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**Policy on Trinity Research Institutes:  
Formation, Oversight, Operation and Financial  
Arrangements**

**Prepared by the Research Committee Working Group  
on Trinity Research Institutes  
Version 2.4 – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

This document outlines the policies and procedures governing the formation, oversight, operation and financial management of Trinity Research Institutes and supersedes all previous documents<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1

<b>Version</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Circulation</b>
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# 1. The Place of Research Institutes in Trinity College Dublin

The establishment of Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs) is central to the development of the College's research strategy to promote the development of centres of excellence in a limited number of key areas. In terms of existing policy on research groupings in College [1], TRIs instantiate headline strategic priorities of College. A TRI should represent an area of acknowledged research excellence and have at its core a critical mass of scholars/principal investigators<sup>2</sup> of acknowledged high international standing in that area (e.g., who are competitive for major individual research awards such as European Research Council (ERC) grants or Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and Wellcome Trust Investigator Awards). TRIs are recognised by College as long-term strategic resources that must be sustainable even, for example, when the principals who set them up step down. They should serve to increase the level and impact of research in the corresponding area in College. The research areas represented by TRIs should be highlighted specifically in the College's Strategic Plan.

To be internationally competitive, TRIs must have a degree of autonomy and flexibility to be able to respond to opportunities as they arise, while at the same time being fully accountable to College. With substantial space and staffing, the scale of TRIs is expected to be too large to be absorbed directly into normal School structures, especially as they are likely to be strongly inter-disciplinary. However if TRIs are to benefit the College as a whole, then they must be fully integrated into the College and staff working in the TRIs must be integral members of the College community.

The operation of a TRI should be underpinned by the support of a set of participating Schools (see 3 below). TRIs must have the full support of the participating Schools and be part of their strategic direction.

Approval of a proposal to become a TRI will only follow rigorous examination by the Research Committee, the Finance Committee and Executive Officers, and approval by

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<sup>2</sup> Referred to as 'principal investigators' throughout this document.

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Council and Board (see 4 below). Consideration of the proposal will include external evaluation and benchmarking of research excellence.

## **2. Definition and Principles**

A TRI is defined as a research grouping which:

- represents an area of acknowledged research excellence and has at its core a critical mass of principal investigators of acknowledged high international standing;
- instantiates a headline strategic research priority of College;
- has a scale of operation approaching that of a School;
- consists (directly or indirectly) of academic, research, administrative and support staff, led by a Director (see 9.1 below), a number of whom are on permanent contracts or contracts of indefinite duration;
- has significant and verifiable funding to sustain the research for a significant period of time; and
- has been approved by Board as a TRI.

A TRI will operate within an agreed budget and the management and operational structure is expected to ensure this through appropriate financial governance under the oversight of the College Finance Committee. The duties and responsibilities of the Directors of TRIs are comparable to those for Heads of Schools in relation to responsibility and accountability for financial matters (see Appendix 2 and [2]).

While TRIs are established for the primary purpose of engaging in research, the TRIs must also contribute to the teaching activities of the College including providing access to their research infrastructure.

## **3. Relationship with Schools**

Academic Schools are the basic organisational unit in College and therefore it is intended that, while TRIs have a degree of autonomy and independence, they will be

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closely associated with one or more Schools. These Schools, as well as College as a whole will benefit directly from the presence of a TRI by, for example,

- making state-of-the-art equipment and facilities available to the School;
- contributing to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, and in particular the development of Ph.D. programmes;
- raising the profile of the School(s) and College internationally.

Equally, it is intended that TRIs will be a central part of the strategic plans of the relevant Schools and Faculties and that they will be committed to the development and sustainability of TRIs. In practical terms, this means that Schools/Faculties will include TRIs in their staffing plans.

Thus, the operation of a TRI must be underpinned by a set of participating Schools from which the TRI's principal investigators are normally drawn. Participation in a TRI should be a mutually beneficial relationship, and Schools should support and integrate associated TRIs into their strategic and staffing plans in the same way that TRIs should support the missions of their participating Schools thus creating a wholly symbiotic relationship. TRIs are nevertheless differentiated from Schools in that their focus is on undertaking research in a specific area. This objective is underpinned by the following principles:

- 3.1 All academic staff, research staff and postgraduate students belong to one or more Schools. The affiliation of research staff and postgraduate students will be determined by the affiliation of their principal investigator. Postgraduate students based in TRIs are subject to the normal rules and regulations of the College. Where a School had specific additional regulations for postgraduate students, these regulations will also apply unless there is agreement between the relevant Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) and the Director of the TRI to vary them.
- 3.2 Academic staff will have teaching and administrative duties in their School(s), determined by the Head of School in accordance with the School's workload allocation model.
- 3.3 Senior (support) staff members in a TRI who have appropriate qualifications and experience will be facilitated in their wish to contribute to teaching and/or supervision of postgraduate students. This will be arranged through the staff

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member's affiliation with a School, and subject to the agreement of the Head of that School. Any such postgraduates will be admitted into the School, undergo the School's assessments for progression, and be examined according to the procedures of the School as outlined at 3.1 above.

