

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, 14 March 2023 via Zoom

MINUTES

In attendance

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)
Professor Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts
Professor Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education
Professor Mary Cosgrove, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Eburne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Peace Studies
Professor Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Professor Sergey Mozgovoy, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Hal Duncan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Anne Marie Healy, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Kingston Mills, Director of TBSI
Professor Rhodri Cusack, Director of TCIN
Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, Senior Dean
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development, Office of the Dean of Research
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director of European Engagement, Trinity Research
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office
Ms Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Ms Siobhán O'Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Human Resources
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist, Library
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services
Mr Kevin Ryan, Procurement Portfolio Manager, Financial Services Division
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

Apologies

Professor Eve Patten, Director Trinity Long Room Hub
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director CRANN and Director of Research, School of Physics
Professor Aideen Long, Director TTMI
Professor Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Mr Leonard Hobbs, Director Trinity Innovation

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	Minutes Minutes of the meeting of February 14 th were circulated in advance and accepted by the committee.
A.2	Matters Arising from the Minutes RS/18-19/14 Dean of Research advised the committee that Trinity had signed DORA but that it may take a few weeks for Trinity to appear as a signatory.

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	<p>RS/22-23/3 It was noted that at the last meeting when it was agreed to sign the Agreement on Reform of Researcher Assessment, it was perhaps not clear that by signing the agreement Trinity was entitled to also sign up to COARA and its working groups. DOR noted that she was conscious of potential workloads associated with these groups but that the coalition was not legally binding and did not commit Trinity to anything specific. Doris Alexander noted that over 437 members have signed up to COARA including SFI and IRC and it was likely that the new national funding agency would also do so. It was also noted that 13 members of LERU have signed up. It was noted that Trinity could monitor its own level of engagement with this groups. It was confirmed that the committee was happy for Trinity to also sign up to COARA on the understanding that the level of engagement would be kept under review.</p> <p>RS/22-23/9 DOR noted to the committee that a meeting between Procurement and the Office of the Dean of Research would be arranged to discuss options following on from the discussion around software licences at the last meeting. A full update would be brought back to the committee.</p>
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
<p>B.1</p>	<p>Update from Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>DOR noted to the committee that she had just started in the role in the last week and was still getting up to speed. She noted that she had been at Trinity for more than 20 years and had previously served as Director of Research and also Head of School for the School of Mathematics. DOR noted that she hoped to continue in the same spirit of collegiality and friendship with this committee, and that her main aim was to enable the great research that happens in Trinity.</p> <p>It was noted that the Research Development Office had run a very successful ‘Early Career Researcher Funding Week.’ Raquel Harper noted to the committee that the event took place over three days in Tangent and that the RDO was looking to develop more events like this to help researchers take control of their careers. DOR noted thanks to the RDO for putting together the event and all of the colleagues who attended to participate in panels and give advice.</p> <p>ADOR Brian Broderick noted that the TORCH Annual Forum had recently taken place at Trinity. It was noted that TORCH was looking at ways to improve the research element of the CHARM-EU alliance. It was also noted that university alliances were becoming more common in Europe, with representatives from 15 alliances attending the forum.</p> <p>DOR welcomed the recent announcement by Trinity to consolidate internal PhD schemes in order to increase stipends to €25k per annum. DOR noted her personal hope that this would act as a spur to others including funding agencies to review their stipend provision.</p> <p>DOR noted congratulations to researchers who had recently secured funding, and noted the importance of recognising those researchers in a forum such as the Research Committee. Congratulations were noted to the teams from the School of Engineering and the School of Computer Science and Statistics who were funded as part of the first awards under the National Challenge Fund:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Muhammad Ali, School of Engineering; co-lead Prof. Laurence Gill • Dr Julie Clarke, School of Engineering and co-lead Dr Paul Nolan, University of Galway

