

**The University of Dublin
Trinity College**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, 17 October 2023
Boardroom, Trinity Business School**

MINUTES

In attendance

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)
Prof. Brian Broderick (Associate Dean of Research)
Prof. Padraic Fallon (Associate Dean of Research)
Prof. Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts
Prof. Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education
Prof. Pádraic Whyte, Director of Research, School of English
Prof. Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities
Prof. Mark Bell, Director of Research, School of Law
Prof. Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Prof. Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Prof. Benjamin Wold, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies
Prof. Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Prof. Marco Ruffini, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Prof. Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Prof. Frank Wellmer, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Prof. Andrei Parnachev, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Prof. Yvonne Buckley, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Prof. Sarah Doyle, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Prof. Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Prof. Anne-Marie Healy, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Kingston Mills, Director of TBSI
Prof. Aideen Long, Director of Trinity Translational Medicine Institute
Prof. Eve Patten, Director of Trinity Long Room Hub
Prof. Rhodri Cusack, Director of TCIN
Prof. Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association

Dr Sally Smith, Head of Research, Trinity Research
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director of European Engagement, Trinity Research
Ms Siobhán O'Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Human Resources
Dr Gordon Elliott, Technology Transfer Case Manager, Trinity Innovation
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

Apologies

Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist
Prof. Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, Director of CRANN
Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Prof. Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research
Prof. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Prof. Mary Cosgrove, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Dr Michelle Olmstead, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer, Trinity Innovation

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Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Minutes for the September meeting were circulated in advance. Pending corrections to the attendance list, minutes were approved.</p>
A.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>RS/23-24/1 The committee was advised that the Policy on Sponsorship of Clinical Trials was being revised to incorporate committee feedback and would then be brought to Council for approval.</p> <p>Regarding the question of whether postdocs could act as personal tutors, the committee was advised that HR was reviewing it, but there was concern it might not be in compliance with Statutes. HR will provide an update to the committee in due course.</p>
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	<p>Update from the Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>The committee was advised that Dr Sally Smith had been appointed Head of Research. The Dean welcomed her to Trinity and wished her well in her role.</p> <p>Disappointment was noted with the allocations for research in the recently announced Budget. DOR noted that the figures stated in the budget fell far short of the scale of challenges the sector faced, and also noted that very little progress had been made on the issue of PhD stipends. The Dean of Graduate Studies echoed this, and noted it was very disappointing in light of the recommendations made in DFHERIS’s own review of PhD stipends. DOR noted that the overall budget allocated for R&I was actually down 3% from the previous year.</p> <p>RS/23-24/8 Export Controls: DOR advised that meetings regarding Export Controls had taken place with the Secretary’s Office. It was confirmed that responsibility for this issue lies with the Secretary’s Office, and that the DOR had discussed with them what was required for Trinity in terms of awareness raising and training. The committee was advised that DETE would be conducting a “soft audit” in November/December and Trinity would need to demonstrate some progress on the issue by that time.</p> <p>ACTION: DOR proposed that the committee invite the Secretary’s Office to provide a full update on this matter.</p> <p>In relation to issues that had been raised outside of the committee, the DOR confirmed that there was no college policy that mandated how the buyout for a PI’s time should be budgeted for in an ERC application. This had been raised a number of times by colleagues in the RDO and the DOR confirmed that there is flexibility in how this should be managed. The committee was advised that the budget does not have to reflect a percentage of the PI’s current salary and could instead be whatever the school considered to be appropriate to cover the PI’s teaching. In response to a question from the committee, it was confirmed that there is no college policy on teaching buyout.</p> <p>ACTION: formal communication from DOR to be circulated.</p>