- 3.4 Staff appointments are made by the College. Either a TRI or a School may take a lead in recruiting academic staff to be a member of a TRI, but the entity taking a lead in the recruitment process must do so with the agreement of the relevant corresponding School or TRI. Where a TRI seeks to appoint a new principal investigator to the College, it must do so in conjunction with the School or Schools that will be the home School(s) of the investigator, and who may agree to take responsibility for his or her salary after any initial grants have ceased to underwrite these costs. Such principal investigators will be appointed following College procedures.
- 3.5 A TRI may employ support staff directly. All appointments to TRIs will be made following normal College procedures. All staff in a TRI will be employed by College and are subject to the normal rules and regulations and have the same entitlements. For the purposes of determining the nature of the relationship between Schools and TRIs, TRIs will be required to maintain an up-to-date register of staff, research fellows and postgraduates associated with the TRI, and the Schools with which they are associated.
- 3.6 From the point of view of a principal investigator, there should be no difference in the conditions of occupancy of equivalent space for research activities in a TRI or in a School.
- 3.7 Agreements between Schools and TRIs regarding the allocation of space to TRIs, sharing of costs, and allocation of indirect costs/overheads for research contracts held by members of a School who are also principal investigators within a TRI in addition to general understandings regarding allocation of teaching and administration, etc., will be explicitly negotiated between TRIs and Schools following the principle that costs and resources follow activity. Further details of the arrangements to be put in place between TRIs and Schools regarding research contracts are considered in 5 below.
- 3.8 Where research grants are 'housed' wholly or partly within a TRI, the grant applications should be signed off by both the Head of the principal investigator's School as well as the Director of the TRI (or their designates). Similarly if TRI

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research activity is wholly/partly ‘housed’ within a School, the grants should be signed off by the Director of the TRI as well as the Head of the relevant School (or their designates).

3.9 Such agreements are to be negotiated in good faith and neither the Head of School nor the Director of the TRI should unreasonably withhold agreement. In the event of failure of a School and a TRI to come to a mutually agreeable arrangement on these matters, they may be referred to the Dean of Research. Should the disagreement be of such a fundamental nature that the Dean of Research is unable to bring it to a satisfactory agreed resolution, the matter may be decided by the Dean of Research.

3.10 The establishment of a TRI, particularly where principal investigators have separate office accommodation in the space allocated to the TRI, may pose a challenge to maintaining the collegiality of the participating Schools. Principal investigators should be aware of this risk and should strive to maintain a close and cordial working relationship with their School.

Publications by staff employed by a TRI will be listed in the Calendar under the TRI with an appropriate cross-reference to the School to which they are affiliated, if any. Publications by staff not directly employed by but affiliated to a TRI may be listed either under the TRI or their School with an appropriate cross-reference.

## **4. Proposal to Establish a TRI**

Proposers of potential TRIs should discuss their proposal informally with the Dean of Research in the first instance in order to verify that the proposed TRI is likely to meet the criteria for TRIs listed below. A formal proposal may then be brought by the Dean of Research to the Research Committee over the course of the academic year.

Recognition will rest partly on a positive external evaluation of the proposal. Such an assessment may take place under the auspices of a national body such as SFI or the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Research Committee may accept such an assessment in lieu of a further process on the recommendation of the Dean of Research. In cases where no external international evaluation has taken place (e.g., from an SFI site visit), the Dean of Research will arrange for assessment of the proposal to create a TRI through a site visit by an international team of experts in the



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field who will advise not only on the academic excellence of the prospective TRI compared internationally, but also on its fit with the College's strategic priorities. The report from the reviewers will be made available to the Research Committee before a recommendation on the proposal is made. The proposal will then be considered by the Finance Committee and Executive Officers before approval by Council and Board.

#### **4.1 Criteria for a TRI**

- They instantiate headline strategic research priorities of College.
- They should represent an area of acknowledged research excellence within College.
- They have substantial external funding and a strong business plan focussing on sustainability.
- They must contribute to the teaching activities of the College.
- They are independent cost centres.
- They have a critical mass of principal investigators of acknowledged high international standing who are members of academic staff and whose participation is defined by:
  - Running research grants relevant to the work of the TRI through the TRI's cost centre.
  - All principal investigators who occupy space (either personally or via their research groups) in the TRI generate funds to contribute to the TRI's operating costs.
- They continue to receive favourable reviews in regular external assessments.
- They have appropriate administrative infrastructure.
- They occupy substantial defined space.
- They satisfy the governance requirements for a TRI (see 8 below).

