



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of the Quality Committee

21 January 2016, 2.30pm, Boardroom, House 1

Present:

Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*

Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer

Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer

Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies

Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer

Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IS Services

Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian

Ms Gianna Hegarty, Vice President Graduate Students' Union

Dr Liz Donnellan, Secretary to the Committee

Apologies:

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science

Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Ms Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office

Ms Molly Kenny, Education Officer Students' Union

QC/15-16/018 Minutes of the meeting of the 2 December 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the 2 December 2015 were approved.

QC/15-16/019 Matters arising

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) report for 2014/2015 (QC/15-16/011), was being prepared for Council consideration and that the 2015/16 survey would take place from 22 February to 13 March 2016.

The Quality Officer circulated an updated quality framework diagram (Appendix 1) outlining the relationships between the principle committees and the different elements of the quality review framework (QC/15-16/014). In terms of external statutory requirements and the development of a risk register, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stressed the importance of ensuring that, if possible, there should be no duplication in terms of data gathering.

With regard to the request by a member of the Committee for an update on the Academic Registry stabilisation programme and its impact on systems issues raised in quality reviews, the Chief Operating Officer gave a commitment to bring this to the next Quality Committee meeting, and noted the Committee's concerns around systems support for registration, Blackboard, CMIS, student cases and support for Schools around the external examiner process.

QC/15-16/020 Progress Report for Accommodation & Catering

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Commercial Director, Mr Adrian Neilan, to speak to the progress report for Accommodation and Catering. Mr Neilan reported that the recommendation to develop additional accommodation capacity was being addressed and that there was a strategic commitment to identify suitable student accommodation within a certain radius of College at a certain price point. Responsibility for the procurement of additional residential accommodation has been assigned to an Accommodation Working Group led by the Dean of Students. Plans for Oisin House which will contain c. 280 beds have been advanced to the planning permission stage and subject to the granting of planning permission, these rooms will come into service for the academic year 2017/18. The Accommodation Working Group has commissioned a feasibility study for the provision of additional residences at Trinity Hall, and 264 beds have been secured for 2016/17 (with options for future years) with a commercial developer of a new student housing development at the Binary Hub. Estates and Facilities are leading in discussions with other commercial parties on the development of student accommodation at various locations in Dublin.

The Reviewers made a number of recommendations around improving the catering facilities and choice of food available to students on campus. Mr Neilan reported that feedback from staff members and the student body suggests that customers are seeking healthier options on the menus, and work is on-going to address user expectations in this regard. The long-term plan is to provide healthier and more diverse meal options which will cater for both Irish and international students within the TCD environment. A system of menu reviews every term has been introduced, and the Tcard project to enable cashless transactions in catering facilities on campus was successfully launched in September 2015. Approximately 5,000 users have signed up to the Tcard project and it is hoped the numbers will increase as awareness of the facility grows. Catering at Trinity Hall is not an economic proposition at this time. In the short-term, it is hoped that evening opening in the Hamilton restaurant will be introduced in the next few months.

In relation to the creation of student spaces across campus, Mr Neilan reported that communal space at Trinity Hall is being used for residential social activities in line with planning permission. The communal spaces in the Arts Block will be upgraded as part of an overall improvement plan for the building, but philanthropic funding will need to be secured in order to proceed.

Work is on-going in relation to the development of conference facilities, and an events strategy is at the implementation stage. An Events Office is under development and a proposal in relation to funding will shortly go to the Capital Review Group. Progress has been made in coordinated handling of enquiries. Some progress has also been made in getting access to Departmental seminar rooms in the Arts Building. Discussions have taken place between the Commercial Revenue Unit (CRU) and Estates and Facilities in relation to upgrading some of seminar rooms in the Arts Building. This work is subject to the sourcing of funding from commercial revenue streams.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer acknowledged that much had been done in the last 18 months to implement the Reviewers' recommendations and congratulated the Commercial Director on the progress made. In the discussion that followed the importance of balancing the need to derive revenue from tourist stays on campus during the early Summer months with the student need for accommodation right up to and including the examination period was raised. The Committee agreed that priority should be given to ensuring that students, and in particular international students, have secure accommodation during and immediately after the end of year examination period. The need for appropriate common student spaces, including catering facilities, in the St James' and Tallaght campuses was raised and the Commercial Director reported that a review of student spaces at these sites was underway. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that this also falls under the remit of the Bursar, who has responsibility for Estates management.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Mr Neilan, and the meeting closed.

