



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

Report on Employment Contract Patterns and Conditions

February 2024

Executive Summary

Members of the working group gathered on nine occasions to review the employment contract patterns and conditions of our staff in the University under four categories: Academic, Research, Professional and Occasional Staff.

The approach of the group was to review the quantitative data in the first instance for all categories outlined above and provide observations and comments where appropriate.

Following on from that, members of the working group engaged on a consultative basis with a wide range of employees in each category across the university to gather qualitative data.

The quantitative and qualitative data was reviewed and considered in detail resulting in a number of key recommendations, all of which are captured and outlined throughout this document under each category.



1. Context

The Board of the University directed the establishment of a working group to review employment contract patterns and conditions (Dec 2021).

In establishing the group, it was noted that while it is the case that Trinity will always need to support a mix of modes of employment, it was deemed timely to look at the full picture in detail. Hence it was agreed to set up a working group of Board, to focus on surveying the broad landscape of employment contract patterns and employment conditions in Trinity and to identify what can be done to enhance conditions in Trinity.

2. Objectives of the Working Group

The group had two main objectives.

1. To get a full picture of employment contract patterns for those who do not hold permanent positions in Trinity. This involves looking beyond the headcount numbers and fully articulating all the challenges that arise for the different cohorts within this category.
2. To understand what we can do as a University to either provide more secure options, or in cases where permanent contracts are not a possibility, provide a more supportive environment for our staff.

The terms of reference of the working group (appendix 1) note that it is important to reiterate that Trinity will always need to support a mix of modes of employment and that there are several roles that will be by nature related to finite projects. In these cases, practical and demonstrable actions to provide support will be key.

There were certain matters that were outside the scope of the work of the Working Group. It is beyond doubt that the cost of living in Ireland and especially in Dublin is very high, but this is a factor beyond the control of the University and hence is not considered in this report.

Furthermore, and in so far as the recommendations made in this report are concerned, the Working Group was not in a position to assess the cost of what is recommended.

It is worth noting that whereas much public discourse focuses on the concept of 'precarity' of employment, in fact there is no uniform definition of what is meant by precarity and in any event, the focus of this working group is on employment patterns more generally rather than on the concept of 'precarity'.

3. Approach

The working group approached the task methodically by evaluating data in four sections:

1. Academic staff
2. Research staff
3. Professional staff
4. Occasional staff



For each cohort of staff, data¹ was provided by HR to show the number of staff per job category, per grade, by contract type and contract pattern.

To assess **contract type**, the data showed numbers of staff on permanent, contract of indefinite duration, fixed term and specific purpose contracts and included information on funding sources where that was a factor in determining contract type.

To assess **contract pattern**, the data showed numbers of staff on part-time or term-time contracts. It was noted that part-time work is not necessarily precarious in of itself. Facilitating part-time work is a feature of being a good employer.

To supplement the quantitative data provided, the group identified topics that required further investigation via qualitative methods. Semi-structured interviews took place with a variety of staff and managers to elicit further information to inform the discussion.

Types of staff included in qualitative assessment:

- Teaching fellows, Adjunct academic staff, Term-time employees.
- Research assistants, post-doctoral researchers, research fellows, also referenced report from the Research Staff Association.
- Professional staff: senior management and administrative staff.
- Occasional staff undertaking academic work and support work.

Topics identified for discussion included:

- a) Academic staff on term time work: purpose, operational need, impact on individual.
- b) Academic staff on adjunct contracts: nature of work, expected duration, purpose, career expectations of individual.
- c) Teaching Fellows: nature of work, career expectations of individual.
- d) Research staff: nature of work, research versus other types of work e.g. academic, admin.
- e) Research staff: transparency of rates of pay, pay scales, increments.
- f) Professional staff: contract duration, nature of work vis-à-vis project work or ongoing work.
- g) Occasional staff: duration of work, nature of work, payment rates, regularity of work.

4. Definitions: Types of Contracts of Employment

Fixed Term: Covers employees whose contract ends on a specified date. Generally, a fixed-term contract ends on an agreed date. Objective Grounds needed on renewal as to why not indefinite duration.

Specific Purpose: Employee whose contract will finish when a particular stated task is completed or when a specific event occurs. Objective grounds needed.

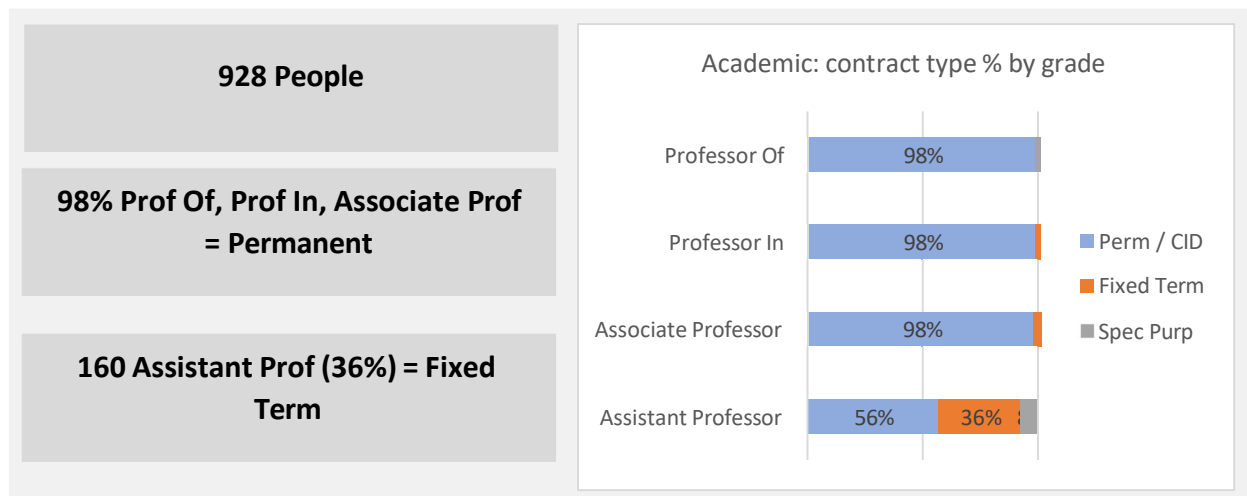
Indefinite Duration: 2003 Fixed Term Workers Act: Contract of continuous service are intended to last for an indefinite period of time, with no specified or foreseeable end to the relationship. It will only cease with resignation, dismissal etc.

