



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

A meeting of the University Council was held on 8th April 2026 at 11.15am in Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.

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| <i>Present</i> | Provost, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Registrar, Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Students, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Research, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dean of Health Sciences, Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Professor D. Geary, Professor P. O'Grady, Professor V. Colasanti, Professor C. Kenny, Professor G. Watson, Professor D. Nolan, Professor H. Siljak, Professor L. O'Driscoll, Professor D. Brennan, Professor K Neenan, Ms D. Alexander, Mr M. McAndrew, SU Education Officer. |
| <i>Apologies</i> | Vice-Provost Global Engagement, Registrar, Senior Tutor, Dr N. O'Dwyer, Professor M. Stock, Professor AM. Malone, Heads of Schools Representative (Professor Gregory O'Hare), Ms G. Villa, Ms E. Martin, Ms K Grogan, Mr A. Zafar, Ms L. Mpofu. |
| <i>In attendance</i> | Chief Operating Officer, Secretary to the College/Director of Governance, Librarian and College Archivist, Academic Secretary, Education Support Officer, Academic Affairs; Dr Pauline Rooney, Head of Academic Practice/Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Programme Director for item 153; Dr Claire McAvinia, Senior Academic Developer and Strategic Initiatives Lead for item 153; Dr Jonathan Hodgers, Education Fellow (ESD) for item 153; Prof. Cuisle Forde, Education Fellow (ESD) for item 153. |
| <i>Observers</i> | Ms C. Persello. |

SECTION A.1: Policy Matters

The Provost welcomed everyone to Council and requested that Council members declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the agenda. The Secretary to the College/Director of Governance advised Council there were no statement of interest declared.

CL/25-26/151 Minutes
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/151: The minutes of the meeting of Council on 11th March 2026 were approved.

CL/25-26/152 Matters Arising from the Minutes
No matters arising were noted or raised.

Dr Pauline Rooney, Head of Academic Practice/ESD Programme Director, Dr Claire McAvinia, Senior Academic Developer and Strategic Initiatives Lead, Dr Jonathan Hodgers and Prof. Cuisle Forde, Education Fellows (ESD), joined the meeting.

CL/25-26/153 Embedding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Trinity Education – Update
The Provost welcomed the speakers and explained the focus of the presentation will be an update on the work completed on the ESD project, to date.

Professor D. Geary and Professor D. Brennan joined the meeting.

The Head of Academic Practice/ESD Programme Director introduced the ESD team members. The team co-presented the slides as circulated, which included the following highlights:

1. Trinity's strong institutional commitment to ESD, integrating it across curricula while respecting different disciplinary approaches and the principle of academic freedom.
2. The Team is working towards achievement of targets set in the Higher Education Authority (HEA) Performance Agreement 2024-28 and is on track to achieve, if not exceed, these targets.
3. Trinity's ESD progress is becoming more visible internally and through national, EU and international networks.
4. The approach is not to prescribe ESD via mandatory modules; rather to empower staff and students to develop and embed ESD within their disciplinary and interdisciplinary curricula.
5. Curriculum mapping of ESD competencies has been completed across elective modules, via manual review of module descriptors; some AI screening, and confirmation by module coordinators. This work shows significant evidence of ESD within elective modules.
6. The Centre for Academic Practice has expanded ESD Professional development for faculty, ranging from events, open-access resources, an ESD online resource Hub, and accredited offerings. Trinity's March 2026 Green Week also provided opportunities for staff engagement.
7. Trinity's ESD Curriculum Design Framework explicitly incorporates [UNESCO ESD](#) competencies, providing a shared structure for ESD themes, pedagogical approaches and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategies.
8. ESD competencies align strongly with Trinity's Graduate Attributes, however, at present, the ESD Biosphere theme is the least visible across modules.
9. HEA funding, student demand and School ESD champions are enabling progress, however consistency of module and programme information and broader staff engagement present challenges.