#### **4.2 Format of Proposal to Establish a TRI**

A proposal to establish a TRI will include:

1. an outline of how the TRI proposes to contribute to the overall mission of the College, including teaching and learning;

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2. an initial detailed five-year strategic (research) plan;
  3. evidence of a favourable external assessment of the TRI's research excellence and strategic plan;
  4. a detailed discussion of the proposed relationship with participating Schools, including how the TRI's mission is consistent with the strategic direction of the relevant Schools. This statement should also be clear on how facilities are to be shared between the TRI and participating Schools, including, for example, how the TRI's use of any School equipment, resources and personnel is to be accounted for and vice versa;
  5. a communications strategy aimed at promoting the activities of the TRI among not only the international research community but also amongst Schools, industry and the general public;
  6. the proposed governance structure and composition of the TRI's Executive Management Committee (EMC) and Board (see 9 below);
  7. a list of participating principal investigators;
  8. a detailed five- year financial plan/budget (excluding direct research grant activity) setting out the following:
    - a. projected income including anticipated income from related indirect costs/overheads (see 5.2 below), philanthropy, events, industry, etc.
    - b. projected expenditure (pay and non-pay), noting that any impact on the College's staffing profile (e.g., relevant to national legislation) be identified at the outset
  9. a detailed Risk Analysis associated with the TRI's projected financial performance;
  10. a description of the financial support to be provided by the participating Schools to the TRI, if any;
  11. space requirements and any associated costs;
  12. endorsement by the relevant Head(s) of School and Faculty Dean(s).

## **5. Financial Management of TRIs**

This section sets out the main principles associated with TRI financial management under the headings of:

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- financial requirements when submitting a proposal to establish a TRI including research indirect cost/overhead funding to support TRIs
  - financial guidelines and oversight for the management of TRIs
  - strategic funding requests by TRIs
  - the ‘housing’ of research grants

bearing in mind that a TRI will be represented as a cost centre within the College.

## **5.1 Financial Requirements When Submitting a Proposal to Establish a TRI**

Any proposal to establish a TRI should include a detailed financial plan and related information as outlined in section 4.2 points 7 – 11.

A level of support staff and operational support for the TRI will normally be identified to reflect both the level of support afforded to principal investigators in their home Schools and the existing support in place for any precursor of the TRI by the participating Schools. The TRI should be supported in efforts to augment such supports through funding from external sources, and the appropriate pro rata (percentage) levels of support staff costs included in research grant applications as direct costs.

## **5.2 Indirect Cost/Overhead Funding to Support TRIs**

The following financial mechanism shall be applied to all TRI-linked research grants.

- a. Indirect costs (overheads), other than that portion accrued to ‘*cista communis*’, from research contracts will be shared between the principal investigators’ Schools and the TRI.
- b. For each (new and existing) contract related to activity to be ‘housed’ by a TRI (and managed through the corresponding cost centre), an agreement will be made and executed between the relevant School and TRI on the appropriate percentage distribution of those indirect costs/overheads to the School and TRI arising from the research activity at the time of signature/transfer.

For each (new and existing) contract related to TRI research activity to be ‘housed’ by a School (and managed through its cost centre), an agreement will

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also be made and executed between the relevant School and TRI on the appropriate percentage distribution of those indirect costs/overheads to the School and TRI arising from the research activity at the time of signature/transfer.

Indirect costs/overheads returned to such accounts will be placed in the relevant unit's Self Financing Indirect Cost Account for appropriate distribution. This distribution mechanism of TRI indirect cost/overhead will recognise any constraints and commitments of distributions under OIP schemes.

- c. Awards involving multiple principal investigators will be treated in the same manner.
- d. In all cases, every effort should be made to attain full economic costing for activities from all sources of research income – both exchequer and non-exchequer. The cooperation of the TRIs in dealing with these sources and their compliance with indirect cost/overhead level requests in grant submission will be paramount to attaining this goal of fully funded activity. The College's Indirect Cost Policy can be found at [3].
- e. In relation to recording of research activity in the College's Annual Statement of Research Accounts, all TRI-linked principal investigator income will be recorded in a sub-section under their home School's cost code. Annual returns to Finance Committee will therefore record research income as to Schools. Research income data in relation to TRIs will also be available to Finance Committee at financial year end.
- f. The College recognises that TRIs are flagship programmes with high external visibility and are highly research-intensive activities – accordingly internal mechanisms for distribution of income, credits and costs must be kept under review.

### **5.3 Strategic Support for TRIs**

On occasion the College may provide financial support to TRIs to enable them to meet the objectives outlined in their strategic plans. Requests for multi-annual support may be made to the Planning Group annually, through the Dean of Research, and should consist of a comprehensive business case (in line with the criteria set out below).

