

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 16th March 2010

Present: Professor Patrick Prendergast (*Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and Chair*), Dr Patrick Geoghegan (*Associate Dean of Research*), Professor Michael Marsh (*Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences*), Dr James Callaghan (*Associate Director of Trinity Research & Innovation, ADTRI, and Secretary*), Professor Carol O'Sullivan (*Dean of Graduate Studies*), Professor Poul Holm, Professor Linda Doyle, Professor John Boland, Ms Patricia Callaghan (*Academic Secretary*), Professor Shane Allwright, Ronan Hodson (*President of the Graduate Students' Union*), Dr John Walsh (*Chair of the Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)*)

In attendance: Dr Camilla Kelly (*Research Development Office & Minute Secretary to the Committee*), Ms Doris Alexander (*Research Development Officer*), Ms Deirdre Savage (*Nominee of Treasurer*), Professor Charles Dorman (*Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology & Nominee of Professor Clive Williams (Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science)*).

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd (*Dean of Research and Deputy Chair, DoR*), Professor Clive Williams (*Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science*), Professor Colm O'Moráin (*Dean of Health Sciences*), Professor James Wickham

Not present: Professor Dermot Kelleher (*Faculty of Health Science Representative*)

Section A

RS/09-10/33 Attendance of Associate Dean of Research
The Committee welcomed the new Associate Dean of Research, Dr Patrick Geoghegan, to the meeting.

RS/09-10/34 Minutes of 19th January 2010
The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed.

RS/09-10/35 Matters Arising from the Minutes
RS/09-10/24: The meeting queried whether the Working Group on career structures had been initiated. In reply, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the Committee that, to

date, a Working Group had not been formed. The meeting was invited to discuss the issue.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer initiated the discussion by asking the meeting for its opinion on the concept of senior research positions. Issues around the cost of such positions, e.g. redundancy costs, were raised by various Committee members. It was noted by some of the meeting that post doctoral posts should be viewed as training positions and that research staff who stay around College on successive contracts should not be automatically eligible for these senior positions. The TRSA representative disagreed with the suggestion that contract research posts could be viewed primarily as training posts and suggested that such an approach seriously underestimated the extent of the contribution made by contract researchers to publications and research output, as well as ancillary tasks such as administration. Another member of the Committee commented that senior positions should be limited to post doctoral staff who bring in their own salary via a grant. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that it might be wise to develop a system that awards a title in recognition of a researcher getting funding in his or her own name. It would not necessarily mean a pay rise for the researcher. At this point, it was noted that most funding agencies do not allow researchers to apply for grants.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer concluded the discussion by proposing that a Working Group be formed to discuss the issue more fully. Professor John Boland was invited to join the Working Group.

Action: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer to initiate the formation of a Working Group on Career Structures for Researchers and to report back on progress at next meeting (4th May 2010).

RS/09-10/26: The Dean of Graduate Studies provided the Committee with a brief update on the Innovation Bursaries. In total, 10 PhD studentships and 6 postdoctoral grants were awarded. The meeting commented that College should come up with more ways to incentivize people to 'innovate'. The Committee offered its congratulations to the Dean of Graduate Studies for successfully coordinating the scheme.

RS/09-10/27: The ADTRI has written to staff serving on the Research Ethics Working Group to ask if they would agree to serve on the Research Ethics Policy Group (REPG). The first meeting of the REPG is scheduled for 29th March. The REPG will be listed as a subcommittee of the Research Committee.

Action: The ADTRI to convene a meeting of the Research Ethics Policy Group and circulate a list of existing research ethics committees.

Action: Camilla Kelly to ensure REPG is listed as a subcommittee in the Research Committee Terms of Reference.

RS/09-10/28: The Committee was informed that the next meeting of the Research Quality Metric Working group will look at developing metrics at a School level.

RS/09-10/36 Social Science Working Group (SSWG)

A copy of a draft report from the SSWG was circulated with papers for the meeting. The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences provided a brief overview of the contents of the document. The Committee was informed that the report arose on foot of an external review of Social Sciences.

It was noted by one of the Committee members that the report is missing one very import issue: the importance of making a link between science, technology & policy. Creating a link between the social sciences and science and technology would provide real benefits. It is a common occurrence in other universities, and creates a good spirit across campus. In view of the fact that funding agencies are not promoting such a link, TCD should take the lead.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer questioned whether a social sciences research institute was really emerging. In response, the Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences stated that none seemed to be emerging. The notion of interdisciplinarity in social sciences is not as accepted as in other disciplines. The Dean also noted that he did not sense enormous enthusiasm for creating a social sciences research institute. Another member of the Committee pointed out that research into how technology is adopted is very important. It was also queried whether there was a good model in use elsewhere for a social sciences research institute that College might be able to adopt.

Action: The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences to convene the SSWG again, with individuals from other faculties, to look at the concept of a social sciences research institute. To look at models in use in other institutions and to report back to the Research Committee.