Permanent: Contracts are continuous service and intended to last for an indefinite period of time, with no specified or foreseeable end to the relationship. It will only cease with resignation, dismissal.

¹ No personal information was provided.



5. Findings – Academic Staff



5.1 Assistant Professors and above

Data shows that 78% of Academic staff are on permanent or indefinite duration contracts.

44% of Assistant Professors (196 people) are on fixed term or specific purpose contracts. The reason for these FT/SP contracts are:

- **Tenure track:** a fixed term contract with the view to permanency, with a development programme to support achievement of milestones. This is not deemed precarious in that the future of the post is clear and the route to achieving tenure is well documented and supported.
- **Human Capital Initiative posts:** HCI posts are funded from an exchequer award and are prescribed as fixed term under the funding arrangement. The objective for Trinity is to use this funding to explore new programs or initiatives for potential long-term viability. All appointees are clear from the outset regarding the duration and purpose of the post.
- **Fixed term funding:** A small number of posts are funded from external funds that are time-limited in nature, thus contracts are aligned to the funding duration.
- **Specific purpose:** Some post-holders are covering for other employees on various types of leave, or in College Officer roles. The post belongs to the substantive post-holder, so cannot be offered on a permanent / indefinite duration basis. Appointees are aware of the nature of the post.

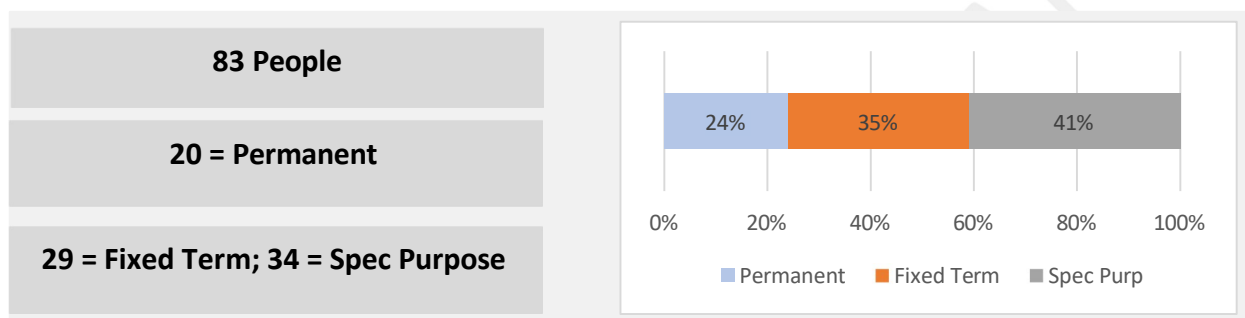
As the data outlines, the majority of Academic Staff are on permanent contracts. Those on fixed term and specific purpose are explained above, however further discussions identified a small number of instances in the use of fixed term/specific purpose contracts for Assistant Professors where permanent/tenure track may have been more appropriate, demonstrating lack of planning and clarity at the recruitment stage for fixed term Assistant Professors in terms of potential for transfer to Tenure Track at a later date.



Having discussed the qualitative data, the recommendation from the working group regarding Assistant Professors is:

1. The University applies and facilitates the policy on use of Tenure Track contracts and the parameters under which fixed term or specific purpose contracts may be used.

5.2 Teaching Fellows



There are 83 Teaching Fellows in Trinity, 24% permanent, 35% fixed term, 41% specific purpose.

The working group identified a disconnect between how Teaching Fellows are regarded in the Academic Titles document and how Teaching Fellows are engaged in practice.

- Academic Titles document prescribes a limit of 3 years for those in Teaching Fellow roles.
- In practice, some Teaching Fellows are re-engaged beyond 3 years as they are operationally required for the running of the School.

This prompts a question for the University leadership: What is the role of a Teaching Fellow in Trinity College Dublin.

The following **observations** were made by the working group, noting that they express differing points of view, they formed the basis for further discussion and investigation with the community:

- There is a need in some disciplines for Teaching only roles. The other facets of the Assistant Professor role are not required; therefore a Teaching Fellow role is appropriate.
- Where the work of a Teaching Fellow is required on an ongoing basis, the three-year principle per the Academic Titles document is not appropriate or practicable.
- Trinity is a research-led University and generally, academic staff should be engaged as Assistant Professors, not Teaching Fellows in order to support the research of the University.
- The role of Teaching Fellow can become a cul-de-sac for Academics, as the longer the time spent in this role, the more difficult it may be to successfully compete for an Assistant Professor role.
- Teaching Fellow roles are useful to fulfil the teaching-only elements where the substantive post holder is absent e.g. career break, college officer role.
- There is a view that there are blurred lines between the role of Teaching Fellow and Assistant Professor, with some anecdotal evidence of Teaching Fellows being requested to



do more than teaching, or Teaching Fellows opting to participate in activities outside the remit of the TF role. As is noted below, the qualitative research undertaken clarifies this – and specifically notes both that the practice in one school may be different to the norm, but also that even in that school, it would seem that, certainly contractually, there is no question of the teaching fellow role being akin to that of an Assistant Professor.

Findings from the qualitative information gathered

As a qualitative exercise, semi-structured interviews were conducted with many of the Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants in the School of Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies. It is worth noting that the outputs of these interviews appear to be *specific* to this school – in other words, the approach to the role of ‘Teaching Fellows’ that emerged from these interviews does NOT appear to arise elsewhere in the University.

In order to ensure balance, comments were then sought from the Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and the School Manager. The findings below therefore reflect both the comments made in interviews with Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants (referred to below as ‘the respondents’) *and* the responses from Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager.

The Name of the Job	It was noted by respondents that within academia, and indeed within the titles document there is a common colloquial understanding of the concept of a ‘Teaching Fellow’, namely that this is a short term position held either by someone at the outset of their career and to gain teaching experience, or someone who (again on a short term basis) is filling a temporary gap in a school or department.
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By contrast, all of the respondents had been in the role for many years and many had CIDs. Indeed respondents said that describing their (long term) role as that of ‘Teaching Fellow’ mean that they were in a position of relative disadvantage when applying for other jobs outside Trinity (in that other applicants from other universities who might have done the same kind of work, would be described as ‘lecturer’ or using some alternative nomenclature which colloquially denotes a long term role). Thus in so far as the position of the respondents in the School of Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies is concerned whatever about the *nature* of their role, it simply is not properly described as that of a *Teaching Fellow*.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager broadly endorsed this view. They made the point that the current state of affairs came about following a review of the School where the reviewers had recommended regularising the position of many occasional and CID language teaching staff/language assistants and the term ‘Teaching Fellow’ was chosen (following advice from HR/Employee relations) as the most suitable.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager also believes we should review the nomenclature here as well as considering possible career option routes via teaching pathways.