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- a. Funding allocated to a TRI is contingent on its advancing a concise strategy to minimise replicated core services in the TRI (vs. School and support areas) and where relevant, any impact on the College's staffing profile (e.g., relevant to national legislation) be identified.
  - b. Funding allocations will be tranching and performance linked – with five specific milestones/key performance indicators (KPIs) - one of which must be the securing of specific targets of leveraged funding to supplement the allocation - to be agreed for each TRI.
  - c. As a consequence of College funding of strategic allocations to a TRI, an access mechanism for College research-related use of TRI facilities must be agreed and implemented, with a prioritisation for:  
TRI > TRI School > Rest of College access requirements.

In particular, evidence of the use of the allocation specifically for strategic purposes should be provided by TRIs and, in order to monitor this more closely, TRIs should submit pre-expenditure plans as well as post-expenditure plans for the allocation, aligned with the funding terms and conditions. Pre-expenditure plans will be subject to the approval of the Planning Group before the allocation is drawn down. TRIs are also required to report to Planning Group annually on the use of the Strategic Funds allocated to them, (in addition to the bi-annual reporting required by Finance Committee as set out section 5.4 below and the Research Committee annually as set out in Section 9.2).

#### **5.4 Financial Guidelines/Oversight for the Management of TRIs**

In the context of the sustainability of the TRI being a key component of the success of the College's research strategy, the following should be adhered to in the management and oversight of the finances of the TRI:

- a. The Director will be responsible for and accountable to the Finance Committee and the Board of the College in respect of all financial matters.
- b. Strategic and related financial planning, monitoring, control, oversight and reporting should be undertaken by the Director and reviewed by the TRI's

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- Board on an ongoing basis to ensure sustainability and viability in the context of income from research contract funding and other sources.
- c. Financial monitoring, control, oversight and reporting, in line with generally accepted best practice, should be carried out by the Director.
  - d. There should be ongoing review by the TRI's Board of the individual and combined financial outcomes of TRI grants in the context of the available budgets.
  - e. There should be bi-annual financial reporting including performance against agreed KPIs by the TRI to the College via the relevant Faculty Dean to the Finance Committee.
  - f. In the event that the sustainability of a TRI is no longer viable, recognition as a TRI is withdrawn and the TRI ceases, the relevant Faculty Dean assumes overall responsibility for the management and elimination of outstanding TRI-related deficits/liabilities.

### **5.5 The 'Housing' of Research Grants**

As described at 3.8 above, where research grants are 'housed' within a TRI, the grants should be signed off by both the Head of the principal investigator's School and the Director of the TRI (or their designates). Similarly, if TRI research activity is wholly/partially housed within a School, those grants should be signed by the Director of the Institute and the Head of the relevant School.

## **6. Membership of TRIs**

Membership of a TRI as a principal investigator is open to all academic members of staff of the College as well as to Senior Research Fellows. For the avoidance of doubt, and in line with principles of academic freedom, academic members of College should not require the approval of their Head of School in order to apply for membership of a TRI, however, the School should be fully informed when a member is considering applying for membership of a TRI and the implications be discussed with the Head of School. The treatment of their space allocation, workload allocation and research overheads should follow the relevant agreements in place between their School(s) and the TRI. In the event that the School(s) concerned are not already

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participating in the TRI, appropriate agreements may need to be put in place. An academic can be a member of multiple TRIs if appropriate.

There must be a defined process managed by the TRI's EMC, through the TRI Director, to manage membership of the TRI. Two cases arise:

- The case of existing TRIs
- The case of new TRIs

In both cases, TRIs must establish criteria for membership (which will address issues to do with research interests, track record, and motivation).

*For existing TRIs*, the process might take the following form.

- 6.1 A proposal in the form of a letter by a current TRI member, accompanied by a curriculum vitae and a signed letter of application from the prospective member, is submitted to the Director.
- 6.2 This should be considered by the relevant EMC, and a formal letter of membership, signed by the Director on behalf of the TRI, be issued.
- 6.3 The Director should meet with the new proposed member and discuss the rights and responsibilities of membership. Further, the TRI Director should facilitate introductions to other TRI members.
- 6.4 Differing degrees of membership may be possible, and designations should reflect this (for example, TRI investigator, TRI associate member, etc). Each TRI should define these designations appropriately and publicly.
- 6.5 Membership of a TRI brings rights and responsibilities. Explicit assent must therefore be sought from prospective members. TRI members should not be included in membership lists for 'window dressing' purposes.
- 6.6 Membership may be for a defined period of time, as appropriate to the TRI and set out in its procedures.
- 6.7 The TRI will hold records of membership and TRI membership must be publicly recorded (for example on the TRI website).

*For new TRIs*, an initial set of members should be proposed as part of the process of defining the TRI and confirmed as part of the approval process. After the appointment

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of the Director and the instantiation of an EMC, the procedures elaborated above should then be applied.

