Masters programme is feasible. While the course would be well recognised internationally and would attract world-class students in support of the College globalisation strategy, its delivery would have serious resource implications for the School and staffing levels would have to be reviewed. Additionally space constraints may also impact on the development of any new courses.

The School fully supports the Reviewers' recommendations in relation to the Hamilton Mathematics Institute (HMI), whose activities have been suspended due to lack of income. An application for targeted funding for research institutes is being prepared which, if successful, might help to revitalise HMI's activities. The redevelopment of the Institute would help to maximise the research profile of the School as it would attract world-class staff and students, and promote the School on the international stage.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the head of School and invited comment from the Committee. A short discussion followed in which the following points were raised:

- Many students transfer from Theoretical Physics (TP) to pure Maths or Physics, having realised that these are their primary areas of interest. The high transfer rates may be reduced by providing more in-depth information to 2nd level students and teachers about what the TP course entails, and ensuring that TP students are more closely integrated into the School;
- The School should consider developing a direct entry Masters programme in Mathematics, which could link in with the postgraduate training modules currently available and would attract high calibre students from overseas;
- Space and resource constraints for the development of new programmes could be alleviated by providing them in an on-line or distance learning format;
- There is a potential market for offering modules for credit outside TCD but currently the option to register for modules is not facilitated by SITS;
- The School's reputation is in the area of Theoretical Physics and Mathematics. While funding opportunities exist in Applied Mathematics, the School does not have a history in this area and it is not where staff interests lie. In order to address the lack of research funding for pure Maths, philanthropic sources should be pursued.

In closing the discussion the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer congratulated the Head of School on such a positive report, and thanked her for her presentation.

QC/14-15/010 Code of Practice for Providers of Programmes of Education and Training to International Students

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Dr Juliette Hussey (Vice-President for Global Relations), Ms Erika Doyle (Global Officer Co-Ordinator), Ms Leona Coady (Head of the Academic Registry) and Mr Paul Coote (Financial Planning Manager, Financial Services Division) to the meeting. The Quality Officer reported that this was the second draft of Quality and Qualifications Ireland's code of Practice for Providers of Programmes of Education and Training to International Students and was open for consultation until the 14th November 2014. She informed the Committee that quality-related issues arising from the Code are likely to become statutory over the coming months and requested input from the invited guests and Committee members on issues that might arise for TCD if the white paper in its current form were to become law. The implementation of the Code will have cross-university impact and require a co-ordinated response and ownership from all parties involved.

The Vice-President for Global Relations welcomed the white paper and reported that the College is well placed to address the three areas outlined in the paper – Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions & Enrolment Information Provision. She reported that the College seldom uses recruitment agents but is very diligent in how they are selected and trained, and reported that the Global Office will be reviewing whether the agents that it uses are aligned with the London Statement. The Quality Officer asked what relationship exists with the Secretary's Office in relation to the development of a Memorandum of Understanding with an agent and reported that the Irish Universities Association (IUA) is advocating that the HEA and Enterprise Ireland develop a list of preferred agents from which third level institutions can draw when engaging Agents.

The Vice-President for Global Relations reported that College aims to provide comprehensive information for international students pre-arrival and during the admissions and registration process regarding banking and other financial issues. The Office links with the Dean of Students and the Tutors Office regarding student supports, and is represented on the Student Life Committee. Information on student support services is also provided to international students through student ambassadors. The Global Officer Co-ordinator reported that the Global Relations Office provides pre-arrival information to international students on procedures for obtaining visas etc., and that international students are accompanied to the Garda National Immigration Bureau to obtain their visas. The Head of the Academic Registry reported that the three units (Global Relations Office, Academic Registry and Financial Services Division) work together on a case-by-case basis but that there is no formal mechanism in place for this relationship.

The Financial Planning Manager expressed concern regarding the use of the word 'cost' in some instances in the White Paper where 'fee' would be more appropriate.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer opened the item to Committee members and in the course of the discussion, the following issues arose:

- Supporting international students and monitoring their progress is important, both for new entrants and for continuing students;
- Induction for international students should be facilitated at varying times during the year to allow for both September and January intakes, and advanced entry students;
- With regard to transparency around fees, it was agreed that while information on tuition fees is readily available and clear, there may be fees/charges post-registration that are not visible at the centre and need to be highlighted to both International Students and non-Irish EU students;
- In relation to section 3.3 (staff training in intercultural competence) the numbers and types of staff requiring training, and the associated costs will need to be determined. It was suggested that this could be incorporated into the staff induction training programme. It was reported that ICOS are working towards a digital resource relating to cultural competence which might be useful;
- In relation to section 3.2d (provision of an appropriate balance of international and domestic learners in different learning settings), members queried how it would be possible to enforce this whilst also encouraging and facilitating integration;
- In relation to 3.1a (designate appropriate personnel to be responsible for inquiries about pastoral care issues from international learners) it was noted that postgraduate students don't have an individual tutor and it was suggested that personal tutors should be made available for international postgraduate students;
- It was further suggested that the tutor system be extended to Erasmus students, as while there are often Erasmus Coordinators available at local level, students studying on the Erasmus programme may fall through the cracks in terms of student supports.