The Provost thanked the presenters. During discussion following the presentation, the following points were noted:

- Council's appreciation of the scale, pace, and quality of the work, with recognition that ESD implementation is ongoing.
- Emphasis on the strategic importance of the UNESCO ESD competencies, with a suggestion to highlight their added-value more explicitly in ESD work at Trinity, especially in relation to future-ready, human-centred skills (e.g. critical thinking, problem anticipation) in an AI-enabled world.
- The importance of research to understand and evidence the student experience of ESD and its impact on their outcomes.
- Curriculum mapping is essential to enable the identification of early adopters and champions. This depends on the consistency of module and programme information in Descriptor documents, and this must be improved at Trinity. It was suggested that a system of tags on module descriptor forms could provide an immediate visual indicator of which ESD themes are addressed.
- The lesser visibility of biosphere and biodiversity themes reflects a wider sectoral challenge that the biosphere is not relevant to learning outcomes or curricula in some academic disciplines. Addressing this requires creative approaches.
- Recognition of allied initiatives (e.g. Trinity Library's sustainability plans) as effective partners, with the value of clear, memorable data points for impact communication.
- Council welcomed the assurance that Trinity is on track to meet its agreed performance targets for ESD, with HEA, but noted how important it is that engagement increases across disciplines. In response to a query from the Provost, it was clarified that ESD competencies are not mandated at module-level however Council had previously agreed that new undergraduate programme proposals must

include at least one programme learning outcome which addresses ESD themes and/or competencies.

- Council expressed support for the ESD team's scaffolded approach to staff engagement, meeting academics where they are and working collaboratively within disciplinary contexts.
- Resourcing challenges within Schools were acknowledged, and it was noted that the revised academic staff promotions process provides a mechanism to encourage academic time to be invested on ESD teaching and learning activities.

Dr Pauline Rooney, Head of Academic Practice/ESD Programme Director, Dr Claire McAvinia, Senior Academic Developer and Strategic Initiatives Lead, Dr Jonathan Hodgers, Education fellow (ESD) and Prof. Cuisle Forde, Education Fellow (ESD) left the meeting.

CL/25-26/154 Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer's Report

The Vice-Provost shared a verbal update on substantive topics that had recently been discussed at the Irish Universities Association (IUA). Council noted that:

- **Access to undergraduate education: Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) and the Higher Education Access Route (HEAR):** A national review of the DARE scheme is now underway, and the Vice-Provost has been asked to chair the Review Group until the work is complete. Concerns remain across the sector that institutions will continue to face operational risks as they seek to manage requirements arising from continued year on year growth in DARE student numbers. In relation to the HEAR scheme for socio-economically disadvantaged students, sectoral numbers have been in decline, and the priority is to review the criteria and the (complicated) applications process, which includes a verification step with SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland), for the approval of student grants.
- **National Student Survey.ie 2026:** the updated national survey for taught undergraduate and postgraduate students was rolled out this year, following a gap of two years while the survey was being redesigned. The survey closed in Trinity on 17th March. The final Trinity response rate was confirmed by the HEA (shortly post-Council meeting) as 18.2%, with a national average of 19% across all HEIs. The Vice-Provost noted the importance of gaining student feedback and that the Quality Committee will receive a report on the analysis of the data. It was also noted that the national student survey is part of the HEA Act and is part of each university's performance compact.
- **Hyper-regulation and better regulation of HE:** arising from shared concerns across the sector, and reflecting global trends to aim for more responsive, proportionate regulation, the IUA is developing a paper on the risks of hyper-regulation of Higher Education and what makes for better regulation. This is for discussion with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS), the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI).
- **New Student Records System (SRS):** the HEA is seeking to develop a new Student Record System (SRS) which, they intend, will provide a higher quality, robust evidence base to underpin policy and funding decisions.
- **CAO reform:** DFHERIS has informed the IUA that Minister Lawless would like to engage on CAO reform, which is a commitment in the programme for government. It was flagged that the Central Applications Office (CAO) was established as a private company to ensure objectivity and transparency in the allocation of places in the universities, through an algorithm. Notwithstanding, there is IUA support for a better integrated system of information for prospective students, on all Further and Higher Education options across the tertiary sector and it was noted that the HEA is setting up a related governance group to focus on the transition from second level to tertiary education.