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	<p>RS/20-21/4 Research Ethics Application Management System: The committee was advised that Version 2 was nearly ready to be rolled out and that RECs would all be contacted to arrange training sessions. It was noted that V2 was a radical improvement on V1 and would be monitored very closely once it went live to address any issues that might arise.</p> <p>It was noted that the call for SFI centre proposals was open with the deadline approaching. The DOR noted that the RDO had been engaging with prospective applicants to get a sense of what was happening across college and provide feedback. DOR hoped that Directors of Research were aware of any proposals in their schools.</p> <p>RS/19-20/1 University Rankings: it was noted that Trinity had moved up to 134 in the recently announced Times Higher Education World University Rankings. The committee was advised that the rankings always come with a health warning, and that the methodology had been slightly changed this year. DOR also noted the University of Utrecht's very public withdrawal from all university rankings. DOR noted that while Utrecht operated in a very different system to Irish universities, it was still interesting to read the rationale behind the decision.</p> <p>RS/23-24/9 HEA System Performance Framework: the committee was advised that the HEA had recently published the new System Performance Framework which would replace the old Compact. It was noted that the timelines afforded to HEIs to develop a first draft of their framework was extremely short with little indication as to how much scope there would be for amendments to a second draft.</p> <p>ACTION: DOR to provide full update to committee at a later date.</p> <p>DOR noted congratulations to Richard Nair (Natural Sciences) and Craig McEntee (Biochemistry and Immunology) who were recently awarded Royal Society Fellowships. It was also noted that 38 postgraduate scholarships and 11 postdoctoral scholarships were awarded to Trinity researchers in the IRC's Government of Ireland scheme. DOR also noted congratulations to the Trinity Long Room Hub for its very successful Arts & Humanities Festival which took place at the end of September.</p>
B.2	<p>RS/23-24/6 Researcher Recruitment Project Siobhán O'Shea, Human Resources</p> <p>The committee was reminded that its approval had been sought and given in March 2023 to embark on this process which would explore requirements in relation to compliance and also to understand the needs of PIs. The committee was presented with an overview of the workshop outputs, draft policy, and process roadmap in relation to the Researcher Recruitment Project.</p> <p>SOS noted that implementing an open, transparent and merit based recruitment process was part of Trinity's obligations under the EU Charter, Athena Swan, and the EU Gender Equality award. HR's perspective throughout the process is to enable recruitment, not block it. The following points were noted to the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A principles-based policy had been drafted and circulated for discussion. The policy and process needed to be agile and responsive.• Standardised salary scales, such as the IUA scales, would be helpful from a Payroll perspective with regard to increments.• There was still work to be done to understand how grant requirements can be translated to recruitment processes and employment contracts.

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- A goal of the process would be to provide PIs with as much collateral as possible up front so that they were ready for recruitment when needed.
- No decision had been made on whether to use a standardised application form or narrative CV. It was noted that narrative CVs were discussed at a recent LERU HR group meeting, but there was no consensus on the topic.
- It was noted that HR has no control over how long it takes for a visa to be granted or a hosting agreement to be arranged. This should be built into an indicative timeline from the outset of the process.
- It was noted that there are many “hygiene factors” around recruitment that Trinity and HR have no control over such as cost of living, housing, childcare, schools etc but perhaps there was more could be done to develop guidance and information around living in Ireland.
- It was noted that the “research job family” was out of scope for this project but a broader discussion would be needed on this at some point in the future.
- For the technical aspects, the use of CORE was being explored. This would be convenient as it would capture data at source, but still unclear as to how straightforward it would be for PIs to use.
- Any implementation of the process was contingent on securing budget and resource, and a request was with Planning Group but had not yet been approved. Should the request be approved, it was anticipated that a 12-week development/implementation period would be needed.