The Extent of the Role Teaching Fellows are paid (for the months that they work) on the Teaching Fellow pay scale. Under the terms of their contracts, they are required to teach for 12 hours a week and it has been confirmed by HR that (taking preparation and course administration into account) this represents a maximum working week (for the period for which they are paid) of 37 hours work.

All respondents said that they worked very significantly in excess of 36 hours p/w – with a substantial amount of time being spent on preparing classes (with each iteration of a class requiring specific preparation), *grading* assessments and giving feedback thereon. In addition, they all said that they were regularly asked to write references for students. Some respondents said that they had administrative responsibilities beyond simply administering their courses. All respondents said that they do not simply work to their contracts and refuse to do more because if they did so the work of the School (and the education of the students) would be undermined and they did not want this.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager said that, as a standard, administrative workload was course connected (e.g. inputting of marks, attending exam boards and so on). Alternatively in the case of some Teaching Fellows, exam or programme co-ordination might be part of their contractual duties. In smaller departments (Spanish, Italian) Teaching Fellows may be asked to take on wider administrative duties but, if so, then they receive a deduction in the amount of teaching hours that they have in compensation. Finally whereas there is one elected representative from Teaching Fellows on the school executive, in general Teaching Fellows would *not* be expected to sit on School or College committees.

The Nature of the Role All respondents said that whereas they were hired at least in part on the basis of their research portfolio, equally *their* current roles negatively impacted their ability to obtain an academic position or to pursue academic careers. They said that was (A) because they had so much work to do in terms of teaching, preparation marking and so on, this severely limited their ability to research (B) they were not entitled to any conference funding, or any other form of research funding nor to sabbatical leave and (C) they did not receive any career planning advice from College.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager responded that whereas being 'research active' was not a requirement for hiring a Teaching Fellow, equally such a person in their view was expected to have a PhD (albeit that SLLCS is the one School in the University where there are Teaching Fellows on CIDs who do not have nor are studying for PhDs). Nonetheless the School accepted that because of the point mentioned above (the fact that there are concerns with nomenclature in the case especially of CID Teaching Fellows) the current position does impede progress for many Teaching Fellows in the school.

Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants Some people interviewed were of the view that the roles of Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants were regarded as interchangeable within the school. The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager rejects this. In fact under Trinity rules they are separate roles with separate salary scales and separate requirements. Teaching Fellows assist the School to teach a programme, whereas Language Assistants support the student in terms of language tutorials and language practice. They do not teach programmes. The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager also reject the idea that the Teaching Fellow role is akin to



that of an Assistant Professor in that there is no contractual obligation to research – and whereas some Teaching Fellows *may* research in their own time, they have no obligation to do so and this is outside their contract.

Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Teaching Fellows are:

1. The University clarifies the role of Teaching Fellow and the parameters under which this role may be used and communicates this to all schools. The limit of three years should be addressed and either enforced with rationale explaining it or removed from the academic titles document. There should, in other words, be no abuse by schools, departments or institutes of the role of Teaching Fellow.
2. The University should review the requirements and responsibilities for the role of Teaching Fellow, its duration of appointment, and its nomenclature. The situation of Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants on indefinite duration contracts in the SLLCS needs to be reviewed and a more suitable nomenclature to be found.
3. At the point of commencement, and annually thereafter, the Head of School/Discipline in all schools should clarify the boundaries of the Teaching Fellow and Language Assistant role with the appointee(s).
4. Heads of Schools should review the workload of Teaching Fellows in their schools, to ensure that work required is carried out within their contractual hours.
5. There appears to be a bigger dependency in the SLLCS on Teaching Fellows and Language Assistants, and development of a strategic staff plan may be helpful in identifying the long term needs of the school.

5.3 Adjunct Academics

Adjunct academics are described in the **Academic Titles** document as follows:

“Adjunct academic staff are employed for a specific purpose in teaching, research, or academic administration (which may include co-supervision of research students). They do not carry teaching/research/administration roles pro rata with full-time staff. The responsibilities of adjunct academic staff will be specified by the Head of School at the time of appointment. Adjunct academic staff may not be permanent; they are part-time and there is no specific time commitment. They may be remunerated for their adjunct role but the College is not their primary employer”.

40 Adjunct Academics:

30 Adjunct Assistant Professor

1 Adjunct Professor

8 Adjunct Teaching Fellows

1 Part Time Medical Lecturer (AP)

Adjunct APs: 21 Permanent

5 Fixed Term; 4 Specified Purpose

Adjunct TF:

1 Permanent; 7 Fixed Term

Adjunct Professor:

1 Fixed Term



There are 40 Adjunct Academic staff in Trinity College, and this report refers only to those who are paid employees, not those who are unpaid, also known as visiting adjunct staff.

The working group identified a disconnect between how Adjunct Academics are regarded in the Academic Titles document and how Adjunct Academics are engaged in practice.

The following **observations** were made by the working group:

- The Academic Titles document states that for Adjunct staff, Trinity is not their primary employer. This is unenforceable. It is not possible for Trinity to keep abreast of the external employment or otherwise of adjunct staff. Furthermore, it would not constitute a valid objective ground for failing to award a CID under the Fixed Term Workers Act or failing to offer additional work where available under the Cush Report. Once engaged, Adjunct staff are employees of Trinity irrespective of their employment elsewhere.
- It is a legitimate objective of the University to enhance our students' education through provision of additional content and teaching from those who are considered experts in their field. Utilisation of Adjunct staff from industry or practitioner-based roles adds diversity and richness to the curriculum and provides opportunities to develop links for student placements, projects and future careers.
- The nature of some of the programs in the University means that some modules may be taught in one semester only, or to a very small number of students, or may only be required for one year. There may not be resources within the fulltime cohort of academic staff to provide these niche or specialist modules. Engagement of adjunct academics may be a pragmatic response to meeting timetabling needs for elective subjects that are not part of the core curriculum.
- Trinity has set a high standard for the engagement of Assistant Professors. It also provides a dedicated development program for those on Tenure Track, and high achievement is expected. Where an Adjunct Assistant Professor is engaged by way of direct nomination, the rigorous selection process is bypassed, and the appointee is not considered eligible for development in the same way as their full-time peers.
- Adjunct Academic staff are paid based on personal rates and are not necessarily placed on a pay scale. They do not receive increments and in many cases have not received increases in line with national wage agreements. They are not pensionable, although some would be eligible based on their working hours (20% or greater).

Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Adjunct Academic Staff are:

1. The University clarifies the role of Adjunct Academic staff and the parameters under which this role may be used.
2. The statement regarding Trinity not being the principal employer should be removed from the academic titles document.
3. At the point of commencement, and annually thereafter, the Head of School/Discipline should clarify the boundaries of the Adjunct Academic role with the appointee.



4. Adjunct Academics should be engaged for less than 20% of a full-time comparator. Where a role requires more than 20%, this should be treated as pro-rata to full-time staff, with the same terms and conditions applied such as selection process, access to promotion calls, pension, development programs etc.
5. Adjunct Academics should be mapped to the appropriate pay scale e.g. Assistant Professor, Teaching Fellow, and receive annual increments and national wage agreement increases as per full-time salaried staff. The use of personal rates should be discontinued.
6. Review the recommendations set out in the internal audit report; Audit of Adjunct Academic Processes (Nov 2023).

5.4 Term Time Academics

Term Employees	Permanent	Fixed Term	Spec Purpose	Grand Total
Teaching Fellow	8	2	1	11
Adjunct Assistant Professor	7			7
Language Assistant	1	5		6
TAP Tutor	6			6
Grand Total	22	7	1	30

Data shows that 30 members of Academic staff are on term-time working arrangements. This is separate to their contractual status as permanent, indefinite duration, fixed term, specific purpose.

The intention of term time work is that where the work occurs only within the teaching year, that a contract aligned with this is offered. This is driven from an operational need, as the University is paying only for the work that is needed when it is needed. From the individual's point of view, this is perceived as precarious as the individual's income ceases and it is up to them to find alternative work or seek social welfare payments for the period they are not engaged.

The practice stems from a cost-conscious approach, which is reasonable. However, where the same staff are engaged each year on a term-time basis it becomes problematic because it creates the risk that either because of the nature of the role or the nature of the dynamic between the term time employee and their line manager/college, the former could end up doing work outside of term time but just not being paid for it. In particular this may arise if students and possibly other staff are not aware that the individual is effectively not an employee during the summer months (such that occasionally the latter may be asked to do work or are expected to be available for queries).

Findings from the qualitative information gathered

The Teaching Fellows/Language assistants in the School of Languages, Literature and Cultural Studies referred to above also form the most substantial group of term time academic staff. Thus they were also interviewed in relation to the 'term time' nature of their work. In this regard, most were employed on either nine or ten month contracts each year (some had CIDs in this regard) though occasionally if there was some work that needed to be done in a department (for example the organisation of a conference) they might be employed for an additional period. Two common themes emerged reflecting the universal experiences of all respondents.



Term Time (Negative practical consequences)

First, they believe there were negative practical consequences arising out of the term time nature of the role. It is, for example, more difficult to get a mortgage if one has a term role. Moreover, whereas one can obtain social welfare during the summer months, this can take time to set up – in other words, one can be without any source of income for a substantial period. Respondents noted that they were in a worse position than, for example, primary or secondary school teachers who get paid during the summer.

Term Time (Summer availability/work)

Secondly, it was universally agreed that the reality of the term time nature of the role was that the post holder would not be *paid* for the summer months but that they would do work for Trinity in this period. This was in all cases because the relevant term employee could be coming back to Trinity to work under the same arrangement in the following academic year. Thus all of the respondents interviewed said that they *did* do work during the summer including:-

- Assisting students in viewing scripts and providing feedback on scripts following courts of examiners (that is, very shortly after the end of their term of work)
- Setting supplemental exams
- Marking supplemental exams and coursework
- Writing references for students who approach them
- Preparing the next year's syllabus

According to those interviewed the point was made that for those teaching fellows who are retained year on year, the quality of the pedagogical offerings of the school would be compromised if they did not work during the summer – in that supplemental results would not be available in time for students to progress and classes in the new academic year would not be prepared. In other words, so it was claimed, the fact that these things need to be done clearly indicates that these roles are not properly characterizable as term time in nature.

Respondents were asked why these term employees did not just tell students/the school that they were not available to work during the summer because they *were* term employees. Respondents said that this was because (a) they did not want to let students down (b) they did not want to let the school down and (c) there was a real sense that to tell students of their term work role would be humiliating – and that there was a stigma attached to this.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager rejected the idea that unremunerated work is expected of such colleagues when out of term. It noted that some teaching fellows claim that they must use the summer to prepare classes and keep abreast of their fields.

The Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager further noted that term employees all have their email/systems access suspended over the summer – but that some voluntarily request summer access which invariably means they receive departmental, school and college emails.

Term Time (Role of the Line Manager)

Finally, the Head of School (and via them) various Heads of Departments and School Manager made the point that line managers are reminded that the work of term time colleagues must be completed within their assigned term, or else that work should be assigned to another colleague who is still on payroll at the time.



Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Term-time Academic Staff are:

1. It's clear that in some areas, for whatever reason, there are very different views of what is expected of term time academic staff. Clarity of expectation, by the Head of School and sign off by the individual is essential to address this issue.
2. For Teaching Fellows, the practice of term time work should be examined on a case-by-case basis. What is expected from Teaching Fellows in the summer months should be clarified with the Head of School/Discipline. If there is no work required, then the University may continue to utilise term time contracts. If there is work required, the Head of School should employ the person on a year-round basis. Continued use of the same people each year on term time Teaching Fellows is discouraged, and alternative solutions should be explored such as engagement as Assistant Professor or Adjunct AP, or Adjunct TF.
3. Heads of School and Discipline as well as school management should ensure that there is never an obligation on any such member of staff to work out of term when not being paid. In this regard, School management should target not merely direct instructions/requests to work out of term, but also factors that indirectly cause term employees to work out of term. Thus, for example, it might be appropriate for the school to assign two full time academics to each student as their 'assigned referees' with instruction that no other member of staff is to be approached for a reference. In other words, either the concept of 'term employees' (at academic level) should be removed or else it should be strictly enforced.



6. Findings - Research staff

6.1 Context

Fostering and growing research talent and leadership means nurturing and providing support for researchers throughout their research careers in Trinity. It is about supporting researchers to be the best they can be, in whatever shape or form their scholarship takes.

At Trinity we know that our researchers contribute significantly to our position as one of the world's leading universities: we believe that employment as a researcher should be an attractive option in itself and that as well as being a potential steppingstone to academic positions, it can be a springboard to a range of other careers.