During discussion following the Vice-Provost's comments, the following points were noted in relation to the HEAR scheme:

- The USC had recently discussed the HEAR scheme and a proposal was forthcoming which aims to increase the number of HEAR applicants to Trinity's programmes;
- It is important to emphasise the inter-connectedness of actions such as resource-cuts in the Youth and Community sector and the decline in HEAR applications, since many young people in areas of socio-economic disadvantage rely on such local resources for support.

CL/25-26/155 Provost's Report

The Provost began her verbal update to Council by congratulating the Schools of Nursing and Midwifery, English and Pharmacy on their recent QS subject rankings, with rankings of 10, 19 and 28, respectively.

The Provost highlighted the recent publication of the National Student Accommodation Strategy, noting that this Strategy places emphasis on public-private partnerships for the delivery of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA).

The Provost updated Council on an emerging political concern that universities in Ireland offer degrees that are over-specialised and as a result do not seek to develop the transversal skills of students. She gave examples of how this perceived concern is at odds with the wide choice of broad-based degree offerings available in the sector, contrasting the broadness here in Ireland with other jurisdictions in which degrees are more specialised.

The Provost also noted that the process around pre-budget submissions for 2027 in Ireland is now underway and Trinity will be feeding into this through our work in the Irish Universities Association and in other ways.

During the discussion that followed, the following points were noted:

- The evidence from External Examiners' reports on programmes, and other Quality Assurance mechanisms, does not currently point to concerns about graduate outcomes and over-specialisation at undergraduate level.
- There was some discussion about the forthcoming national budget for 2027 and university research and innovation, specifically in relation to the high level of expectation for the INSPIRE research funding programme that is being administered by the Higher Education Authority and Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland.
- In a general sense, the Research & Innovation (R&I) link between universities and indigenous business and industry in Ireland remains under-developed in the wider context of Ireland's reliance on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) companies, which undertake their own R&I.
- Given geo-political and economic uncertainties in the international context, there is an opportunity for Ireland to identify research and development opportunities and to invest strategically.
- In relation to the National Student Accommodation Strategy, there were a number of concerns expressed in respect to the risk this newly-envisaged model of PBSA delivery has for universities. It was noted that the IUA has also acknowledged this risk.

CL/25-26/156 Any Other Urgent Business

There was no other urgent business.

SECTION A.2: Policy Matters which have already been considered by Committees

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings.

- CL/25-26/157 Proposal to add Framework Structure to the M.Sc. programme in Gerontological Nursing from 2026/27**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/157: The proposal to add Framework Structure to the M.Sc. programme in Gerontological Nursing was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/158 Revised Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/158: The revised Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/159 Revised Academic Awards Policy**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/159: The revised Academic Awards Policy was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/160 Revised Dual and Joint Awards Policy**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/160: The revised Dual and Joint Awards Policy was noted and approved. The Academic Secretary noted that the changes presented in this revision were minor but that a more substantial review is planned in collaboration with Trinity Global, in the context of new strategy on international partnerships.
- CL/25-26/161 Revised Student Capacity Policy (formerly Fitness to Study)**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/161: The revised Student Capacity Policy (formerly Fitness to Study) was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/162 Postgraduate Research National Student Survey Report 2025**
Action/Decision:
The Academic Secretary noted that the response rate for the National Postgraduate Research Student Survey was 30%, which compares favourably to the 18.2% response rate for the UG & PGT National Student Survey, ie 2026 as reported by the Vice-Provost. The results from the Postgraduate Research Student Survey were also noted as largely complimentary about the quality of the PGR experience at Trinity.
CL/25-26/162: The Postgraduate Research National Student Survey Report 2025 was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/163 School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies – Quality Review Report**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/163: The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies – Quality Review Report was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/164 School of Psychology – Quality Progress Report**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/164: The School of Psychology – Quality Progress Report was noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/165 Royal Irish Academy of Music – Academic Policies**
Action/Decision:
CL/25-26/165: The Royal Irish Academy of Music – Academic Policies were noted and approved.
- CL/25-26/166 Royal Irish Academy of Music – Institutional Quality Progress Report**
Action/Decision:

CL/25-26/166: The Royal Irish Academy of Music – Institutional Quality Progress Report was noted and approved. The Provost complimented the Academy on their evident progress and noted their ongoing efforts to strengthen the relationship with Trinity.

SECTION B: Reports from Committees

CL/25-26/167 Graduate Studies Committee

Action/Decision:

CL/25-26/167: The minutes of 26 March 2026 were noted and approved.

CL/25-26/168 Quality Committee

Action/Decision:

CL/25-26/168: The minutes of 12 March 2026 were noted and approved.

CL/25-26/169 Research Committee

Action/Decision:

CL/25-26/169: The minutes of 17 February 2026 were noted and approved.

CL/25-26/170 Undergraduate Studies Committee

Action/Decision:

CL/25-26/170: The minutes of 24 March 2026 were noted and approved.

SECTION C

CL/25-26/171 University Council Membership – Students' Union

The Council noted and approved that the following has been elected and will serve as a member of the University Council for the academic year 2026/27.

Education Officer: Ms Eve Martin.

CL/25-26/172 Higher Degrees – Reports of Examiners

The Council noted and approved the circulated reports of examiners on candidates for higher degrees (Higher Degrees List) dated 8 April 2026.

M.D. Adam Daniel Roche.

Ph.D. Maha Abdulaziz S Alobaid; Kehinde Charles Akinwarere; Linta Antony; Mohammed Bayounes; Laetitia Paula Bettmann; Ebru Boynuegri; Roberta Mary Bramhill; Martin Brennan; Charlotte Buckley; Reem Cherif; Gearoid Conlon; Alexandra Day; Lucia Della Ventura; Marianne Fallon; Daniel Anthony Fitzpatrick; Mauricio Flores Vargas; Mark Fortune; Dermot Grant; Áine Halpin; Shane Hayden-Smyth; Jeff Henderson; Donghyuk Kwon; Conor Leahy; Teng Liu; Qirui Luo; Rebecca Lyons; Endika Martinez; Amy McGlinchey; Ciara McNevin; Victor Morozov; Blessing Mutiro; Declan Patrick Nell; Jessica O'Brien; Artur Osipov; Gustav Parker Hibbett; Breanne Pitt; Matteo Pograxha; Alexandra Marie Richardson; Bandeh Ali Talpur; Joanne Touhey; Zeena Ziyuan Wang.

D.Mus.Perf. Douglas Carnes.

M.Sc. Anis Allahdiniyan; Jack Behan; Catherine Lynda Shenton.

CL/25-26/173 Heads of Discipline

The Council noted and approved the following nominations:

- (i) Professor Balázs Apor as the Head of the Discipline of Russian and Slavonic Studies, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, from 1 June 2026 to 31 May 2029.
- (ii) Professor Paul Conroy as the Head of the Discipline of Clinical Speech and Language Studies, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, from 1 June 2026 to 31 May 2029.

CL/25-26/174 Directors

The Council noted and approved the nomination of Professor Yvonne Lynch as the Director of Teaching and Learning (Undergraduate), School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, for a second term until 31 May 2028.

CL/25-26/175 Derogations for Examinations Outside the Formal 2025/26 Assessment Sessions – Trinity Access Programmes

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Head of Assessment/Deputy Head of Operations dated 11 March 2026.

CL/25-26/176 Board and Council Meeting Dates 2026/27

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Secretary to the College/Director of Governance, and the Governance Manager dated 30 March 2026.

SECTION D

In compliance with the Data Protection Acts, this information is restricted.

Signed

Date