Membership of TRIs for individuals who are not academic staff members of the College community should be possible for good strategic academic and research reasons. If appropriate, such individuals may be appointed to the TRI according to the College rules governing appointments of adjunct staff. All visiting researchers in the TRI, including those from industrial partners, will be formally recognised using College procedures and appropriate titles.

### **6.1 Termination of Membership**

Membership of a TRI may be terminated by

- A letter of resignation.
- In the event of a serious breach of the responsibilities stated below, and after a defined process as set out by the EMC has been observed.

Appeals against the decisions to terminate membership taken by the EMC may be heard by the TRI Board at its sole discretion.

## **7. Rights and Responsibilities of TRI Membership**

Rights of TRI Members will include (this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- The use subject to EMC agreement of TRI facilities and capacities (for example, specialised equipment, information repositories, grant holding, etc.);
- Attendance at principal investigator meetings and other events;
- Inclusion on appropriate internal information channels;
- Representation on the TRI governance bodies;
- Access to the Director and EMC via agreed procedures.

Responsibilities will include (this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- The normal responsibilities of membership of College;
- To uphold the academic integrity and mission of the TRI and College;

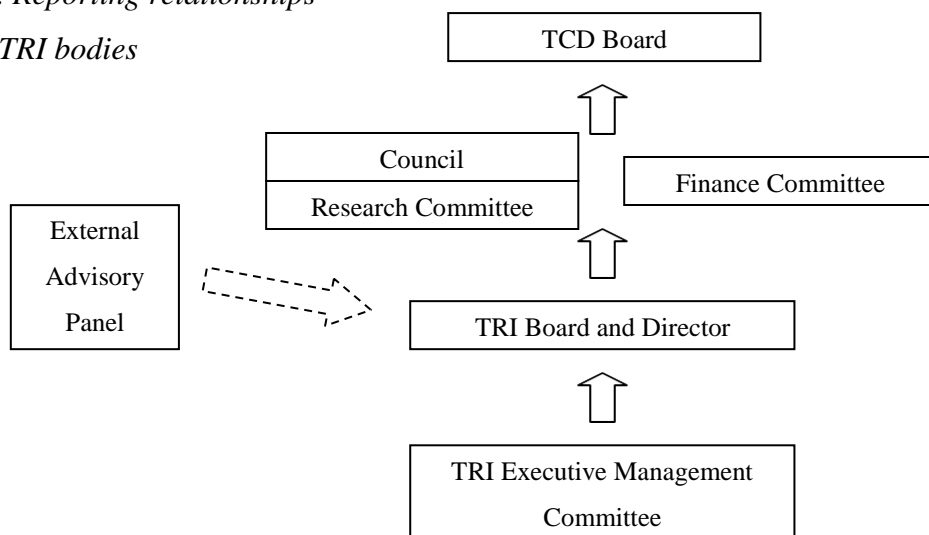


- Running research grants relevant to the work of the TRI through the TRI's cost centre;
- Where principal investigators occupy space (either individually or via research groups) in the TRI, to generate funds that contribute to the TRI's operating costs;
- To include their affiliation with the TRI in publications relevant to the work of the TRI.

## 8. TRI Governance and Administration

Given the complexities in the management and control of TRIs, the management structure should include not only the Director and TRI Board, but also an Executive Management Committee (EMC) and an External Advisory Panel (EAP). In addition, one Dean of Faculty, appointed by the Provost, will have oversight responsibility for the TRI. This structure is intended to provide for accountability, with clear separation of the governance/oversight, executive/operational management, and advisory functions.

*Figure 1. Reporting relationships between TRI bodies*



### 8.1 The Role of the Director

Each TRI will be headed by a Director who should normally be a member of academic staff. The Director will have a distinguished track record of research in the area addressed by the TRI and demonstrated leadership ability. The Director will have

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the ability to drive the strategic, financial and academic planning needed for the long-term success of the TRI as well as to take responsibility for liaison and negotiations with partner institutions, in both the public and private sectors in Ireland and abroad. Above all, the Director will offer academic vision and leadership that will help integrate researchers from diverse backgrounds into a thriving inter-disciplinary environment. The Director is expected to actively undertake/direct research in her/his own field within the TRI and to generate research funding for this purpose.

The Director will normally be appointed by the Provost on the recommendation of the TRI Board following an open competition from within the academic staff of the College managed by the Dean of Research. It is expected that the Director's workload allocation within their School will be made in such a way as to accommodate their role as Director of a TRI; funds may be made available from College to support the Director's contribution to teaching and administration in the School where needed, the use of such funds for this purpose to be agreed between the Director and their Head of School, and subject to Faculty approval, in the case of any staff appointment. The Director reports to the Faculty Dean with oversight responsibility for the TRI in respect of their performance as Director and will be a member of the corresponding Faculty Executive. The procedures set out in Appendix 3 apply in relation to allegations of unsatisfactory performance.