The University operates in three interrelated but distinct activity areas, education, research, and engagement. Trinity does not specifically provide autonomous research careers. To sustain the research activity that is intrinsic to the University, this is funded from research awards and the ability to continue to grow our research depends on ensuring the University is structured appropriately for research.

The funding the University receives for research is targeted and this funding model does not provide for life-long careers of individual researchers within the organisation.

It is a legitimate objective of the University to provide Post-Doctoral research professional training and development opportunities which are of limited duration. This will allow for the progression over many years, to facilitate large numbers of Post-Doctoral researchers through the University's research programmes.

We nurture our researchers whilst they are in their research roles and equip them with the skills they need to deliver their research goals whilst in Trinity and to develop themselves to progress in their future careers wherever that may be.

6.2 Research Contract Types

Research contracts are defined by the nature of the work and are either Fixed Term or Specific Purpose by design.

- If a researcher is engaged to work on Project A, their job concludes when Project A concludes.
- If Project A is extended, and the researcher is on a specific purpose contract, the initial contract is valid as work on Project A is still taking place. A renewal of contract is not required.
- If Project A ends, and Project B starts and the same researcher is engaged, they should be issued with a new contract for Project B.

Contracts of Indefinite Duration (CID)

- Accruing 4 years' service over 2 or more contracts does not result in a CID where there are objective grounds to justify the renewal of Fixed Term or Specific Purpose contracts.



- The University's intention is to provide appropriate contracts related to the nature of the work, either Fixed Term or Specific Purpose.
- A small number of CIDs have been created in the past for various reasons on a case by case basis.

Trinity Research Staff Composition							
	Indefinite Duration (Full Time)	Indefinite Duration (Part Time)	Fixed Contract (Full Time)	Fixed Contract (Part Time)	Specified Purpose (Full Time)	Specified Purpose (Part Time)	Total
Research Fellow	29	3	75	8	406	51	572
Research Assistant	9	2	31	8	281	71	402
Grand Total	38	5	106	16	687	122	974
Data = number of people not FTE, as at Dec 2022							

6.3 Discussion topics identified by Working Group

During the discussion, the Working Group identified themes for further exploration, and a series of in-depth discussions were undertaken directly with the research community. The table below summarises the areas we identified and the discussions with the Research Community.

Findings from the qualitative information gathered

Nature of work: Research and other elements e.g. teaching, supervision, other work not related to research project/grant.	Some roles by their nature exist to support research, not necessarily devoted to one specific research project e.g. Lab Manager or Research Project Manager. These roles are considered part of the research community and the RA or RF job title is appropriate. In these roles having organisation knowledge is very helpful and it is useful to be able to move people from one grant to another to keep them in role. In general, need to have continuity in lab in some key posts enabling the research to happen. Suggestion that these ongoing roles which support research could be engaged for longer periods, especially where skills are transferable. "If there was more certainty on budgets, and more planning at higher level University-wide, wouldn't have need for individual fixed term/specific purpose contracts as there would be opportunities to redeploy the person if current role ended." Concept of "Alt-Ac" (alternative academic career) or para-academic. For example, person trained as a researcher then they do technical support or comms for research projects. The person needs an appreciation for research work and research questions. These people would be involved in the research and cited in publications. They provide a support infrastructure in which research takes place. They would contribute to the grant application. It's a very specific type of work and it is all under the banner of Research.
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Some areas e.g. Learnovate do applied research – taking an idea, turning it into a product, getting it to market. Creating Spin Out companies. Whilst it is called research, it is really applied research not pure research. For example, developers are called researchers. The EI definition of research would be to call developers researchers. It might differ from the traditional idea of a researcher. The researchers have transferable skills and can move from one project to the next. They are not as discipline specific as other types of researchers. There could be different strands of research employee e.g. project management roles, developer roles.

Contract aligned to funding

Generally, contracts are linked to funding. In 2022/23, there were 200+ distinct sources of funding for research. Each has different requirements.

Not one-size-fits-all with respect to stipulations within grant e.g.

- Industry funding– to try something for a year – push it to commercialisation – develop a product
- SFI / IRC – normally 3-4 year grants
- Some funding schemes e.g. Marie Curie specify the salary and the duration, and there is no discretion, though the salary is generally good and the duration is 2 years. Not seen as precarious.
- Could be program funding e.g. Enterprise Ireland (EI) 5 year plan. Or could be for projects funded individually, which would be shorter.

Some areas have a funding model to hire people for 1 year, then they move on to allow a new batch of people to avail of the training. Key is to be very explicit with appointees that this is for one year only. Be clear upfront.

Multiple contracts:
Practice of multiple sequential contracts

For the most part, the contract duration is determined by funding and is aligned to the project (e.g. 3 years). Unless there is a no-cost extension, contracts are generally not renewed or extended.

Generally, contracts are for 1 year or greater. However shorter contracts can occur where someone leaves and the replacement is needed for the remainder of the contract, or if there is funding from industry for a short piece of work.

Salary Scales:
increments, use of personal rates, impact on gender pay gap

“Regarding increments, highly recommend that there is a directive to PIs to include increments in the grant application and be clear from the outset that increments will be applied annually. Given that the labour market is tight, it is better to be upfront with employee that they will receive increments”.

Annual leave is only 22 days. Suggestion to make it 24 days to make it fairer with other staff.

Some areas already using IUA scales but not including provision for increments. This should be made explicit to the funder to provide for increments and national wage increases.

Key point: make increments compulsory and give clear direction to PIs.

Research Career Framework:
career development and progression

Examples cited where PI worked with Post-doc, developed them for future and that person is now working in industry, successful. Adopt the principle of preparing them for role in future “Do good things here, do better things when



they leave”.

Recommendation to show PhD students the breadth of opportunities available to them. More than just seeing their PI/supervisor and assuming a narrow career path.

People need to be recognised and acknowledged. People need to know the things they are good at and the areas where they need to develop or improve. Our research staff don't have an expectation that they would find another role in Trinity, their expectation would be to move on into industry. We check in with staff to ask them about their career aspirations and what development they would benefit from whilst they are here.

There is an overall increase in PhDs but there are not enough jobs in academia for everyone who does a PhD (1 in 10 maybe), so other career opportunities need to be promoted. The number of research opportunities are limited and fixed term in nature.

“Generally, researchers understand that their role in Trinity is a chapter in their career and not a long-term proposition. They will be in role for 2-4 years and can add this to their cv.”