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Subhash Chandra, School of Engineering, Trinity and co-lead, Dr Liwen Xiao • Prof. Aonghus McNabola, School of Engineering, Trinity and co-lead Prof Mary Kelly Quinn, University College Dublin • Dr Séamus O’Shaughnessy, School of Engineering, and co-lead Dr Daniel Trimble • Dr Charles Stuart, School of Engineering, co-lead Dr Sinead Roden • Dr Alessio Benavoli, School of Computer Science and Statistics, co-lead Prof. Rocco Lupoi <p>DOR noted the recent announcement that the government has approved the appointment of a Government Science Advisor and the establishment of a National Science Advice Forum. No indication yet as to how the advisor will be selected or who it may be. DOR noted that the separation of the Chief Scientific Advisor from the head of a funding agency is a positive step. The establishment of the forum was also welcomed. It was noted that an update was circulated to the committee recently advising that SFI had made some changes to eligible costs. A new eligible cost for grant awards was approved to cover the Irish Residency Permit (IRP)(€300 pa) and mandatory health insurance costs (€600 pa) required by the Department of Justice for all non-EU/EEA students coming to Ireland. The expectation is that these costs can be absorbed within existing award budgets, new awards should include these costs in applications going forward. DOR noted that this was a positive development and also noted that it would be reasonable to expand this beyond students.</p> <p>It was also noted that SFI and IRC had recently announced an uplift to PhD stipends for the calendar year 2023, which amounts to an additional €41.66 per months for the student. DOR noted that while this was a step in the right direction it was a very small one, and made Trinity’s announcement even more important as it showed leadership in where these agencies should be heading.</p> <p>The committee was reminded of the recent circulation from the Secretary’s Office in relation to updating staff publications on RSS and the Annual Research Productivity report. In response to a question from the committee it was agreed that clarity would be sought on any changes to budget calculations.</p> <p>ACTION: Office of the Dean of Research to follow up regarding budget calculations</p>
<p>B.2</p>	<p>RS/22-23/10 New national funding agency Lisa Keating, Irish Universities Association</p> <p><i>Lisa Keating joined the meeting for this item</i></p> <p>Following on from discussion at the committee meeting in March, Lisa Keating joined the committee for this item to discuss several issues related to the establishment of a new national funding agency.</p> <p>LK noted briefly to the committee in opening comments that the proposed agency had been announced in Impact 2030 and that a new research bill would be introduced to support that. It was noted that the operationalisation of the new agency was also a factor. In relation to the research bill, LK noted that the IUA had queried with DFHERIS why the decision was taken to form a new agency which would incorporate the activities of SFI and IRC. It was noted to the IUA that the legislation underpinning SFI was very restrictive in terms of what it was permitted to do, and the there was no legislation underpinning the IRC which operates under the HEA. A new bill would provide legislative standing for the new agency and provided an opportunity for</p>

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research activity to be viewed on a more secure footing. The committee was advised that heads of bill have been drafted and were due to go to cabinet in the next week after which they would be published.

It was noted that Impact 2030 stated there would be parity of esteem across all disciplines, but it was unclear what this truly means. There were also different interpretations of what research excellence means. It was noted that in relation to the new research bill there would be specific stages in the process where input could be given, but it was understood that the operationalisation of the agency would include a consultation process.

In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:

- Prof. Kingston Mills noted that from the perspective of the sciences, the definition of excellence was very simple and was based on publications. Also noted that if fundamental basic science was not funded then it would be impossible to train the next generation of scientists who would go on to work in industry, generate patents etc.
- Doris Alexander noted the general sense was that Pillar 2 in Horizon Europe had gone too far on TRL and would have to be corrected. Noted the importance of a balanced funding system and the need to fund basic research in order to be internationally competitive. Also noted that the concept of excellence was being examined at a European level via Action 13 which is one action that Ireland did not sign up to.
- In response to question from the DOR regarding benchmarking with international comparators, LK noted that she was not aware that any benchmarking had been conducted by DFHERIS and it seemed that it would fall to the sector to do this.
- Prof. Rhodri Cusack noted that neuroscience was highlighted once in Impact 2030 as an example of Ireland's successes but as this was the only reference perhaps the discipline would be better served under the Dept of Health which might enable more translational research as a result. LK noted that it was very important that a suite of agencies were in place to support research, and that the IUA was engaging with the depts of Health and Environment in this regard.
- Prof. Michael Monaghan noted that as well as the importance of excellence, the operationalisation of the agency was just as significant. There should be engagement with other agencies to ensure that there is no duplication of funding schemes. LK noted that colleagues in DFHERIS had expressed interest in a consultation process when it came to operationalising the new agency. Noted that there had been mission creep across SFI and Enterprise Ireland in particular and that these agencies were currently engaging to clarify their activities. Also noted the importance of agencies and depts having very clear remits and not straying from those.
- Prof. Immo Warntjes noted that it was crucial the agency be aligned with what is happening in Europe, and noted concerns with following models that are not scalable to activity in Ireland. Also noted that the issue of governance was of concern, particularly for AHSS disciplines. Noted that any new agency should have equal representation from every discipline. Also noted serious concerns with SFI's funding activity at the moment compared to the pausing of IRC programmes. Noted that it was crucial that the approaches of both agencies be combined rather than imposing one former agency on a new construct. LK noted that representative from the Norwegian Research Council would be visiting in May, and Nordic and Baltic Secretaries General would be visiting in

