Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin

Minutes of the People and Culture Committee

Thursday, 19th February, 14:00-16:00

Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.

Present: Professor Darryl Jones (Chairperson), Mr Séamus McManus (Committee Secretary), Director of Human Resources), Mr Noel Gorman (Chief Operating Officer), Ms Paula Hicks (College Staff Member), Professor Lorraine Leeson (Associate Vice-Provost for EDI), Professor Rachel Moss (College Staff Member), Professor Eoin O'Sullivan (Senior Dean)

Apologies: Mr Lucky Khambule (External member), Mr Andrew Duffin (Group of Unions Rep), Prof Sylvia Draper (Dean of FSTEM), Ms Kathryn Whyte (External Member – Head of Corporate Services, Office of Public Works)

In attendance: Ms Michelle Hogan, Ms Lara McKeown, Ms Niamh McKeown, Ms Megan Josling, Mr Eoin O Cinneide, Ms Lydia Brazil, Ms Fidelma Haffey, Ms Mary Leahy

Section A – Standing Items

Section A.2 Minutes and Matters Arising

PCC/25-26/29 Minutes

The People and Culture draft minutes of 27th November 2025 were discussed. A committee member requested clarification regarding the status of the former DR&C contact people. They noted that, according to the previous minutes from the meeting on 27th November, the Manager of the DR&C service advised that contact people were integrated into the advisory function within the service. The Committee member did not recall this from the meeting and asked for clarification. It was also queried whether this information had been communicated to staff. The Secretary agreed to follow up with the DR&C service and report back to the Committee. The minutes will also be resubmitted at the next meeting.

PCC/25-26/30 Outstanding Actions

No outstanding actions were noted.

PCC/25-26/31 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Committee were notified that Board had approved an interim Senior Academic Promotions Call under the existing procedures.

PCC/25-26/32 To receive a verbal update from Committee Secretary & HR Director, Mr. Séamus McManus.

The Secretary noted that a new Promotions Sub -Committee had been established to examine promotion pathways for Professional and Technical staff. Initial discussions on the Terms of Reference were underway between HR and Union representatives, and the first meeting was positive. A further meeting with the full Group of Union representatives was to be scheduled. The Secretary confirmed that Kevin Foley would be approached to act as the external Chair of the Sub -Committee. The aim was to finalise a draft Terms of Reference for consideration at the next People and Culture Committee meeting in April.

It was noted that work was continuing to develop baseline measures for each of the commitments within the Strategic Plan, including those relating to staff commitment. A request was issued to all areas in the College asking them to submit the information they would like to measure and collect, with the intention of agreeing a consistent, College-wide approach. The Secretary emphasised the need to undertake this work in a sequenced and consistent manner, while being mindful of the time demands on staff. From a People and Culture perspective, it was mentioned that HR intended to develop an employee engagement survey building on the work of the recent wellbeing survey and benchmark this data against other organisations. This proposal was to be submitted as part of the wider baselining work. The Committee was informed that the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Management Group is scheduled to take place in March.

The Secretary reported that a number of funding applications submitted to Research Ireland by several research centres across the College were successful, while others had not been. HR was actively engaging with the unsuccessful areas, recognising it as a time of concern and uncertainty for staff affected. Supporting these staff was a key priority, and HR is working closely with the Dean of Research, the Dean of STEM, and other relevant colleagues. The Secretary confirmed that 30th June 2026 is the funding deadline for AMBER and CRANN. DANU Research is due to commence at the end of July in partnership with DCU. Where changes to organisation structures will be required, HR will remain committed to supporting staff throughout the process. Where reassignment would be necessary, affected staff would be prioritised for alternative roles across the College, with significant opportunities expected as new research centres and opportunities were due to be established. A Town Hall meeting for AMBER staff was scheduled for 26th February 2026, at which a number of Group of Union representatives will be present. It was further noted that there were several ongoing and recently established research projects, and that research staff supporting these projects will continue this work to their natural conclusion. It was expected that associated support structures would be impacted the most.