QC/14-15/011 Implementation Plan for Review of Accommodation & Catering

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Director of Commercialisation to speak to the Implementation Plan for Accommodation & Catering which had been circulated with papers for the meeting. The Director reported that in relation to the recommendation to develop additional accommodation capacity, short, medium and long-term solutions have been developed through third party contracts and a programme of development which will add approximately 2,000 bed spaces to the College's stock by 2018. In the short term, 120 bed spaces have been reserved for TCD students in the accommodation blocks of two other educational establishments. In the medium term, permission for 490 rooms in the Digital Hub is being sought, which are due on-line in September 2016, and a paper is being prepared for Executive Officers' consideration. Two possible College locations have been identified, one of approx. 300 beds in Oisín House and the other 600 beds in the TTEC building. If approved, these would not come on stream before 2017/18. An Accommodation Group, chaired by the Dean of Students, will progress the initiative and make recommendations to the Provost.

The recommendation to diversify and specialise catering is being addressed. The Director acknowledged the issue of competition from establishments outside the College and reported that a new menu programme has been in place over the last few months with positive reaction from students and staff. A project to introduce a cashless meal plan is at an advanced stage of planning and it is hoped that this will provide an additional revenue opportunity. There is a demand for the provision of late night/afterhours catering facilities and meeting points, and examples of how this is being addressed include the provision of an evening catering service in the Hamilton restaurant. An Events Strategy has been developed by the Commercial Director (to be finalised in January 2015) and this will introduce a strategic approach to event delivery as recommended by the Reviewers.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of Commercialisation and opened the discussion to the floor. Responding to a query regarding the safety of some of the proposed locations for student accommodation, the Director reported that this would be addressed as part of the paper to Executive Officers. Regarding the issue of whether bed spaces would be rented or owned by Trinity, the Director reported that apart from the TTEC building which was owned by TCD, other premises would be initially rented on a 3-5 year lease. The plan to extend after hours catering facilities was welcomed. It was noted that the Buttery is underused and could be developed as a late-night meeting space if current access restrictions could be overcome. It was acknowledged that while the specific food and accommodation needs of international students need to be addressed, it is also necessary to ensure an appropriate level of integration for these students into College life and the student body.

Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of Commercialisation for his presentation and closed the discussion.

QC/14-15/012 Outcomes from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2013/14

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak a to a report on the outcome of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2013/14 which was circulated with papers for the meeting. The Quality Officer reported that the survey had been administered in a three week period in February & March 2014 to first year (JF) and final year (SS) undergraduate students, and postgraduate taught students (PGT). TCD had the highest response rate of the seven universities (16.5%) and that this was up considerable on our response rate of 9% in the pilot year 2013. The first year response rate was 22.1%. The results of the survey will be used internally by individual institutions to drive change. It provides a source of quantifiable data that can be used to access and monitor the success of any strategies that are introduced and ensure that efforts and resources are being targeted in the right areas.

At the broadest level, TCD scored higher than other Irish Universities and higher than National results in the indices for *Overall Satisfaction* of educational experience, *Higher Order Thinking*, *Academic Challenge* and *Enriching Educational Experience*. TCD scored lower than other Irish Universities and lower than the National scores in all other indices including *Student Staff Interactions*, *Supportive Learning Environment* and *Active Learning*.

The National report is due to be released on 4 November 2014 has yet to be launched so there is no comparative data in the public domain until the report is released. The outcome of the survey will contribute to the faculty quality brief and the data will be used to inform possible areas for future development in line with the Strategic plan.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and noted that the results of the ISSE tie in well with those arising from the International Student Barometer regarding student feedback. A short discussion ensued regarding the policy around student feedback and it was agreed that the impending update of the Student Charter would address this issue.

Responding to a query as to how significant the data provided in the survey is, the Quality Officer reported that in 2014 institutions received means and standard deviation data for their institution only. A request has been made to the ISSE Project Group to release mean and standard deviation data at a sector level to allow tests of significance to be performed. The data will have greater value and significance as the numbers of respondents in each cohort increase in coming years. Plans are in place to review the ISSE in 2016 and introduce a short form ISSE survey in 2017 with a reduced number of questions and the opportunity to include institution-specific questions.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer for her presentation and closed the discussion.

QC/14-15/013 Matters arising

There were no matters arising and the meeting closed.