



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

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Quality Committee

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the
22 March 2018, 3.00 – 5.00pm, Boardroom House 1

Present:

Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Vice-President, Graduate Students' Union
Education Officer, Students' Union

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:

Ms Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies

In attendance:

Professor Kevin Mitchell, Pro-Dean for EMS, for item *QC/17-18/37 (i) FEMS Annual Faculty Quality Report*
Ms Sandra Kavanagh, Faculty Administrator, EMS for item *QC/17-18/37 (i) FEMS Annual Faculty Quality Report*
Ms Agnes Gogan, Faculty Administrator, HS for item *QC/17-18/37 (ii) HS Annual Faculty Quality Report*

Section A

QC/17-18/34 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 18 January 2018

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 18 January 2018 were approved.

QC/17-18/35 Matters arising

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) noted that all actions arising from the January meeting had been implemented and would be addressed in the call-over log.

The Quality Officer reported that, arising from the review of the Law Programmes (*QC/16-17/053*), a new model of group supervision for the LLM dissertation has been introduced and the foreign law components have been removed from Law and French and Law and German.

The review report for the Joint Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (*QC/17-18/22*) was considered by Council on the 17 January 2018 and it was agreed that the Planning Group would consider and make recommendations on the funding structure for courses/modules delivered outside the school structure in the context of the Structured PhD.

The Quality Officer reported that the Quality review of the Long Room Hub (*QC/17-18/27*) was considered and approved by Council on the 14 February 2018. Council recommended that the Long Room Hub and the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences take measures to increase success in future framework programmes, such as the ERC, and to submit an implementation plan to the Quality Committee in due course.

With regard to the recommendation arising from the review of the M.Th. that a designated person be appointed in the Academic Registry (AR) as a contact point for the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) (*QC/17-18/32*), the Quality Officer reported that the Registrar has undertaken to arrange a meeting with AR to discuss systems support for the Associated Colleges but noted that the current AR operations model does not support a designated support staff person for external organisations.

QC/17-18/36 Quality Committee call-over log

- (i) **Library supports:** The Quality Officer reported that in relation to *QC/17-18/030-Revised Procedures for School Reviews* a link to the Library website outlining supports available for quality reviews has been incorporated to the relevant quality review guidelines and included on the Quality Office website.
- (ii) **Linked Provider Appeals Procedure:** The Quality Officer reported that the revised *Linked Provider Appeals Procedure (QC/17-18/014)* was approved by Board on the 14 February 2018.

QC/17-18/37 Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQR) 2016/17:

- (i) *Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science AFQR*

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Kevin Mitchell to the meeting to present the FEMS report on behalf of the Faculty Dean. He also welcomed the FEMS Faculty Administrator, Ms Sandra Kavanagh.

Professor Mitchell highlighted a number of key points in the report.

- The undergraduate Science course (TR071) has been successfully revised into four new entry streams – the first intake of students will commence in September 2018. Undergraduate student recruitment to the Science course remained steady in 2016/17 despite an overall reduction in intake to undergraduate courses across College. There has also been an increase in the number of international students recruited to the new Science course which has resulted from a joint initiative with Global Relations (GR) to grow the number of students from the USA.
- Non-science schools in the Faculty are revising their undergraduate course content and pedagogy to facilitate integration of TEP principles.
- The three Schools associated with the E3 strategy will see an expansion of student numbers and research activity, and changes in pedagogy and curriculum as well a new approach to student recruitment and marketing will be required to support the strategy.
- A consistent approach to student recruitment and marketing of courses in the Faculty is required. There is a need give consideration to our web presence and digital marketing. The Science Course websites is a current focus and the revamp of Schools websites is ongoing.
- The Masters in Computer Science (MCS) and the Masters in Engineering (MAI) attained Engineers Ireland (EI) accreditation in 2016/17 for the first time.
- The poor quality of teaching space across the Faculty, particularly the unsuitability of Goldsmith Hall, is raised consistently in reviews and remains an issue of concern.
- A reduction in postgraduate research students was noted and can be linked to a change in the research grant landscape, which has seen a consolidation of budgets into large research centres reducing the opportunity for individual researchers to access funding.
- The low ISSE score for student-faculty interaction can be explained by large class sizes in freshman years. The streaming of the undergraduate science course, which will result in more manageable class sizes, may address this.
- The return rate for Postgraduate External Examiner reports is an issue of concern.
- The timing of the Annual Faculty Quality report (AFQR) and supporting reports (e.g. ISSE) should be reviewed so that all background data corresponds to the same reporting year.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Mitchell and noted with concern that the lack of good quality teaching and learning spaces had been highlighted as an issue of concern in all three Faculty reports. The Deputy Librarian commended the initiative being spearheaded by the Dean of FEMS to improve student spaces in the Hamilton Library and noted that the Library is keen to partner on this. She also reported that in the light of the College's internationalisation and student diversity strategies, the Library is considering how best to address the different expectations of these students in terms of resources and supports. The Pro-Dean agreed that the provision of appropriate supports for international students once they arrive on campus is vital to the promotion of the College as a destination for foreign students. Additionally, the VP/CAO noted that as Ireland is becoming a multicultural society, international students are now an integral part of the Irish student body.