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the coming week to discuss the structure of their agencies and systems. Also noted the importance that colleagues throughout the sector find ways to input at all stages of the process. LK agreed on the importance of governance structures. Noted that the IUA was also concerned about the planned calls from SFI, particularly in relation to centres as this would tie up approximately 50% of any new agency's budget for 8 years. LK noted that there was general agreement that ringfencing budget for AHSS disciplines was not favoured as this risked keeping budgets low when these disciplines tend to perform very well in open competitions (eg. two-thirds of drawdown from ERC is in social sciences and humanities).

- The committee was asked for thoughts on the formation of an 'academic council' in addition to a board as part of the governance structures. DOR noted that the interactions between those bodies would have to be very clearly defined, and that an academic council would have to have some authority in order to be effective. There was a risk that the structure became too complicated and in so doing avoided having any accountability. DOR noted that it was not yet clear how any principles for a new agency would be safeguarded.
- Prof. Declan O'Sullivan asked about engagement with the TU sector and how it would interact with the new agency. LK noted that the IUA and THEA have a long established relationship and have always sought to work together on issues of common interest.
- Prof. Padraic Fallon noted concerns that following on from the recent event at the University of Limerick and what was being done with feedback gathered there. Also noted that the IUA was a broad church that included different universities with sometimes very different concerns. LK noted that discussions like this one were vital to ensuring that the IUA was able to find common ground across the sector. Agreed that it can often seem like nothing is happening on the surface, but that much of the dialogue with government etc tends to take place on a one-to-one basis. LK noted that when the HEA legislation was drafted, the IUA hired a legislative expert to assist with writing responses. LK noted that the IUA's main task was to engage with policy makers, Oireachtas members etc to make sure they understand what is meant by 'research excellence,' 'parity of esteem' etc.
- DOR noted that there is general agreement that research is chronically underfunded and asked if there was any sense of an ambition to raise the funding for research to OECD levels. LK noted that this was difficult and the IUA and sector had to approach it from a number of angles. LK noted that pointing to other better-funded systems had not worked. Other approaches that would be used were capacity building in institutions, the possibility of clustering specific activities and using universities as anchors for innovation activities, and targeting specifically where more investment was needed rather than stating the sector generally needed more funding. Also noted that most blockages in this regard came from DPER.

DOR noted that the establishment of a new agency could be an opportunity to do something very positive for research in Ireland, and thanked LK for her contribution.

Lisa Keating left the meeting

DOR noted comments from Prof. Eve Patten who was unable to attend the meeting. It was noted that Prof. Patten had been in discussions with other Arts and Humanities Institute Directors and members of the Irish Humanities Alliance with a view to preparing a response to the legislation on the new funding agency, when it is published.