The Director will lead the on-going development and implementation of the TRI's five-year strategic plan. The Director has full responsibility for the management of the TRI in the same way as a Head of School has responsibility for their School and responsibilities include health and safety issues, financial and personnel issues as well as responsibility for allocation of all space allocated to the TRI (see Appendix 2 and [2]). This space will be defined by the College Officer responsible for space allocation, in discussion with the Heads of the participating Schools.

The Director may delegate some of these duties to a senior administrator, who need not be a member of academic staff nor have an affiliation to a particular School, as well as to a Deputy Director, appointed by the Board of the TRI on the nomination of the Director, who will be a member of the TRI.

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The term of office for the Director will be for an initial five-year period, with the possibility of renewal for a total period of no more than eight years. The term of office for the Deputy Director will be for an initial three-year period with the possibility of renewal for one further period of three years.

## **8.2 The TRI Board**

The TRI Board is composed of stakeholders in the TRI, chief of which is the College. The Board will exercise strategic oversight and critical review of the operation and development of the TRI. The responsibilities of the Board will include:

- a. Providing assistance and guidance to the Director and the EMC on financial and strategic matters including:
  - Financial management and planning
  - Fund-raising strategies for the TRI and its expansion
  - Potential commercialisation opportunities where appropriate
  - Management and operation of the TRI in line with College policies
  - Development, implementation and review of strategic plans for the TRI
  - Development of strategic alliances with appropriate research, cultural and industrial partners
- b. Oversight and support on matters including:
  - Advising the Provost on the appointment of the Director and EAP
  - Advising on the implementation of the recommendations of the EAP
  - Review of research strategy, based upon inputs from members of the TRI, the EAP, external assessors and other relevant sources
  - Ensuring in collaboration with the Dean of Research and Research Committee that the TRI research strategy is reflected in overall College research strategy
  - Monitoring of (research) performance against agreed targets and key performance indicators, including qualitative indicators, and preparation of formal annual reports of (research) performance
- c. Approving the appointment of the Deputy Director

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- d. Presenting an annual report, including a financial statement, to the Research Committee for onward communication by that body to Council and Board
  - e. Considering and approving the Director's biannual financial report via the responsible Dean to the Finance Committee and Board.
  - f. Raising matters of great concern with the responsible Dean and the Dean of Research at the earliest feasible time.

Note that the Board is not responsible for directing or running the financial affairs of the TRI and has no role in designing, supervising or operating its internal control processes and procedures. These are matters for College and its finance and accounting functions and infrastructure.

The TRI Board will present an annual report to the Research Committee via the Dean of Research and bi-annual reports to Finance Committee via the appropriate Faculty Dean for onward communication to Council and Board as appropriate. Should matters of great concern arise within the course of the year, however, the TRI Board is obliged to report these matters to the relevant Faculty Dean and the Dean of Research at the earliest feasible time.

### **8.2.1 Composition of the Board**

The Dean of Research, following consultation with the Director, proposes to the Provost the composition of the Board of a TRI for approval. It will include the Chairperson, the Director, Deputy Director (if any), the Dean of Research, the Dean of Faculty with oversight responsibility for the TRI, the Heads of the two or three largest participating Schools (or their nominees), at least three external members with industrial, educational, financial or policy expertise (one of whom will be the Chairperson), and at most three further principal investigators. The external nominees may include representatives of external stakeholders and funders and are expected to act pro bono. The Director will appoint a Secretary to the Board (in attendance).

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There shall be at most five member principal investigators on the Board (three in addition to Director and Deputy Director); the size of the Board shall not exceed 15 members.

### **8.2.2 Meetings**

The Board shall meet at least once a term.

### **8.2.3 Term of Office**

External members will serve three-year terms, which may be renewed for a second term. Internal membership will be reviewed annually.

While representative of different stakeholders in the TRI, Board members are expected to act in this role in the best interests of the College and the TRI. All Board members, TRI management and other attendees that may be invited from time to time, at the invitation of the Chairman, are required to absent themselves should a potential conflict of interest arise in respect of either academic, commercial, legal or financial matters pertaining to the TRI. Such potential conflicts of interest are described in more detail in the College ethics policy [4].

## **8.3 Executive Management Committee:**

The EMC is the executive managerial body of a TRI. The Director chairs the EMC, which includes representatives of the principal investigators and may include a Deputy Director as well as representatives of support staff, research fellows and/or postgraduate students. The EMC deals with the day-to-day operations of the TRI. It meets at least monthly to provide oversight on financial and operations management. It reports through the TRI Board to the College as described in section 9.2.