“There is a tension for researchers in terms of their career path. The RA/RF roles are not a career path, they are a standalone role. Even if the person moves onto a different project, it will be the same kind of work at the same level. The nature of the work means that there is no progression in their career within Trinity. People accept that the role is fixed term and they know that they need to plan for what they will do next.”

“There needs to be clear conversations around the kind of roles that are out there (after PhD). Wish there was more opportunity for researchers to build skills, make connections and feel like they are part of Trinity. There are development programs, but they are self-selecting. Managers need to encourage staff to make sure they are ready for the next step in their careers.”

“PIs do feel a sense of responsibility for their people and want to help them in their livelihoods and careers. Showing post-docs the breadth of careers available is positive”.

Non-Research work:
Use of Research
contracts for admin/
technical/ library work

Issue cited regarding hiring staff as researchers to do technical-type work. Generally, technical staff are deployed to support teaching and are not available to support research work. Recommendation that infrastructure should be in place to enable research, with better management of technical staff.

Research as a vocation

Noted difficulties for research staff coming here from abroad. Difficult to plan for the future if their career is uncertain e.g. applying for mortgage, availing of family leave. People need some level of certainty in their mid-career however research is seen as a vocation, and unless the person secures an academic role, they will always face this uncertainty whilst in research. There are advantages to research, including flexibility and freedom.

In general, researchers are doing it for the love of the job, the passion and intrinsic motivation. Whilst the salary is low compared with industry, they do it because it is something they love doing. Very little staff turnover.

Managing Research
staff

General recommendation that managers/PIs would be trained on managing people.



Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Research Staff are:

1. Develop options for longer contract durations for key research support roles that work across a number of projects or funding streams. These roles have been described as enablers for research and include lab managers, project managers, developers, communication officers. This will require consideration from Research Committee and Research Centres to see if this is a viable option.
2. Recommend use of IUA pay scales except where alternative pay scales are prescribed e.g. some awards have higher pay scales than the IUA and if so they should be used. This will bring greater transparency into the hiring and payment of researchers.
3. Recommend holiday entitlement be increased to 24 days. Investigate what other benefits could also be considered.
4. Formally adopt a policy for increments each year subject to satisfactory service in the same way as all other salaried staff (except where alternatives are prescribed e.g. Marie Curie awards).
5. Research Office to work with PIs to ensure that grant applications include provision for increments and national wage agreement increases in pay, where possible.
6. Implement a career development framework for Researchers to highlight development opportunities and career planning that are targeted at pursuing careers in industry, academia, private practice, or further research.
7. Provide management development for those staff who are responsible for managing research staff including communication, performance management, goal setting, people management skills etc.



7. Findings - Professional staff

The history of use of fixed term contracts for professional staff is of relevance when looking at this group of staff. In summary the following is the sequence of events which has led to the current situation:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Decision Maker</u>
2015	Directive that all professional staff would be engaged on a fixed term basis only	Provost
2017	Guidance Note addressed this issue, stating that where a post is required on a permanent and ongoing basis that it should be filled by permanent contract	Dept of Ed. & Skills
2018	Guidance Note implemented for roles up to AO1 in Divisions initially, and subsequently for roles up to AO1 in Faculties - conversion to permanent	Trinity
2023	A conversion process for staff has concluded, however Senior Management posts have not been comprehended by this.	Working Group

The table below outlines the contract types currently in the Senior Management job category.

	Permanent	Indefinite Duration	Fixed Contract	Specified Purpose	Grand Total
Chief Officers	5				1
Senior Administrative 1	12		3		15
Senior Administrative 2	13	1	8	5	27
Senior Administrative 3	55	1	8	11	75
Grand Total	85	2	19	16	122
Percentage distribution	70%	2%	15%	13%	

28% of Senior Management are on either fixed term or specific purpose contracts. This is a risk for the University, as we know that insecurity of tenure is a factor in people seeking employment elsewhere. There is an opportunity for the University to review the ongoing need for these senior management positions, and where appropriate to regularise them.



Administrative Staff - Posts by Job Category

	Permanent Fulltime	Indefinite Contract Fulltime	Fixed Contract Fulltime	Specified Purpose Full Time	Grand Total
Admin Support	863	13	124	156	1156
Buildings & Services	428		31	19	478
Library	109		1	7	117
Technical	127	3	1	9	140
Grand Total	1527	16	157	191	1891
Percentage	81%	1%	8%	10%	100%

The table above shows that the vast majority of people in Library, Technical, and Building and Services categories are permanent. Where there are individuals on specific purpose contracts, they are generally covering for other post holders or working on specific projects, so their contract status is correct. However, looking only at the Admin Support Category above, almost a quarter of our staff (24%) are on fixed term or specific purpose contracts.

The table below (sample of areas) is a further breakdown of this data, indicating the nature of the contract and where there is a desire to move the role to permanency.

	Trinity Business School	Medicine	IT Services	Student Counselling	Global Engagement	FSD	TR&I	Trinity Teaching & learning
Tied to specific timebound funding / project	2		13	3		1	all	all
Linked to Research		12						
Area would like to convert to Perm	11	6		7	27	2		
Appropriate to be FTC/SPC e.g. intern, trainee	1			1		3		
Back fill / Maternity Cover / career break	2			1		1		
Post already moved to perm			1	1		6		
Post no longer needed			1					



Findings from the qualitative information gathered

Views of the area	A review of the areas in which there are larger numbers on fixed term/specific purpose contracts was carried out and while there were many reasons for use of these contract types, it was noted in each of the areas consulted that there was a cohort of staff that managers believe should be converted to permanent.
To summarise	In summary following an analysis of Fixed Term and Specific Purpose posts across a cross-section of schools and units, most areas had some posts that were correctly classified as fixed term/specific purpose with rationale for this. Most areas had posts that were fixed term or specific purpose posts that should, in the view of the management, be reclassified as permanent as the work associated with the post is ongoing.

Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Professional Staff are:

1. Each School and unit to be offered the facility via HR partners and staff planning to identify posts for re-classification as permanent where the work is expected to be continuous and ongoing.
2. Where there is a rationale for a post to be fixed term or specific purpose, then no change is required.
3. New posts created should follow the correct procedure for determining contract type, avoiding unnecessary fixed term contracts.
4. Review of Senior Management posts which are currently classified as FT or SP with a view to regularising where the work is expected to be continuous and ongoing.