Responding to a question from a Committee member, the Pro-Dean reported that the government drive to fund research centres reflects a national strategy for short term commercial impact which he felt was not sustainable. In this model, basic research funding is undercut in favour of financial support for research centres. As this funding must support a range of functions within a research centre, a smaller proportion of it is available to postgraduate research students. Citing a report to Planning Group, the VP/CAO reported that there is an inverse correlation between the numbers of research students and the numbers of post docs available to work in research institutes, and the Pro-Dean agreed that this is a pattern that is observed in research institutes.

The Faculty Administrator raised the timing of submission of the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR), reporting that the approved ISSE data for the relevant reporting year is not available in time to send it out to Schools with the AFQR template. As a result Schools are commenting on data from different years and this does not facilitate cross-referencing and comparison between data sources (e.g. ISSE, external examiner reports, module surveys etc.). The Quality Officer undertook to discuss the timing of the AFQR with the Faculty Administrators.

Referencing the schedule of reviews (Item B.2), a Committee member noted that the next accreditation of Engineering programmes would coincide with a review of the School of Engineering in 2021. The Quality Officer reported that she would contact the School regarding the timing of both review processes and explore options for streamlining them with the School.

A Committee member noted that 22% of new entrants to the Theoretical Physics course transferred to another course and queried whether this is typical for that course. The Faculty Administrator reported that there is a healthy transfer rate between high entry point courses and that this is not a commentary on the quality of the course. The Academic Secretary queried whether the marketing of the course needed to be reviewed and the Pro-Dean responded that transfer of students from this course is not unusual, as many students who take the course find that they prefer the experimental physics aspect rather than mathematics. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer remarked that sideways movement is encouraged in TEP and endorsed the need for appropriate marketing of courses in the Faculty.

The Academic Secretary noted that in relation to the review of student module evaluation (QC/16-17/047) Council had (i) approved the continuation of module evaluations and (ii) approved a pilot study to assess mid-term module evaluations and staff-student liaison committees in 2017/18.

Decision/Action: The Quality Officer agreed to engage with the School of Engineering regarding the timing of their next review and accreditation visit.

Decision/Action: The Council decision on module evaluation to be communicated to the School of Computer Science & Statistics.

Decision/Action: The Quality Officer agreed to meet with Faculty Administrators to discuss the timeline for various inputs to the Annual Faculty Quality Report.

(ii) Faculty of Health Sciences AFQR

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Health Sciences, to speak to the HS report. He also welcomed the Faculty Administrator, Ms Agnes Gogan to the meeting.

The Dean, remarking that the distinguishing feature of courses in the Faculty is the clinical placement element, spoke to the following key points in the report:

- 100% of undergraduate modules were evaluated in 2016/17.
- All 42 postgraduate courses were evaluated and 100% provided feedback to students.
- Undergraduate curricula are regularly reviewed in response to the changing requirements of health care (e.g. Nursing & Midwifery will roll out a new undergraduate curriculum in 2018/19) and the requirements of the relevant professional body e.g. NMBI, CORU, PSI and Dental Council. These reviews are rigorous and time consuming, and should be streamlined with quality reviews
- There is an on-going issue with access to high quality clinical sites. It is hoped that the new Dublin Hospital Group structure will provide access to more clinical sites.

- An audit of clinical sites in 2016 for the undergraduate nursing programme confirmed the robustness of the quality mechanisms in place and it is planned to extend this review to all programmes in Nursing and Midwifery, and to other Schools in the Faculty in 2018. This will provide an opportunity to share good practice with other schools.
- Following the strategic appointment in 2016 of a Faculty-level Director of Inter-professional Learning, students in all four schools are working together on complex cases and patient scenarios.
- The Deans award in Teaching and Practice was launched in 2016/17, recognising the work of staff in clinical areas.
- The Faculty has adopted the use of Turning Technologies software, introducing clickers and mobile apps in class to facilitate student feedback.
- The Faculty appointed a strategic post in early 2018 to drive the attainment of a Faculty Bronze Athena Swan award by November 2018.
- The Faculty has made small strategic infrastructure investments to improve the learning environment for students e.g. the stimulation laboratories in St James'.
- Although QS subject rankings in Trinity declined overall in 2016, the School of Nursing and Midwifery was ranked in the top 50.
- Space remains an area of critical concern for the Faculty, in particular for the Schools of Nursing & Midwifery and Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences.
- Strategic seed funding has been provided by the Faculty to support online offerings but the ability of Schools in the Faculty to offer blended learning/online courses remains an issue.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer congratulated the Dean on the 100% response rate in module evaluations, noting that many programmes in the Faculty have additional external oversight of quality from the relevant professional body. A Committee member noted the space issue in TBSI raised by the School of Medicine and a short discussion followed during which it was agreed that new buildings need to consider both the learning and the social requirements of students at the design stage. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the design approach for the E3 building would be more student-focused.