Functional roles of the EMC include

- To provide overall management of the TRI (and engage participating Schools);
- To oversee the financial affairs and sustainability of the TRI;
- To oversee infrastructural issues;

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- Appointment of appropriate technical and administrative staff;
  - To provide the relevant information and reports in line with funders requirements;
  - To ensure that the use of platform technologies are appropriately costed and utilised;
  - Proactively developing research including industry-academic links;
  - To establish and develop collaborations between the TRI and other national and international institutes and further develop national initiatives;
  - To develop postgraduate student training programmes;
  - To develop and implement the TRI's five-year strategic plan, proactively seeking funding and leading grant applications;
  - To advance the profile of the TRI both nationally and internationally;
  - To attract and host international conferences and workshops; enhance information dissemination in both general public and research community, nationally and internationally.

### **8.3.1 Operation**

Membership of the EMC is for a three-year term, with the option to serve a second three-year term. Members may be re-appointed in different roles. The Director of the selects the membership of the EMC following consultation with the principal investigators and other relevant stakeholders.

### **8.4 External Advisory Panel**

The purpose of the EAP is to review and guide the research of the TRI, with a view to achieving internationally recognized excellence in its field. It will be composed of internationally-respected experts, whose names will be proposed by the TRI Board and then approved by the Provost. The EAP usually meets once a year, and provides assessment and advice to the TRI Board and Director.

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## 9. Review of a TRI

A TRI will normally be granted approval for a period of five years. Every fifth year, the TRI will be subject to an external quality review, including a site visit, under College Quality Review Procedures. Reviewers will be asked to assess the TRI for both current performance and potential performance against international centres in academic fields broadly wide enough to ensure an appropriate range of international comparators on the following scale:

- A. International reference point for research in the discipline. Clearly a world leader.
- B. Internationally competitive in a majority of areas of its research. A significant player internationally in the field.
- C. Internationally competitive in only a minority of its research. Major part of research of national importance.
- D. None or very little research of international significance. Some research of national importance.
- E. Almost no research of national importance.

Reviews will be considered by the Research Committee in the context of the TRI's five-year strategic plan. If the review is satisfactory, the TRI would be formally recognised for a further period of up to five years. If the review is unsatisfactory, then the TRI would be given time to plan and implement remedial action. However, if no remedial action is possible or the planned action fails to address the concerns of the reviewers, recognition may be withdrawn.

College reserves the right to withdraw recognition of a TRI if, for example, the TRI

- receives an unfavourable external review;
- fails to generate appropriate grant income or ceases to have a critical mass of principal investigators to qualify as a TRI and the situation is unlikely to improve in the short term.

In such cases, the Research Committee may, on the recommendation of the Dean of Research, commission an extraordinary external review before making a decision.

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## **10. Review of this Policy**

A review of this policy should be undertaken by the Research Committee every three years and any resulting proposals for modifications be considered by Research Committee, Council, and Board.



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## **References**

[1] The Place of Research Groupings in TCD

Produced by the Research Committee, May 2005 and updated November 2005

[2] Roles & Responsibilities of Faculty Deans/Heads of School/Directors of TRI in relation to Financial Matters

[https://www.tcd.ie/Treasurers\\_Office/docs/FacultyDeansHeadsOfSchoolRolesResponsibilities.pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/Treasurers_Office/docs/FacultyDeansHeadsOfSchoolRolesResponsibilities.pdf)

[3] Explanatory Guidelines and Related Policies for the Financial Management of Research Grants and Contracts

[https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Guidelines\\_Policies\\_Research\\_Grants\\_and\\_Contracts.pdf](https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/Guidelines_Policies_Research_Grants_and_Contracts.pdf)

[4] College Ethics Policy

<https://www.tcd.ie/media/tcd/about/policies/pdfs/ethics-policy-May24.pdf>

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## **Appendix 1 Selected Previous Documents Addressing Aspects of the Operation of TRIs**

1. Governance of Trinity Research Institutes

Approved by Board, 2003

2. The Place of Research Groupings in TCD

Produced by the Research Committee, May 2005 and updated November 2005

3. Clarifications Regarding the Governance and Financing of TCD Research Institutes

Produced by the Working Party on Research Institutes, November 2005

4. Guidelines for Financial Management of Institutes

Approved by Finance Committee as FN/06-07/87

5. Funding of Trinity Research Institutes

Approved by Research Committee, May 2008 and incorporated in “Explanatory Guidelines and Related Policies for the Financial Management of Research Grants and Contracts” of October 2011.