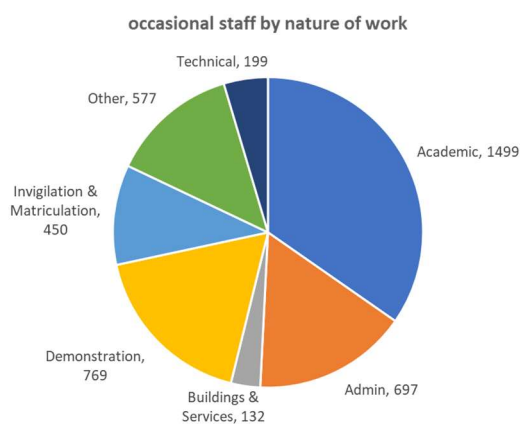


8. Findings - Occasional staff

Many organisations supplement their core workforce with occasional/casual staff, and other forms of atypical employment to ensure that there is the necessary workforce flexibility to meet demand. In this context, the utilisation of occasional/casual staff is also common in universities worldwide to complement core staffing, particularly in the delivery of teaching and in teaching support.

A comprehensive study was conducted by the HR Team into Occasional staff and Casual payroll in 2022 and the report produced by this study was provided to the working group. It is clear from the report that the University has a reliance on occasional employees in every area. The table below outlines the nature of the work carried out across the University in an average year:-

Nature of the Work	No. of People
Academic	1499
Admin	697
Buildings & Services	132
Demonstration	769
Invigilation & Matriculation	450
Other	577
Technical	199
Grand Total	4323



Within the report it was noted that the University community values the ability to avail of the Occasional Staff and Casual payroll process for legitimate cause. It should also be noted that areas openly declared that they often use the casual payroll when they know they shouldn't which is a cultural issue that needs to be addressed. Themes from the report included:

Flexibility	All areas are happy with the flexibility set out in the policy to recruit locally and fill vacancies urgently if required.
Process	Unanimous agreement across the board that the process is cumbersome. In general, they recognised the need for the new engagement form and would welcome an automated process for engagement and payment of occasional staff.
Pay	There is a lack of consistency with regard to pay rates for occasional staff. The introduction of set hourly rates of pay per category of work would be welcomed.
Continuous Service	Occasional staff are being re engaged year in year out indicating that the work is not occasional in nature in all cases. Of the 3717 occasional staff paid in 2021, 453 (12%) have received a payment every year since 2017.
Inappropriate use of Casual Payroll	Most staff paid through the casual payroll earn less than €5,000 per annum, there were almost 100 people who earned in excess of €15,000 in a year. Generally, where a role would require this level of pay, it should be engaged as a salary staff member on a fixed term or part time basis as appropriate, and not as casual payroll.



As indicated in the report conducted in 2022, hiring people on the casual payroll is open to misuse, such misuse can have different facets – for example it can involve avoiding normal college procedures and protocols for hiring employees, but it can also have real and negative impacts on those hired.

Individuals hired on the casual payroll are not on a salary scale, do not receive increments, are not part of the pension scheme, are paid for annual leave but never have facility to book time off, and are not entitled to other types of paid leave. As well as being unsure of their long-term status within the organisation, they do not receive equitable terms and conditions of employment compared with salaried staff.

Where the work is genuinely occasional, casual payroll is appropriate, however for extended periods or regularly working a sizable proportion of the working week, use of casual payroll is an unfair treatment of the individual.

Findings from the qualitative information gathered

Key themes following qualitative research across several areas collected during summer of 2023

Use of the casual payroll is essential in all areas surveyed: e.g. housekeeping and catering for summer peak tourism season; student counselling.

Those surveyed would not like to see restrictions implemented and see the need to maintain flexibility in this regard.

Could agree standard hours/weeks for invigilators and contract them as salaried staff (may have pensions implications as most invigilators are retired staff)

Use of casual staff to fill gaps until recruitment takes place.

Used for Guest Lecturers for courses and to pay researchers who do some teaching.

Some specialised courses result in going back to the same people year in year out so maybe scope to standardise them but don't think the appetite is there.

Would welcome standardised pay rates as long as it is recognised that college rates don't always suit every occasion, so there needs to be flexibility to use personal rates especially for industry professionals.

Some areas do not pay by the hour, they agree a fee for delivery of the module – align to other rates other business schools are offering.

In some schools surveyed, their use of casual staff was predominantly for teaching assistants, placement supervisors, or other quasi-academic roles. Differing pay rates per school.

According to some schools, teaching assistants are generally students who want this experience – giving them full contract as “staff” could expose them to the full spectrum of data in the School – GDPR concerns.



To illustrate the types of work included in the casual payroll at present, sample work includes: Specific pieces of work that were temporary in nature; External Examiners; Visiting/guest lectures; Grinds/giving additional academic supports to students; Foundation programme; Students engaged as ambassadors; Unforeseen circumstances or for short term needs; Internship work, summer work (e.g. graduate outcomes survey); Specific pieces of work/specific skill-set.

Having discussed the qualitative and quantitative data, the recommendations from the working group regarding Occasional Staff are:

1. Define where the engagement of staff on an occasional basis is appropriate.
2. Review the existing policy for Occasional staff and enhance it to clarify the occasions where the engagement of staff on an occasional basis is acceptable and highlight the specific responsibility of hiring managers when engaging Occasional Staff to ensure that it is compliant with the policy.
3. Standard pay rates for hourly paid staff by nature of work to be agreed and additional rate types to be developed to meet the organisational needs. Standard rates should be reviewed in line with national pay increases.
4. Payments will only be made against standard rates unless sanctioned by HOS on a rate for job basis (exceptional).
5. Review reports currently provided on a monthly basis that show usage of casual payroll in each area. Budget owner to take action where roles are continuous and ongoing and engagement of the employee on a salaried basis would be more appropriate. The onus is on the budget owner to ensure they monitor and manage the ongoing use of occasional pay in their area.
6. Review the occasional pay for 2023 (Appendix 3) and investigate further the high spend areas and categories.
7. Introduce online timesheets using CORE HR. An automated system would allow the online timesheet to flow from the employee to the line manager to the Head of School to Payroll Services.



7. Conclusion

The view of this working group is that in general we have good employment practices across the University, however because of our devolved decision making and approvals processes, we have identified areas where we have pockets of irregularity which need to be addressed. We need to resolve these issues and implement clear processes and procedures to ensure we don't inadvertently find ourselves in a similar position in the future. In particular, where policies are in place in relation to the employment of staff, it is vital that these are not abused but rather are followed strictly.