QC/15-16/021 Annual Faculty Quality Report 2014/15– Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences to speak to the Annual Faculty Quality Report for 2014/15. The Dean began by thanking the Faculty Administrator, Ms Valerie Smith, for collating the document and reported that it was a product of the Annual Quality Faculty Executive meeting which was attended by the Quality Officer, Roisin Smith.

In terms of module evaluations across the Faculty, the Dean reported that 89% of UG and 92% of PG modules were evaluated in 2014/15, and while figures are down from 2013/14, particularly in UG, procedures are in place to ensure that all modules are evaluated from 2015-16 onwards. He drew the Committee's attention to the high retention rates (96.5%) across the Faculty for undergraduate new entrants in 2013/14, and noted that they were well above the 90% target set out in the College's Strategic Plan. The Dean highlighted the poor quality of teaching and learning spaces in the Arts building as one of the key issues for escalation to College level, noting that the facilities available for students in the Schools of Drama, Film & Music and Law are completely inadequate. He reported that where possible, Schools try to accommodate classes by making changes in response to requests, but some classrooms are simply too small for increasingly large class sizes and this has an implication for quality of teaching. While the frequent use of unpopular venues such as Goldsmith Hall has been phased out, Schools often have no option but to use these inadequate spaces. He noted that the Faculty will accommodate many of the international students brought in under the Global Relations strategy, and stressed that the provision of inadequate teaching and learning spaces has the potential to damage the strategy.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and the Faculty Administrator, Ms Valerie Smith, for their very comprehensive report, and noted that it is useful to have recurrent, Faculty-level issues and examples of good practice published in the one area. She invited comment from the Committee and in the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- The Library and Information Policy Committee (LIPC) has formed a sub-group to look at the issue of full library access for PG certificate students. It is hoped that the Committee will have concluded its work by the 2016/17 academic year.
- Several reviews of the Arts Building, including a recent external evaluation of the space as part of the development of an Estates master plan, have highlighted the issue of inadequate teaching spaces. There is an urgent need to address this as it affects student perceptions of the College. The HEA has ceased to provide money for minor capital works but Provost has given an undertaking for significant upgrading work for the Arts building, subject to securing philanthropic funding.
- With regard to reported unhappiness amongst students in the Faculty about the lack of examinations after the first semester, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that this will be addressed as part of the Trinity Education Project. Issues around semester exchange arrangements and recognition of mid-year exam results abroad will need to be addressed as part of this project.
- With regard to the preferred method of module evaluation, it was noted in response to a query that the Quality Committee does not have a remit to advise Schools in this regard, or to assist in the establishment of systems to streamline the process. Responsibility for deciding on the preferred method rests with individual Schools, and the most appropriate methods are discipline-dependant. Regardless of the method used, it is vital that the outcome of module evaluations is held at the level at which decisions are being made. Questionnaire templates are available on the Quality Office website, and the Quality Officer engages with Faculty Executives to disseminate this information. The Committee agreed that it is important to communicate the existence of these resources not only at Faculty but also at School level.
- The Committee welcomed the approval by the Graduate Studies Committee of anonymised marking for postgraduate taught course students, and noted that implementation in very small classes may be pose challenges.
- 68% of undergraduate External Examiner reports for 2015/16 were returned for the AHSS Faculty, representing a significant improvement on last year following the introduction of process improvements. The Quality Office has undertaken to provide copies of UG External Examiner Reports within 10 days of receipt to the Head of School, Dir T&L (UG), Schools Administrators and Faculty Office. For Interdisciplinary Programmes, Departmental Heads are also included. In the case of large Programmes where Programme Directors are appointed, they will also be sent the report. In all other cases Schools Administrators are asked to circulate the report to academics teaching on the programme/course or module.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and closed the discussion.

QC/15-16/022 Strategic Review – Careers Advisory Service

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of the Careers Advisory Service, Mr Sean Gannon to the meeting to speak to the strategic review of the Service.