6. Planning group requirements on core funding for TRIs

As per Planning Group Report no. 4 to Board (approved by EOG as EO/10-11/083) and Planning Group Report no. 7 to Board (approved by EOG 21/6/2012)

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## **Appendix 2 Principal Duties of a Director of a TRI**

The Director will be responsible for

1. Strategic, academic and financial planning for the TRI;
2. Liaison and negotiations regarding joint projects with partner institutions and industries and Ireland and abroad;
3. Leading negotiations with partner schools regarding academic, financial, technical and all other matters pertaining to delivery of the mission of the TRI;
4. Creating a compelling academic vision and leadership culture that will help develop and sustain a thriving inter-disciplinary environment;
5. Ensuring the integration of partner schools and its programmes;
6. Management of the TRI's dedicated staff and dealing with all relevant HR matters
7. Management of the TRI budget, including all financial matters associated with the TRI, in accordance with College policies and procedures.
8. Engaging relevant stakeholders in devising and agreeing a strategic plan for the TRI
9. Any other duties as assigned by the College.

In addition, the Director will be expected to carry on running a successful research programme and to raise research grants for this purpose. The Director will be an ex-officio member of the TRI Board and will chair the TRI's EMC.

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## **Appendix 3 Supplementary Procedure Relating to the Conduct of Duties of (Academic) Directors of TRIs**

In matters of allegations of misconduct, serious misconduct or failure to carry out contractual academic duties<sup>3</sup> the provisions of the Disciplinary Procedures Relating to Academic Staff will apply. In instances of alleged failure to carry out the duties to a satisfactory standard in respect of the specific role of Director of a TRI the following procedure applies:

### **1 Principles**

The Manager<sup>4</sup> will make preliminary enquiries with the Director involved and where appropriate deal with the matter on an informal basis. If the Manager believes a hearing may be required he/she will inform the staff member that the matter will proceed to investigation under this policy. The staff member will be informed of the nature of the performance concerns. Hearings will not be convened until the matters of concern have been properly investigated and there has been a finding that there is a case to answer.

At every stage in the procedure the Director will be advised of the nature of the performance concerns and will be given the opportunity to state his/her case before any decision is made. At all stages during the investigation and subsequent hearing (if required), the Director will have the right to be accompanied by an authorised Trade Union Official, Staff Representative or other appropriate representative.

Matters under this policy will be dealt with by the College in a manner which protects the dignity of staff and no action shall take place in the presence of staff not directly concerned.

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<sup>3</sup> It will be the prerogative of the College to determine the applicable procedure

<sup>4</sup> The title Manager is used as a generic term to describe the senior College Officer to whom the Academic Director directly reports.

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## **2 Sanctions**

While sanction in instances of underperformance in the role of Director will normally be incremental, the sanction applied will be related to the level of underperformance in each case. The College reserves the right to exercise discretion as to the suitability of the type of action applicable in any given situation. Sanction under this procedure will normally take one of the following forms:

### **Stage 1 - Verbal Warning**

If performance does not meet acceptable standards, the Director will normally be given a formal verbal warning. He/She will be advised of the reason for the warning and that it is the first stage of the procedure. The warning will be confirmed in writing to the employee.

### **Stage 2- Written Warning/ Final Written Warning**

If the required improvement does not take place a written warning will be issued. He/She will be warned that action under Stage 3 will be considered if there is no satisfactory improvement. If the level of underperformance is sufficiently serious to warrant it, a Final Written Warning will be issued.

### **Stage 3 – Termination in Role as Director**

If performance is still unsatisfactory then termination in the role of Director will result.

## **3 Investigation Process**

A hearing will not take place before the matters of concern have been fully investigated. Details of the performance concerns will be made available to the Director in writing in advance of an investigation meeting. Generally the investigation will be conducted by the Manager. The Director will be advised in advance of the meeting of:

- the purpose of the meeting;
- the complaint/concerns being investigated;
- the time and venue;
- their right to representation;
- that the investigation may lead to sanction.

The staff member will be afforded the opportunity to respond fully to the matters of concern. The outcome of the investigation will be communicated in writing to the

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Director. The person conducting the investigation may issue a formal verbal warning (i.e. Stage 1 above) if this is the outcome of his/her investigation. If the investigator believes that other action may be appropriate he/she will recommend that a hearing be convened. If a hearing is recommended, the Director will be informed in writing of:

- the outcome of the investigation;
- the convening of the hearing, time, venue;
- the name of the Chairperson of the hearing;
- their right to representation;
- the range of possible sanction applicable.

#### **4 Hearing**

The hearing will be conducted by a College Officer who was not part of the investigation. The outcome of the investigation will be presented by the investigator to the Chair of the hearing in the presence of the Director.

The Director will be afforded the opportunity to make whatever representation he/she deems relevant.

The Chair of the hearing will satisfy him/herself that all relevant material has been obtained and that the Director has been afforded reasonable opportunity to respond. The Chair will inform the staff member of the outcome of his/her deliberations and issue a decision on the matter within a reasonable timeframe.

#### **5 Appeal**

The decision of the Chair of the hearing may be appealed to a Rights Commissioner.