Regarding the poor quality of space in the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the sense of isolation experienced by its students, the Dean reported that the numbers of students had increased dramatically since the inception of the School and that the premises in D'Olier St. was no longer fit for purpose. She stressed the need for a fixed timetable which would release larger teaching spaces and facilitate the scheduling of lectures on campus. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer agreed that a fixed timetabling system would allow room requirements to be matched to class size. In response to a query as to whether Schools associated with the E3 project would have first call on the lecture theatres located there, it was agreed that this would require further discussion.

Commenting on the audit of clinical sites, the Quality Officer reported that the revised School review procedures now contain a clinical placement checklist which includes placements associated with the Erasmus programme. She would welcome feedback on the checklist by HS Schools in the audit of clinical sites. The Academic Secretary commended the increased numbers of students engaging in Inter Professional Learning (IPL) and the Dean reported that the Faculty's Director of Inter Professional Learning was supported by IPL champions at School level in this regard.

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

(iii) Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences AFQR

The Chair invited Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to present the AHSS Faculty Report. The Dean drew the Committee's attention to the following points in the report:

- Space is a recurring issue in the Faculty, in particular the condition and use of space in the Arts Building. Refurbishment of the Arts Building is welcomed but it is mostly cosmetic and largely for public rather than teaching spaces.
- Faculty retention rates (96.8%) are well above College targets.
- Some Schools piloted midterm evaluations in 2016/17, the success of which will be evaluated next year.
- A cross-faculty project to assess the suitability of Turning Point Responseware was initiated in 2016/17 and managed by the AHSS Faculty Office. Anecdotally the software is working well but will be reviewed at the end of the academic year, the outcome of which will determine whether the licence will be renewed.
- In response to student feedback and the requirements of TEP regarding enhancing teaching quality, the Faculty Dean continued to provide funding in 2016/17 for new academic staff who are not eligible for fee remission to undertake the Diploma/M.Ed. in Higher Education.
- The promotion of Athena Swan to Schools in the Faculty is a recent initiative, as the Arts disciplines have only recently become eligible for the award. All Schools have been asked to appoint an Athena Swan champion.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and noted that there is great potential in the Faculty to achieve an Athena Swan award, given the existence of gender research as a topic in the Faculty. Noting quality reviews that had taken place in the Faculty in the reporting year he commended the work of the Academic Secretary on supporting the implementation of the review of the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology.

With regard to the issue of teaching and learning spaces, the Deputy Librarian highlighted the 1937 reading room refurbishment, which was funded by the Library. She suggested that as many of the buildings on campus requiring refurbishment are of historic importance a central fund for refurbishment should be provided. The Vice-President of the Graduate Students' Union welcomed the improvements to the Reading Room and thanked the Library.

A Committee member noted that the application of the sports centre charge to online students had also been raised in last year's report. The Dean remarked that while this is an ongoing issue, many online students are located in the greater Dublin area and could potentially use the College's sports facilities.

With regard to the School of Education, a member highlighted the lack of support for international students as an issue of on-going concern. He also highlighted issues with teacher training and placements, noting that the Teaching Council takes no responsibility for securing placements for trainee teachers. This results in increased competition for placements and allows schools to dictate the terms on which students are employed resulting in inequity across the sector. In response to a query from the VP/CAO as to whether there should be a sectoral response to this issue, it was agreed that an IUA response would be helpful in highlighting the fact that there is not only a national problem with teacher supply but also teacher training.

The provision of supports for postgraduate students was discussed, in particular for students who register in March and therefore miss the earlier orientation sessions. The Vice-President of the Graduate Students' Union reported that an earlier scheduling of PG orientation week to occur in February and the extension of global room office hours are ways in which this is being addressed.

With regard to teaching and learning spaces, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that a space audit is scheduled at the end of the year and emphasized the importance of a fixed timetable in maximizing the available space for teaching. Referencing the Population Health building on the Trinity site in the Tallaght campus, a member reported that student breakout spaces are included by design and emphasized the value in having high quality breakout spaces. Following a short discussion the Committee agreed that it should be policy that all new buildings have a breakout/social space incorporated in the design principles. In response to a query as to whether Estates and Facilities has policies in this regard, the Quality Officer reported that the recent review of Estates and Facilities may provide some commentary on this. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that the Committee's comments should feed back to the Bursar in relation to the implementation of the Estates Strategy.