Mr Gannon reported that the focus of this review was to assess the suitability of the Careers Advisory Service Strategy to deliver the College Strategy to embed employability and career development skills in the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in the context of the Trinity Education Project. He stressed the importance for Reviewers to acknowledge the work of the Service.

The Reviewers endorse the re-positioning of CAS within the Academic Services Division, and specifically within Trinity Teaching and Learning. They also support the embedding of all careers advisor posts within the Service as well as a change in title from adviser to consultant, coupled with a change to the name of the Service itself to CareersHub@Trinity.

While the Review Team did not support the development of formalised Service Level agreements, they recommend that the Director of CAS develop a level of direct engagement that is achievable across *all* Schools. This can then be supplemented by a menu of additional service delivery options that can be used to facilitate personalised informal agreements negotiated at an operational level between CAS consultants and their School contacts.

In relation to systems support and data gathering, the Reviewers recommend the purchase of a Career Management System (CMS) as a matter of priority in order to provide specialist, targeted services for students and Schools. The Reviewers acknowledge that the Service is under-resourced, and recommend the development of a detailed business plan for income generation. In terms of enhancing employability, the Reviewers recommend consideration of a mixed placement and internship proposition with embedded placements, as well as enhancing access to and take up of summer internships.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Mr Gannon, and opened the discussion to the floor. The Academic Secretary acknowledged the hard work undertaken by the committed staff of the Service and reported that there was a significant change programme to implement and fund, not just in the Careers Service but across the entire College. She reported that the Trinity Education Project will shape the way in which employability is embedded in the curriculum and stressed the need to capitalise on our proximity to large companies in order to leverage income from employers. She acknowledged that the Service needs a Career Management System that is fit for purpose, and it is hoped that this will be prioritised as part of Trinity Education Project.

In response to a query as to whether the College should offer career guidance at the point of recruitment, Mr Gannon reported that while they engage at careers fairs and with guidance counsellors, resources are insufficient to provide this service in a formalised way. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that slide material on career options for arts students is made available for the Higher Options recruitment events, but that this is not visible to the wider College community. She closed the discussion by thanking Mr Gannon and reported that the next step in the approval of the Reviewers' report would involve the extrapolation of a strategy to implement the new Service.

QC/15-16/023 QQI consultation on Quality Assurance Guidelines

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer, Ms Roisin Smith, to speak to three recently published QQI documents:

- Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines for use by all providers;
- Policy on Quality Assurance Guidelines;
- Towards a White Paper on sector specific quality assurance (QA) guidelines.

Ms. Smith reported that the documents form the basis for the next Institutional Review of Trinity by QQI, which is scheduled for 2019/20, and Trinity's function under the QQI Act 2012 as external quality assurance provider for Linked Providers/Associated Colleges. In relation to the Core Statutory Quality Assurance (QA) Guidelines, Ms. Smith reported that they will have far reaching consequences for education providers. There is general concern amongst the Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) that some of the content in the core guidelines would be more appropriately located in the sector specific guidelines. Other issues include the assessment of risk, the provision of institutional data to support risk and quality and the methods we use to quality assure our awards, of which Trinity has in excess of 800 listed on the Interim International Registrar.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and acknowledged that the College's data provision constraints are not just a compliance issue but also an issue for the effective working of the institution.

Trinity's responsibilities in relation to its linked providers are outlined in the sector specific guidelines for DABs, which provide a guide for what we need to assess in quality assuring our linked providers and what needs to be considered where new partnerships are being entered into. They represent a move to Trinity formally regulating these institutions and the quality of their education provision.

Guidelines for on-line programmes have also been released and preliminary feedback is that institutional arrangements need to change in order to match more flexible modes of delivery.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and in the brief discussion that followed the following points were raised:

- It would be useful for direction from the Quality Office on what service areas will be looked at in the next IRIU.
- need to engage IUA HR groups in discussions relating to institutional requirements for HR outlined in the core guidelines
- further clarification is required in terms of the scope of assessment of 'research' - could a REF type review happen in each institution?
- What would trigger a 'for cause' review

The Quality Officer gave an undertaking to bring feedback to the next meeting.

QC/15-16/024 Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.

Appendix 1

Framework for Quality in Trinity College Dublin –University of Dublin