A contributory factor to the risk of inconsistency of practice and inadvertent breaches of employment policies is the constant changeover of Leadership including College Officers, Heads of School, Heads of Discipline etc. as a term of office can be anything from 1 year to 3 years. On commencement of a new leadership role, sufficient training should be provided to equip these Function Heads with the necessary skills required to successfully navigate their way through employment policy and procedure.

This can be achieved by implementing the following:

- Leadership & management training programmes for all people managers.
- Introducing fit for purpose systems to ensure transparency, compliance and accurate information is always provided.
- Develop an accountability framework for all Function Heads to instil an understanding of what they are ultimately accountable for and their requirement to fully comply with all people related policies.

It should also be noted that an overarching view of this group is that the university needs to encourage professional development for all employees and provide a positive mentoring culture for all staff.

The working group seek approval of the Board to proceed with the recommendations outlined in this report. Adopting these recommendations will:

- ensure we have the correct mix of skills and employment types to operate the University
- address and deal with legacy issues
- ensure future decisions regarding contract types and contract patterns are aligned to University policy



Appendices

Appendix 1

1. Terms of Reference

- To build a complete picture of employment patterns and conditions in Trinity through
 - bringing together multiple data sources (e.g. HR dashboards, HR metrics annual reports etc.)
 - synthesising output from existing reports (e.g. Athena Swan documentation, TRSA reports etc.)
 - designing and conducting any surveys required to provide the quantitative and qualitative information needed address any gaps needed to understand conditions and practices
- To understand how informal and voluntary work practices feed into the wider working patterns (e.g. through our health partners).
- Where practicable, to understand how the patterns in Trinity compare to other similar universities, nationally and internationally.
- To understand the implications of our employment patterns and practices on general staff wellbeing and our competitiveness as a University.
- To identify potential actions that can be taken to address areas of concern.
- To understand and relay back the full costs and wider impacts of any actions.
- To make recommendations to the Board

2. Membership

Co-Chair and member of the Board: Neville Cox

Co- Chair and Director of Human Resources: Antoinette Quinn

Board member: Lorna Roe

Board member: John Walsh

Board member (nominee of the staff representative group): David Grouse

Board member: Ross McManus

A nominee of the VP/CAO, CFO and COO

Dean of Research or their nominee

AVPEDI: Lorraine Leeson

Two members of staff from each Faculty nominated by the Deans (e.g. academic staff member, School Manager, a member of technical staff, a researcher etc.)

A member of the staff representative group



Appendix 2

IUA recommended Principles

Given the nature of occasional/casual employment, differences in practice have developed over many years, while the administration of occasional/casual employment has also evolved in the light of emerging legal protections and the development of HRIS capability.

1. Occasional/casual staff are normally paid via a system of hourly/piece rates and claims for payment.
2. If the employment need is regular and ongoing, and this can be predicted/planned (e.g., over the course of an academic term), then casual/occasional employment should not be used.
3. The fundamental principle in setting remuneration for staff employed on an occasional hourly-paid basis is that the Occasional Staff Member is paid per hour worked at a rate appropriate to the nature of the work undertaken.
4. Casual/occasional staff are used where a need exists to supplement the teaching capacity of an academic unit with casual teaching staff.
5. Casual teaching staff possess professional and/or academic qualifications and expertise appropriate to delivery of teaching within the University. vi. Typically, casual teaching staff are nominated for appointment by the hiring manager based on their competence for the role, following a devolved selection process.
6. Many occasional staff are persons with special competence or expertise that is not readily available from members of the regular staff of the University or is complementary to that from members of the regular staff cohort (e.g., in law, architecture, medicine, dentistry, or other professional courses), and the University is not their primary employer, as their employment in the University is subsidiary to their main employment.
7. The use of casual staff in universities is common in universities worldwide, providing essential flexibility and capacity in meeting the operational needs of the University.
8. The terms of the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 apply to occasional staff, who accordingly, must be issued with terms and conditions of employment. (to include, expected duration of the contract; the rate or method of calculation of the employee's pay; and the number of hours the employer reasonably expects the employee to work per normal working day and per normal working week.



Appendix 3

Casual Pay Highlights (Full year 2023)

- Total spend on Casual pay to both Salaried staff and Occasional staff in 2023 was: €11,272,000 (11.3 million)
- Casual payments made to existing salaried staff: €940,000
- Casual payments made to Occasional staff: €10.3 million
- Casual payments made to existing salaried staff who are employed as researchers (not research students): €574,000
- Casual payments which were input as “miscellaneous” and not given a defined category: €698,000

Casual Payments by nature of work by Job Category rounded '€000								
	Salaried Staff paid a casual payment						Non Staff	
Job Category	Academic	Admin	Bldgs	Library	Research	Technical	Occasional Employees	Total
Academic work	115	22	0.3		141	4	3991	€4.274m
Admin work	27	75	60	0.4	108		2635	€2.906m
Demonstration	5				69		973	€1.047m
External Examiner	1				0		158	€159,000
Invigilation	2		0.4		23		343	€369,000
Science Gallery					0		7	€7,000
Sports	4	1	5		4		587	€600,000
Technical					132		1080	€1.212m
Miscellaneous	1	45			97		556	€698,000
	153	143	65	0.4	574	4	10331	€11.272m



Occasional Pay: High Spend Areas

Category: Academic Work (Top 10)

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS	€1,800,625
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	€479,283
SCHOOL OF LINGUISTIC SPEECH & COMM SCI	€188,833
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & PHILOSOPHY	€171,029
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY	€170,141
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL POLICY	€160,064
SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS	€157,970
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING	€153,234
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	€134,941
TRINITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION	€101,575

Occasional Pay: High Spend Areas

Category: Administrative (Top 10)

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	€432,413
COMMERCIAL REVENUE UNIT	€344,823
TRINITY RESEARCH AND INNOVATION	€234,361
STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE	€203,235
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS	€190,531
Trinity Global	€172,011
SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY	€103,545
SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & STATISTICS	€102,515
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	€100,952
FINANCIAL SERVICES	€99,585

Occasional Pay: High Spend Areas

Category: Miscellaneous (Top 10)

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	€131,776
SCHOOL OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & STATISTICS	€123,866
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS	€89,639
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK & SOCIAL POLICY	€44,035
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY	€36,033
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION	€35,210
ESTATES & FACILITIES DEPARTMENT	€33,108
OFFICE OF CHIEF ACAD OFF - VICE PROVOST	€22,938
SCHOOL OF PHARMACY & PHARMA SCIENCES	€20,890
SCHOOL OF NURSING & MIDWIFERY	€13,746