Noting the issues raised by the School of Education with regard to Garda-vetting of students, the Academic Secretary queried whether there is a College requirement for staff who have interactions with children to be Garda-vetted, particularly staff coming from outside Ireland and Europe. She suggested that it would be prudent to get some advice on the College's legal responsibility in this regard and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer agreed, remarking that this is sectoral issue.

In closing the discussion, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the precis from Heads of School included for the first time this year in the Faculty reports and the Quality Officer reported that this had been initiated by the Faculty Administrators.

The Faculty Administrators left the meeting.

Decision/Action: An IUA response to sectoral issues regarding teaching placements to be raised at the next IUA meeting.

Decision/Action: The Committee agreed that its recommendation that all new buildings have a breakout/social space incorporated in the design principles should be communicated to the Bursar.

Decision/Action: The Committee recommended that advice on the College's legal responsibility regarding Garda-vetting of staff should be raised with Human Resources and the Secretary's Office. The issue will be brought back to the Committee for further discussion when clarity on the situation has been obtained.

QC/17-18/38 Review of Governance for Quality at Trinity

The Academic Secretary spoke to a memo circulated with the papers which outlined a proposed review of governance of quality at Trinity in advance of the Institutional Review in 2021. She suggested that work is required to embed quality at all levels across College so that it becomes more than just a box-ticking exercise, and to change the perception that quality assurance and improvement generates additional work. She cited the success of the recent student partnership model which reviewed the module evaluation process and made recommendations to Council as an example of how ownership for quality can be promoted.

Speaking to the proposed Terms of Reference for the review, the Academic Secretary reported that they had been developed in consultation with a not-for-profit academic consulting company (SUMS Consulting (UK)) who are currently engaged by College on the fixed-timetabling project. They have been engaged to provide external support to propose how quality can be better governed at Trinity and to assess whether the requisite capabilities and skills are in place at central and local level to facilitate this. The review will also consider the role of the Quality Committee and the systems in place to support quality, noting the difficulties in obtaining central data for the quality review process. She reported that the new QQI regulatory framework is onerous and a streamlining of our processes will be required to respond to this.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Secretary and invited comments from the Committee. A member noted that the proposed Terms of Reference focused on the academic and not the administrative touchpoints that enhanced the quality of the student experience e.g. the SITS portal or Blackboard, or student support services. The member would welcome an annual quality report covering quality in these areas in the same way as the Annual Faculty Quality Report does for Faculties and Schools. The Academic Secretary responded that the focus of the review was on governance and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer clarified that the review will focus on how the quality process works. A Committee member highlighted the need to develop a deeper commitment to quality than currently exists and noted that this wasn't explicitly outlined in the terms of reference for the review. Another member emphasized the importance of building a narrative on quality that goes out to the Schools.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Committee for their comments and the Quality Officer undertook to include the suggested amendments in the Terms of Reference.

Decision/Action: The Quality Officer will amend the Terms of Reference for the review of Governance of Quality to reflect the Committee's suggestions.

QC/17-18/39 Revised Procedures for School Reviews

The Quality Officer reminded the Committee that revised procedures for School reviews had been considered by the Committee at its meeting on the 18th January and approved subject to a number of amendments. She reported that the procedures had been revised to include the following (i) information regarding supports available from the Library for academic reviews (section 5.13), (ii) evidence of research activity in the Arts (Chapter 6 - assessment of research activity and impact), (iii) revision of the placement checklist to reflect both clinical and non-clinical placements (Appendix 4) and (iv) inclusion of reference to module structures in TEP (Chapter 4 - assessment of undergraduate education). With regard to the placement checklist, Ms Smith reported that this had been sent to all Schools that offered placements to its students, and that she had received feedback from the Schools of Nursing & Midwifery and Engineering. She confirmed that the HEA gender and Athena Swan requirements had also been incorporated, and that the revised procedures would be published on the Quality Office website and would apply to Schools undergoing review from next year.

QC/17-18/40 Any other business

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the QQI blended learning guidelines and Green Paper on Assessment, which have been published for consultation.

Section B

B.1 Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) 2016/17

The Quality Officer highlighted the circulated Annual Institutional Quality Report and noted that it was a useful document for Schools undergoing accreditation.

B.2 Proposed schedule of Quality Reviews to 2024

The VP/CAO noted that the timing of the Engineering review and accreditation coincide, and that the Quality Officer would engage with the School in this regard.