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	<p>Their view is that arrangements for the new agency look to be highly unsatisfactory in areas of funding equity and governance.</p> <p>DOR noted that she shared many of the committee’s concerns. The test would be in how the principles for the new agency were implemented and protected. Noted that if managed appropriately this could be a change for good but just one concern was there was very little input to date from international best practice. DOR noted that the Office of the Dean of Research would collect feedback from the Trinity research community that could be collated for engaging with the IUA and government. DOR noted that Trinity had some distinctions from other universities that would need to be expressed and protected.</p> <p>ACTION: circulate feedback form to the committee.</p>
<p>B.3</p>	<p>Postdoc Academy update Prof. Immo Warntjes</p> <p>The committee was given an update on the progress of the Postdoc Academy. IW noted that the postdoc experience had long been identified as a problem that needed to be addressed. Too many postdocs come to Trinity with high hopes and then did not necessarily find the support they were looking for. IW noted that the first steps had been to establish a working group with representatives from the postdoc community across College, as well as HR, Office of the Dean of Research, and the Research Development Office. IW also noted that the issue of teaching opportunities had already been addressed, and another issue had been to find an umbrella platform to bring together resources for postdocs in once place. A “virtual academy” had also been created which collected information about supports for postdocs in one space. The TRSA noted that they were happy to see this page was now live.</p> <p>IW noted to the committee that one of the main issues raised by postdocs was the lack of visibility they had. The working group conducted a review of staff pages in all schools and found that there was no consistent approach as to how postdocs were listed. The working group had identified a common template that could be used by all schools and requested that the committee support the addition of a dedicated postdoc page as part of staff listings on school websites.</p> <p>ACTION: a template would be circulated to Directors of Research to facilitate the creation/update of postdoc listings</p>
<p>B.4</p>	<p>RS/19-20/1 QS Subject Rankings Dr. Fiona Killard</p> <p>FK presented a brief overview of the QS Subject Rankings as they were due to be published on March 14th. The committee was advised that each subject has a different methodology. It was noted that it was difficult to make a proper comparison on performance as the methodology had slightly changed and an institution’s score did not correlate with rank. FK noted the introduction of a new metric for ‘International Research Network’ which captured partnerships, engagements etc by analysing scholarly outputs. FK reiterated to the committee that these subjects do not map on to Trinity’s structure. The subject definitions are based on how journals are tagged in Scopus and bear no relation to how Trinity’s schools are organised. FK noted that the subject ranking methodology would not stand up to academic rigour.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, it was noted there was no formal policy on announcements or communications regarding the subject rankings. It was also noted that the methodology was expected to change again next year when it was expected</p>

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	<p>that the weighting for reputational voting would be reduced and a new metric for sustainability would be introduced.</p> <p>ACTION: circulate slides to the committee after the meeting</p> <p>NOTE: QS originally announced that the subject rankings would be published on March 14th with the embargo due to lift at 10.00. On March 15th, QS announced that the embargo was extended to March 22nd and a new fact file was sent to each institution with revised rankings for each subject.</p>
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	<p>Items for Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memo from Research Ethics Policy Committee re REAMS update <p>ADOR Padraic Fallon noted that the memo was to provide the committee with an update on the progress of the new Research Ethics Application Management System that went live in January. It was noted that a fact finding exercise had been conducted since then, and the vendor would now be engaged with to examine improvements and updates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memo from Human Resources re researcher recruitment <p>Siobhán O’Shea noted that Trinity did not have a centralised policy for researcher recruitment which was a requirement for the Athena Swan silver award. It was also an issue of compliance and fairness in terms how research staff are recruited. The committee was advised that HR wanted to engage with the research committee on the development and implementation of this process so that the policy would be simple and processes would be clear. SO’S noted that an online researcher nomination form had been developed over the last six months in consultation with Faculty Deans and a number of schools. The committee was asked to endorse the proposed approach from HR so that consultation could proceed. DOR and committee agreed with a two-stage process proposed by SO’S that would begin with consultation on Open, Transparent, Merit based recruitment, with a second stage that would involve more detailed proposals to the committee in relation to the requirements for applying for the HRS4R Award (HR Strategy in Research Excellence).</p>
C.2	<p>Items for future discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full update from REPC re REAMS to be presented to committee at April meeting • Geraldine Anderson, Head of Daasi Unit to present at April meeting
C.3	<p>AOB</p> <p>The committee was reminded that nominations for the Research Excellence Awards would be accepted until March 31st.</p>