RS/09-10/37 Dean of Research Annual Report

A copy of a draft of the Dean of Research Annual Report was circulated with papers for the meeting. The ADTRI spoke to the document.

The Committee was reminded that one of the reasons for such a report is that College needs a way of tracking research performance. The Committee was then invited to comment on the updated draft.

Some of the issues & concerns raised by the Committee were:

- What data would be most useful?
- Is the report intended for internal and/or external use?
- Are there metrics/targets in place?
- The importance of having the right narrative around the numbers.
- Pie charts on book chapters not appropriate.
- Data on publications in the humanities, taken from Thompson, can be skewed.
- Impact of research not always easy to assess.
- The importance of 'softer' metrics such as election to learned bodies.

In drawing the discussion to a close, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer asked who would be taking the administrative lead on the report. In reply, the ADTRI agreed to take the lead but noted that he would need more direction from the Committee, as there seems to be no agreement as to what the document should achieve or at whom it should be targeted. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that for the time being, the report should be treated as an internal document. He also suggested that it would be useful for him to discuss the content of the report with the ADTRI and the Dean of Research. Another draft of the report should be prepared and presented at the next Research Committee meeting.

Action: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Dean of Research and the ADTRI to meet to discuss the content of the Dean of Research Annual Report.

RS/09-10/38 Proposed Review of Research Centres

The Committee noted a memorandum from the Associate Dean of Research, dated 10th March 2010. The Committee was invited to comment on the proposal and the draft terms of reference therein.

The Committee provided its full support to the proposal, noting that it should not be assumed that a 'research centre' is doing research in the full sense of the word. A research centre should have a certain level of activity and provide a measurable added value. The Committee was then informed that a number of years ago, a past member of staff of TR&I (Jennifer Edmond) and the then DoR devised a document detailing 4 levels of centre. The document was never implemented.

Action: ADTRI to provide the Associate Dean of Research with documents prepared by Jennifer Edmond and the then Dean of Research a number of years ago, which detail 4 different levels of centre/institute.

Action: The Associate Dean of Research to provide an update within 2 months, for discussion at the final meeting of the Research Committee 8th June 2010).

RS/09-10/39 Strategic Planning Issues Arising from Consultation with Schools
The Committee noted a memorandum from the Academic Secretary, dated 8th March 2010. The exercise was useful in that it highlighted common issues among Schools: Representation; Reviewing and Planning Research Priorities; Staffing and Research; and Institutes.

There was some discussion around assisting staff to meet the criteria for research productivity, and the importance of incentivising people to do so. On the issue of staffing and research, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stated that the new blood initiative will continue. One of the Committee noted that attractive start-up packages are vital to attract new staff. On the topic of representation, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that the Directors of Research be brought together more often.

The final part of the discussion focussed on research policy. It was suggested that College should be horizon scanning, building on its strengths, and looking at threats (rationalization). The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that research policy should be something for discussion at future Research Committee meetings, using the College Strategic Plan as a source of items for the agenda. The Research Committee should focus more of its efforts on policy making. Another suggestion was that research policy is a suitable topic for the Directors of Research Forum.

Section B

RS/09-10/40 Research Committee Budget Projection to 2013/14
The Committee noted a memorandum from the ADTRI, dated 10th March 2010, outlining a projection of the Research Committee Budget to 2013/2014. He pointed out that the projection included the following items:

- the ongoing commitment to the PhD studentships/Innovation Bursaries
- the extension of the term of the Dean of Research to July 2011
- the appointment of the Associate Dean of Research (ADoR)
- the costs of back-filling the ADoR's teaching role

The ADTRI asked the Committee for its approval of the document. The Dean of Graduate Studies also requested that the advertising costs for the Innovation Bursaries be included in this year's budget. The Committee approved the payments for advertising and the budget projection to 2013/14.

RS/09-10/41 Any Other Business
The Treasurer's Office has now approved the financial plan provided by the Institute for International Integration Studies (IIS) as part of its bid for Trinity Research Institute (TRI) status.

The issue of patent costs was highlighted by a member of the Committee. Until January of this year, Enterprise Ireland funded

100% of patent costs. Now, only 75% of costs are funded. The Committee was informed that College does not have the funds to carry 25% of patent costs, and was then asked for ideas on how to solve this shortfall in funds. The meeting queried whether the various national funding agencies have been informed about this issue. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the Committee that College views this as an extremely serious issue and that he intends including the shortfall in any budget estimates for next year.

Action: The ADTRI will write to the IIS to inform it of the decision regarding its TRI status (approved).

Action: The ADTRI to provide the Committee with estimates of patent costs for this year and future years.

Section C

RS/09-10/42 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

- (i) sustainability, governance and funding of Trinity Research Institutes
- (ii) governance and funding of College Centres
- (iii) governance structures to support innovation
- (iv) shortfall in patent costs

Signed:

Date: