Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

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The University of Dublin

Minutes of the People and Culture Committee

Thursday, 27th November, 14:00-16:00

Arts Building Conference Room 2026, Arts Building Faculty Office

Present: Prof Darryl Jones (Chairperson), Mr Séamus McManus (Committee Secretary, Director of Human Resources), Mr Noel Gorman (Chief Operating Officer), Mr Andrew Duffin (Group of Unions Rep), Ms Paula Hicks (College Staff Member), Prof Lorraine Leeson (Associate Vice-Provost for EDI), Prof Rachel Moss (College Staff Member), Mr Lucky Khambule (External Member)

Apologies: Ms Kathryn Whyte (External Member), Mr David Treacy (Student Rep), Ms Neha Omprakash Deshmukh (Student Rep), Prof Eoin O'Sullivan (Senior Dean), Prof Sylvia Draper (Dean of FSTEM)

In attendance: Ms Siobán O'Brien Green (Head of EDI) and Mr. Joel Mc Keever (Equality Officer) for item B1, Ms Rachel Skelly (Dignity Respect & Consent (DR&C) manager), Mrs Lydia Brazil (Deputy Director of Human Resources and Head of Operations), Ms Fidelma Haffey (Head of Talent) and Prof Derek Nolan (Professor of Biochemistry) for item B4, Ms Michelle Hogan, Ms Lara McKeown, Ms Niamh McKeown

Section A – Standing Items

Section A.2 **Minutes and Matters Arising**

PCC/25-26/12 **Minutes**

A committee member clarified that in the final paragraph of item PCC/25-26/04 from the draft minutes of 25th September, the reference to clearing backlogs was specifically in the context of allowing one more round of promotions under the existing system. This would provide time for the new system to be approved and implemented.

People and Culture committee approved the draft minutes of 25th September 2025.

PCC/25-26/13 **Outstanding Actions**

The Secretary to the Committee apologised for the delay in responding to outstanding queries from the meeting held on 21st May, which had been with HR for review. A memo addressing these queries had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and the Secretary suggested that any further queries or comments should be directed to HR.

PCC/25-26/14 **Matters Arising from the Minutes**

A committee member commented that documents for the meeting had been circulated on the Friday before the meeting (four working days). The committee member further noted that earlier circulation of meeting documents would be preferrable, ideally two weeks in advance. The Chair acknowledged this point.

It was at this point that the Chair proposed that items A5 and B1 would be combined, to which the Committee agreed.

PCC/25-26/15 **Verbal Update from Committee Secretary & HR Director, Mr Séamus McManus.**

The committee received a verbal update from the Secretary of the Committee and HR Director. It was noted that two new appointments in HR senior management had recently been made. Lydia Brazil, Head of Operations, had been appointed as Deputy Director of HR, and Aoife Gleason was set to assume the role of Head of HR Partnering & Resourcing from 8th December. The Secretary thanked Emma Treacy-Matunga for her contribution as Interim Head of HR Partnering and Resourcing and indicated that a broader communication would be issued to senior College staff regarding Ms Gleason's appointment. The Committee noted that the Casual Pay Project had begun, led by HR Operations, and aimed at enhancing process efficiency, in alignment with the Strategic Plan. It was noted that the Senior Academic Promotions (SAP) process continued to progress positively, with a more detailed update to be provided at the February PCC meeting.

The Committee further noted that HR had commenced a review of the AO1 pay scale/grade, and communications had been issued to relevant staff. HR were scheduled to meet the Heads of School (HoS) Secretariat Group on 2nd December to discuss and were also due to bring this to the HoS meeting on 4th December, and would also be seeking feedback from AO1 colleagues and other key stakeholder groups. The review was currently in the analysis stage, with a timeline to conclude by the end of the academic year. The Committee would receive a more concrete update in due course as the review took shape. Finally, the Secretary reported that HR had submitted a business case to Planning Group for the upcoming financial year and that additional resources for HR had been approved, aligning with the Staff Commitment within the new Strategic Plan, and responding to related expansion in College activities and staffing.

PCC/25-26/16 **To receive an update on the Strategic Plan Implementation.**

The Secretary and HR Director noted that the implementation plan previously shared with the Committee had been approved by Board on 15th October. The Strategic Planning Management Group (SPMG) had met last week and was considering how best to communicate stories linked to the Strategic Plan from members of the College community, and how best to report progress both internally and externally. It was further noted that the Secretary's Office and the Provost's Office were reviewing the most effective way to receive these updates, and the SPMG were awaiting further guidance from them.

Key highlights to date included improvements to PhD and other Research student stipend payments process, as part of the Postgraduate Renewal programme. In the academic year 2024/25, there was a low rate students receiving payment in their first month. HR collaborated with the PG Programme, and departments including IT Services and Academic Registry, to increase this figure significantly, with further improvements anticipated.

The Committee also noted that work was underway to combine the current two probation policies into a single policy for all staff, following engagement through focus groups across College. Additionally, HR have commenced discussions with the Communications Office on the rollout of Trinity's new behavioural values, the first set of such values for the College. These communications would link to areas such as EDI, Recruitment, and DR&C, and will focus on identifying the values we seek in future staff and ensuring those values are being lived across College.

It was noted that a committee member emphasised that College must actively live its stated values and gave examples of how this has not been done, including delays in circulating PCC minutes and inadequate communication with employees who were unsuccessful in recruitment processes. The overall point made was that communications should be all-inclusive. The Secretary agreed that effective communication and dialogue is essential in this regard, and that all members of the College community have a responsibility to ensure that the new values are being lived, and to take appropriate action if this is not the case.

The Chair asked whether a promotions call would take place this year under the new SAP system. The Secretary advised that any call would require Board approval and that a request for an interim call would likely be submitted by the Vice-Provost / CAO to the Board. It was noted that the Vice-Provost / CAO had met with colleagues on related matters the previous day, but the process was taking longer than expected, with the Board expected to consider an interim call by the end of January.

The Chair further queried why the AO1 scale/ grade was the only scale/ pay grade under review. The Secretary explained that while other grades may also require review, AO1 was the most pressing due to the larger numbers of staff currently in those grades, and the breadth and scale of reform needed.

PCC/25-26/17 **To receive an update from the People Projects Manager, Michelle Hogan, on the People Projects.**

The Committee received a verbal update from the People Projects Manager on progress made since the last PCC meeting in September. It was noted that a significant amount of consultation had taken place between the People Projects Manager and wider College regarding the composition of the People Projects workstreams. Workstream proposals had also been considered by various committees. There were recommendations from the Faculty Deans to broaden the scope of the workstreams to ensure appropriate representation which caused a slight but worthwhile delay in mobilisation. The People Projects Management Group membership has now been finalised, and the first meeting will commence in January. The People Projects Manager has confirmed Chairs and Leads for each of the 9 workstreams with most internal HR representatives already identified, as well as representatives from other the Academic Services Division and several other members from key divisions. The People Projects Manager indicated that one-to-one meetings with these Chairs and Leads would take place before the Christmas break. The Committee were informed of some risks, including a lack of resources, as the People Projects Manager was the sole member of the team, and that basic administrative tasks were taking up a considerable amount of time. Additional support was hoped for in January when workstream meetings were set to begin. The Committee noted that feedback from areas regarding the project had been positive to date with staff eager to be involved despite busy schedules.

A committee member enquired whether there were Terms of Reference for each workstream, to which the People Projects Manager confirmed draft Terms of Reference for each workstream will be brought to the first management group meeting for approval. Suggested membership for the Good Employer Project and the Employment Contracts Project were presented, with the Project Manager indicating that adjustments could be made to these groups if gaps were identified once work commenced. It was further noted that the name of the Good Employer/ Wellbeing workstream might be revised to avoid confusion with the overarching name of the project. The Secretary clarified that the Academic Titles Review was separate from the People Projects but had been referenced in the suggested membership for the Employment Contracts Project to avoid repeatedly drawing on the same individuals for multiple workstreams. It was noted that the Faculty Deans had proposed that all three of them should participate in elements of the Academic Titles Review. One Head of School from each Faculty had also been confirmed.

The Head of EDI and the Equality Officer joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/18 **Verbal Update from the Chair of EDI Sub-Committee & Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, Lorraine Leeson.**

The Committee were introduced to the Head of EDI and the Equality Officer by the Chair of the EDI Sub-Committee and Associate Vice-Provost for EDI. It was noted that EDI's work segues closely with the 3 commitments of the Strategic Plan -Purpose, People and Place, also considering a 4th 'P' - Power (who has the power to access College, effect change in College, etc.) and how the College can work to do better. The importance of considering diverse experiences across different College locations College's geographically dispersed community was highlighted as a means of helping to ensure that the College's values are lived throughout the institution. The Committee noted that EDI engaged in a significant amount of compliance-related work, including institutional eligibility for European Commission and national funding via the requirement to have a Gender Equality Plan in place (European Commission) and Athena Swan accreditation (national funders), alongside other national legal and sectoral EDI obligations such as gender equality, race equality, disability, Irish Sign Language, and ending sexual violence and harassment (ESVH) reporting. These also map to our IHREC Act related Public Sector Duty obligations. Cumulatively, this represents a substantial amount of work for the EDI team. The update also referenced ongoing projects enabling EDI to meet these obligations, such as HEA funded projects - HEIs as Places for People, the EMBRACED project - and liaison with the CHARM-EU team. Work continues across the institution with EDI working in partnership with HR, Finance, Academic Registry, Student Services, Estates and Facilities, and other areas to embed EDI principles across College's operations. The EDI Sub-Committee reflected on the evolution of EDI within Trinity was outlined, noting the shift from a gender-focused agenda to a broader, cross-European and cross-sectoral approach in recent years. The Committee acknowledged the importance of ensuring that all members of the College community actively live the University's values.

The Committee noted that challenges remain around ensuring a whole-of-College approach. For example, from a governance structures and channels of reporting perspective, EDI has no formal representation on any Committee of University Council. To mitigate this, the EDI team engages with the wider College community and invites colleagues onto relevant committees and working groups. Building on this collaborative approach, the Committee reflected on how institutional change has been achieved through piloting initiatives (e.g. Trinity Inclusive Curriculum) and seeking to scale up ideas tested out in parts of College. The Committee considered how the College can serve as a beacon of best practice, noting that our standing as an inaugural European Commission Sustainable Gender Equality Champion is a strong example of this. Building from the Gender Equality Champions Network, Trinity has worked collectively to coordinate statements reaffirming its commitment to EDI at national and European level. Another example of ongoing work pointed to was limited childcare provision. The Day Nursery currently only has 50 places, and in the city, something that the Dublin Chamber of Commerce has identified childcare availability as a wider issue impacting on social, and economic activity. Early on that also poses a challenge for College community members. For example, the Day Nursery currently has only 50 place and demand far exceeds supply. It was noted that early-stage conversations were underway to explore solutions in partnership with other city-based HEIs, Dublin Chamber of Commerce and Early Childhood Ireland. It was also noted that in Academic Year 2025/6, EDI has included several activities focusing on socio-economic status including "Class Acts: A Conversation about being Working Class in College" event, which successfully brought together students and staff from across the College community. Finally, the Chair of the EDI Sub-Committee expressed thanks to all who contributed to this work.

Section B – Items for Noting / Approval

PCC/25-26/19 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Deep Dive from the Chair of EDI Sub-Committee & Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, Prof. Lorraine Leeson, Head of EDI, Ms. Siobán O'Brien Green and Equality Officer, Mr. Joel Mc Keever.**

PCC/25-26/20 **To receive an update on Trinity EDI activities, including new EDI staff group, updates on Trinity-INC Project evaluation and next steps, etc.**

The Head of EDI noted that the Trinity-INC Project commenced in late 2020 and an external evaluation was commissioned in May 2024, which has now been completed. The evaluation oversight group has met on more than eight occasions, and the findings have been reported to a series of Council reporting committees. She reported that EDI was working closely with the new Academic Secretary and other stakeholders to progress the next phase of the project, with Inclusive Curriculum related activities moving to Trinity Teaching and Learning, a truly appropriate 'home' for this work. One element that remains to brought forward post-Trinity Inclusive Curriculum is ensuring that Universal Design training continues to be available for professional staff in College via Trinity Learning and Development. The Committee noted that Universal Design training had been very beneficial and there was a desire to continue this initiative.

PCC/25-26/21 **To receive Athena Swan updates and reflections on 10 years of Athena Swan in Trinity.**

The Committee received an update on our cross- institutional Athena Swan activities. It was noted that work takes place under an Irish Athena Swan

Charter and awards scheme serving as a mechanism in higher education for promoting equality. The Committee were informed that the initiative dated back 20 years, and the focus has radically changed from its inception, expanding from a focus on women in academic roles to include all staff. The Athena Swan Ireland Charter broadened the scope to cover all equality grounds in 2021, and EDI works closely with Schools and Units, and with HR colleagues on applications. Engagement with the Athena Swan process is a requirement for higher education institutions and checks are in place to ensure compliance.

The Committee noted that there were three levels of awards; bronze, silver, and gold. It was noted that Athena Swan operates on a cyclical basis, with standards for renewal becoming higher. Trinity typically manages between one and four applications per cycle, with two cycles of submissions annually. It was further noted that documenting progress requires data collection and EDI runs a bi-annual survey to support this goal. The next survey is scheduled for Spring 2026. Given a previous response rate of 36%, efforts are planned to increase participation. The Committee acknowledged that the process was highly transparent, with our redacted institutional application and action plan available on the Trinity website. The Committee heard that Trinity had been highly successful in Athena Swan, with 22 out of 24 schools currently holding awards, alongside Trinity Global – the first professional unit in Ireland to secure an Athena Swan award. Trinity's work in this area has achieved international recognition, making the College a leader in Ireland and within the sector. At the same time, it was noted that this work entails significant workload. The schedule for upcoming award applications was outlined, and it was noted that Trinity aimed to submit four school renewals, including two bronze to silver awards, which would result in an exceptionally busy period.

PCC/25-26/22 **To receive an update on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.**

It was noted that the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty is set out in Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, that it applies to all public sector organisations and that public bodies have a legal obligation to comply. The Committee heard that, to date, Trinity had been deemed non-compliant with the Duty, despite the broad range of equality related work that we can demonstrate. It was noted that College is working towards compliance with the Act, most notably via EDI's active engagement with the Secretary's Office on this issue. For example, a statement on College's engagement with the Public Sector Duty has been published on the Secretary's website (https://www.tcd.ie/secretary/compliance-and-legislation/public-sector-equality-and-human-rights-duty/) and on the EDI website: https://www.tcd.ie/equality/trinity-edi/legislation/public-sector-duty/ It was acknowledged that while the work undertaken by EDI effectively met the requirements of the Duty, but essential functional obligations had not previously been met. This includes including explicit reference to the Public Sector Duty within the Strategic Plan 2025–2030. Trinity is not alone in working pro-actively to meet compliance obligations -the Committee heard that nationally, current compliance levels were at 20%, as per the IHREC Monitoring Implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty Report 2025.

PCC/25-26/23 **To receive an update on the implementation of the Race Equality Action Plan and approve the Terms of Reference for the new University Race Equality Action Plan Implementation Oversight Group (UREAP-IOG).**

The Equality Officer noted that the RACE Equality Action Plan (REAP), which was the result of several phases of work across several years is now at a critical stage of implementation. The REAP is aligned with the College's current institutional Athena Swan action plan (2023–2028).

It was reported that a Race Equality Officer, Ms. Assia Boudhar, had been appointed in July 2025 to coordinate REAP actions across the University. The REAP comprises 34 actions, including items that focus on recruitment procedures, development of an inclusive curriculum, and staff training.

The Committee also heard that a recent Town Hall meeting had been held in Regent's House in response to a rise in racist and xenophobic attacks in Dublin. The event, a result of cross-College collaboration (e.g. EDI, Trinity Global, Dean of Graduate Studies, Student Counselling, and others) which attracted approximately 70 attendees, provided an opportunity to communicate concerns and break down silos. The Committee noted that EDI was collaborating with other institutions to support collective approaches to ensure that Dublin is anti-racist.

A key instrumental element to support the implementation of the REAP is the establishment of a University Race Equality Action Plan Implementation Oversight Group (UREAP-IOG), which People and Culture Committee were invited to consider and approve.

23.01. The Committee considered and approved the Terms of Reference for the new University Race Equality Action Plan Implementation Oversight Group (UREAP-IOG).

PCC/25-26/24 **To receive an update on the Staff Disability Working Group and approve the Terms of Reference.**

While the Disability Service primarily focused on student disability, the Staff Disability Working Group (SD-WG) had been established to address staff accessibility and disability issues, and to help College work towards meeting our legal obligations (e.g. Disability Act, Irish Sign Language Act and IHREC Public Sector Duty). The Committee noted that the SD-WG had recently moved under the remit of the People and Culture Committee with support from the EDI Office. It was reported that the intention was to reconvene the group, with two co-chairs: by Dr Patricia McCarthy, (School of Education,) and Ms. Patricia Ryan (HR). The SD-WG were also seeking approval of the Terms of Reference (ToR) to proceed.

It was noted that the Heads of School Committee had proposed, and approved, the appointment of Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EEDI) Leads in each academic school for the Academic Year 2025/6.

The Committee engaged in a discussion following the updates presented. A Committee member congratulated the EDI team and queried the addition of the term 'Equity' to the current EDI title. The Committee heard that this change had been proposed by the Heads of School Committee and reflected how it is the case that different people may need different levels of support to get to the same equitable point.

A question was raised regarding anti-racism training and whether existing training was available. It was noted that a specific anti-racism training package was scheduled to be piloted in Spring 2026 with the help of HR. While anti-racism strands were already available (e.g. There is an online module, "Let's talk about Race in Higher Education" available via the EDI training website), the new package, currently in preparation, would provide a deeper dive. The Committee noted that EDI was actively seeking to engage with minority students and had organised events such as a coffee gathering following the Town Hall meeting to provide additional support and opportunities for discussion. It was further noted that each student entering Trinity had an assigned College Tutor, and EDI continued to raise awareness on where to access support from across the College community and via local and national organisations.

A query was raised on how anti-racism training would be rolled out. It was reported that discussions were ongoing with the Learning and Organisational Development team, and consideration was being given to existing requirements for EDI training. Several areas had already expressed interest in participating. Appointment panels were suggested for inclusion in the rollout.

The Committee heard that a new Staff Disability Liaison Officer post had been finalised and would sit within the Disability Service to address staff queries with a dotted reporting line to HR. The job specification had been finalised and was expected to go live with recruitment shortly. It was further noted that EDI had secured funding to make the following roles permanent: Equality Officer post and two part-time Irish Sign Language/English

Interpreter posts and Head of EDI role, with extension of administrative support from a half-time to 80% FTE, which will significantly support and sustain College's EDI commitment.

24.01 The Committee considered and approved the Staff Disability Working Group Terms of Reference.

The Head of EDI and the Equality Officer left the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/25 **To receive an update from the Dignity Respect & Consent (DR&C) manager, Rachel Skelly, on the activities of the service.**

The Manager of the Dignity, Respect and Consent Service (DR&C) opened the update noting that the DR&C service had been launched in April 2024 as part of the implementation of the revised Dignity, Respect and Sexual Misconduct policies approved by Board in 2023. The Service provided prevention and response, support and training respectively.

The Committee heard that in March 2025, the National Speak Out Office was established in Trinity after receiving funding from the HEA. Speak Out is an online anonymous reporting tool now used by 17 institutions nationwide. The tool allows individuals to report a range of issues, and two staff members had been appointed to lead the project. It was noted that the national Speak Out report had recently been published, and the Manager provided statistics on usage of both the Speak Out tool and the DR&C Service, including that since the launch of the DR&C Service in April 2024, the service has provided support and advice to 232 staff, students, and others. The DR&C Manager continued to highlight an increase in formal reporting since the launch of the DR&C Service. This increase in formal reporting was a positive indicator of trust and engagement, addressing staff and students' fears that "nothing would be done" if they made a formal complaint, as seen in the National Speak Out Report.

Comparisons were made by a Committee member regarding how the previous DR&C contacted people who were reported to them and how they were made aware that a complaint had been made against them before it was brought as a formal complaint. Questions were then raised as to the role of the current screening panel and concerns that it was unfair for a respondent to be unaware that a complaint had been made against them. Dedicated staff had been appointed to manage reports who have training in areas such as trauma and data protection. Work was continuing to ensure these contacts were fully incorporated into the new structure. It was noted that the role of the Screening Panel was to determine the scope of anonymised complaints and recommend if informal or formal resolutions should be explored. Finally, the Manager of the DR&C service explained that they don't inform the respondent about a complaint until the Screening

Panel determined the scope of the complaint was in or out of scope, and if in scope, whether a formal or informal process was established an appropriate resolution option, with informal resolution encouraged as a first step. It was further noted that respondents are invited to provide a written response to a complaint that is in the scope of the policies. A Committee member further queried whether sexual misconduct complaints were reported to An Garda Síochána. It was noted in response that the service could refer and support individuals to engage with the Gardaí but do not typically make a report on their behalf, and internal processes would be paused if Gardaí became involved, until matters were resolved.

PCC/25-26/26 **To receive a verbal update from the Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations, Lydia Brazil, on the Gender Pay Gap Report.**

It was noted that the Committee had previously discussed the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Report at two meetings last year and noted that the deep-dive into the data presented some surprising insights. The Committee was informed that the latest annual GPG report had just been completed and would be published on the Trinity College website the following day. The data had been pulled on 30 June 2025, and covered over 6,000 individuals, including casual /occasional staff. The Committee heard that less than half (42.1%) of the workforce is male, and that the mean gender pay gap stands at 7.49%, which is a small reduction from the previous year of 7.6%. The median gap has decreased from 11% to 7.5%, and the gap among part-time staff had also reduced. It was noted that since 2022, the overall GPG has decreased by 3.5%. The Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations confirmed that a deep dive analysis and breakdown of the report would be presented at the next PCC meeting to provide further context on the statistics.

Chair of the Technical Staff Committee and Professor of Biochemistry, Derek Nolan, and Secretary to the Technical Staff Committee and Head of Talent, Fidelma Haffey, joined the meeting at this point

PCC/25-26/27 **To receive an update on the Revised Terms of Reference of the Technical Staff Committee and approve same, from Head of Talent, Ms. Fidelma Haffey (Committee Secretary) and Chair of the TSC, Prof. Derek Nolan, Biochemistry (Chair).**

The Committee received an overview of the role of the Technical Staff Committee (TSC), noting that the TSC served as a platform for technical staff to raise issues relating to qualifications, procedures, and other matters of concern. The Committee heard that the ToR had last been revised in 2012 and that a subcommittee had reviewed and updated them to reflect changes primarily in the role and composition of the TSC. Changes to the ToR were noted, including the Committee's role in relation to promotions, and that one of the five technical staff members would now be nominated as Deputy Chair through an internal vote. It was noted that four staff representatives who consulted with the Group of Unions (GoU) sat on the committee. The ToR had not been updated since 2012 because promotions were stood down in 2016. A review of procedures and the ToR were considerably overdue, and the Committee welcomed the current review. In response to a query regarding the removal of promotions from the ToR, the Head of Talent explained that if there were substantive changes in relation to the College's position on promotions, the ToR could be updated following consultation with the GoU. Lastly, it was noted that the TSC itself had ideas of additional ways the committee could contribute, and these would be given further consideration.

27.01 The Committee considered and approved the revised Technical Staff Committee Terms of Reference.

Professor of Biochemistry, Derek Nolan, and Head of Talent, Fidelma Haffey left the meeting at this point.

Section C – Items for Discussion

PCC/25-26/28 It was noted that the Equality Fund was open for applications for funding collaborative projects involving students and staff.

The Committee noted that the PCC Annual Report had been circulated to Board for noting, having been prepared by the Chair and Secretary. The report was largely based on the minutes from the previous year and was grouped thematically. Pending timelines, it was proposed that feedback would be sought from the Committee next year prior to submission. It was noted that time constraints had not allowed for this in the current report.

Signed: ……………………………

Date: ………………………………