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

- Some members of the committee noted strong objections to the use of narrative CVs. SOS noted that HR had not made a decision and was asking the committee whether this was something that they should consider. Members of the committee noted that CVs were an opportunity for researchers to present themselves as they wanted, and it was difficult to see how standardising them would benefit the researcher.
- Derogations to the process would be possible, such as if a specific researcher had been named in a grant proposal. This would be considered to have gone through peer review.
- Members of the committee noted that while a process was needed to ensure transparency, flexibility was still needed to ensure that important resources would not be lost. SOS noted that this had been noted in feedback from centres where the training, development, and progression within a group had sense and merit, but current contractual arrangements did not properly allow for this. More work needed to be done around specific purpose contracts.
- SOS confirmed that selection committees did not need a representative from HR on them and could be made up of the PI plus one other person from the area. It was also confirmed that a HR representative did not need to be on interview panels.
- Some members of the committee noted difficulties other European institutions had experienced in implementing OMTR. SOS noted that it was a requirement that Trinity had to comply with, and that every other 3rd level institution in Ireland and most LERU partners had already implemented it. SOS noted that the current process sees a nomination come to HR and only then can questions be asked. The proposed new process would ask the questions up front before nomination stage to avoid delays later in the process.
- Members of the committee noted that in some disciplines, such as Physics and Mathematics, a common international platform was in use that had common deadlines and templates shared across all institutions. If those schools were unable to use that platform for recruitment they would lose good candidates.

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- Some members of the committee welcomed the proposal to implement the IUA salary scales as standard. However, it was noted that these scales could sometimes change multiple times a year which would limit what PIs could do between grant proposal stage and when recruitment might be able to commence. The need for funding bodies to provide adequate resource for salaries and researcher careers across the lifecycle of grants was noted as a concern for all universities. SOS noted that while IUA salary scale would be used, PIs would have flexibility to choose points on that scale.
- SOS reiterated that the scope of this process only took in Research Fellows and Research Assistants. There was a much larger piece of work to be done around the roles in the “research job family”.

The DOR noted the importance of maintaining the flexibility that PIs currently enjoy, and of respecting specific timelines within certain fields. It was noted that members of the committee could follow up directly with SOS on the proposed policy and that HR would be happy to come to schools to discuss it in more detail. SOS also noted that the committee was being asked for feedback at this stage on the policy, and that approval would be through the normal policy approval process with final approval at Board. The DOR encouraged the committee to report back to their schools and institutes to socialise the process with colleagues.

RS/23-24/10 Research Culture

Dean of Research

The DOR noted that the concept of ‘research culture’ was an emerging topic in a national and international context. It was noted that the Wellcome Trust had recently funded a call related to research culture which Trinity had unsuccessfully applied to, it was a topic for discussion at LERU meetings, and formed part of discussions around COARA and researcher assessment reform.

A brief snapshot of what other institutions, both nationally and internationally, were doing in this area was presented to the committee. It was noted that Trinity was not visibly “doing” research culture initiatives in the same way as other institutions. It was noted that while both the Research Charter and Living Research Excellence Strategy were moving in that direction, neither document explicitly mentioned ‘research culture’. It was also noted that the strategy was due for a review over the coming year and this could form the basis for a broader discussion around research culture and what it means for Trinity. The DOR noted that it was important for Trinity to define what research culture means for the institution.

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

- Members of the committee welcomed the discussion, especially in light of the recent Wellcome Trust bid. The importance of having this discussion with all parts of Trinity was noted, not just at school level.
- Some members of the committee noted a concern about a perceived lack of prominence for research at Trinity, and that any initiative needed to come from the top down. DOR agreed that research was not perhaps as prominent as it should be, but also stressed that the committee had a role to play in addressing that.
- Some members of the committee suggested that recruitment was driven by teaching requirements as opposed to research needs.
- Work was already underway on the new College strategic plan. DOR noted that if a proper process could be put in place around the review of the Living

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	<p>Research Excellence Strategy and the discussion around research culture then this would provide an opportunity to more effectively feed into the institutional strategy.</p> <p>The DOR advised the committee that this would be a recurring topic for discussion over the coming year.</p>
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	Items for Noting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• REPC Memo - Update on REAMS: a memo from the REPC outlining the progress on REAMS V2 was noted by the committee.
C.2	Items for future discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The committee was advised that an updated version of the Policy on Good Research Practice would be presented to them for approval in December.
C.3	AOB <p>Meeting adjourned.</p>