PCC/25-26/33 To receive a verbal update from the People Projects Manager, Ms. Michelle Hogan, on the People Projects

The People Projects Manager provided a verbal update on progress within the People Projects. She reported that the People Project Management Group had been successfully mobilised in December 2025, with the first meeting held in January. The Terms of Reference for the individual workstreams under both the Good Employer Project and the Employment Contracts Project had been approved, with the understanding that each would be brought to their respective workstreams for further discussion. At the first management group meeting, a business case for the appointment of two Project Officers had been submitted, and work was underway to clarify the funding for the project. It was outlined that the Good Employer workstream kick-off meetings were underway. The Recognition and Career Development workstreams had already met, with the Reward and Good Employer/Wellbeing workstreams scheduled to follow. It was noted that t-he Chairs and Leads of the Employment Contracts and Working Patterns workstreams had also recently met. It was noted that since November there had been significant engagement across the central unit, with ongoing efforts to ensure as broad a level of representation as possible. Overall progress was on track from a timeline perspective. It was highlighted that the Chairs and Leads were very busy individuals, and this would need to be kept in mind. Each workstream's focus and goal would be to deliver early, tangible outputs, particularly within the Good Employer project, before the end of the summer.

PCC/25-26/34 To receive a verbal update from Chair of EDI Sub-Committee & Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, Prof. Lorraine Leeson

The Chair of EDI Sub-Committee & Associate Vice-Provost for EDI provided an update on recent EDI activity and upcoming events. An EDI recognition event, Thriving at Trinity, had recently been held, with over 100 attendees from across the College. The event celebrated the significant initiative and people that make Trinity a more equitable environment. Those recognised for their EDI commitment at the Thriving at Trinity event included areas represented on the People and Culture Committee – HR, Learning and organisational Development, and the Senior Dean.

A Town Hall on experiences of racism and xenophobia in the city took place in October, and a follow-up meeting had since been held with representatives from major further and higher education institutions in the city centre, together with Dublin City Council (DCC). The Council had asked the group to organise a workshop to explore actions that DCC could consider implementing, with actions to be brought to the DCC Rejuvenation Action Group.

The AVPEDI notes that the Race Equality Action Plan Implementation Oversight Group (REAP-IOG) had been formally established and met for the first time in January 2026. EDI is rolling out antiracist leadership training, with the goal for over 100 leaders to complete the programme by October 2026. The training is being facilitated by Kevin Coutinho, former CO-Chair of the LERU EDI Policy Group, and participant feedback to date has been very positive. Funding for the initiative came from the HEA PATH 4 programme.

Reports on Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment, Race Equality, and the annual EDI report were being prepared for the HEA. Internally, an EDI bi-annual survey will be launched in the coming weeks, and this will support Athena Swan accreditation. It is also anticipated that the HEA survey on sexual violence and harassment will be launched on 18th March 2026. In addition, a Race Equality survey for staff and students is expected to be rolled out in October 2026.

It was noted that the HEA had been awaiting a response from DFHERIS for several months regarding a report on the SALI Professors initiative. Trinity currently has two SALI Professors in post, with a third approved in principle. While a further call had been expected in past years, the HEA had not yet proceeded with a third round in the absence of confirmation of funding from DFHERIS. There was strong advocacy for the release of this funding at sectoral level. In College, the School of Philosophy has been waiting several years for progress as a Professor of Philosophy SALI role was approved in principle but cannot be filled until funding is released.

The Committee was notified of several upcoming EDI events. On 12th March 2026, EDI, together with the Office of the Dean of Research, will cohost an event on intersectionality in research, aimed at supporting researchers in embedding considerations such as sex and gender into research design. On 20th May 2026, EDI will host a conference that looks at the tensions that hold between protecting heritage buildings within higher education institutions and meeting our access, equality, diversity and inclusion oblidations. This conference will bring together architects, EDI practitioners, and heritage experts. The State Architect would be the keynote speaker and had previously encouraged EDI to support the recruitment of young architects who could reimagine heritage spaces through a human rights lens. Finally, it was noted that a HEAfunded Open Access project, co-led by the Chair of EDI Sub-Committee & Associate Vice-Provost for EDI, would involve 65 participants across the higher education sector, which had been shortlisted for an Education Award. In response to a query from the Chair regarding the delay in the SALI post for the School of Philosophy, it was clarified that in the first SALI call, Trinity had received posts in Mathematics and Economics; in the second call, the post had been placed on a waiting list pending funding; and the third round had not yet proceeded.

Professor Eoin O'Sullivan (Senior Dean) left the meeting at this point.

The Risk Manager, Mr. Eoin O Cinneide joined the meeting at this point.

Section B – Items for Noting / Approval

PCC/25-26/35 To receive an update from the Risk Manager, Mr. Eoin O Cinneide, on the risk management process at Trinity College as relevant to the remit of the Committee.

The Secretary introduced this item, noting that the Committee's Terms of Reference require it to review risk registers for areas relevant to its remit. This session would mark the beginning of a longer-term item, and the Committee would return to this topic over the coming meetings. The Risk Manager provided an overview of Trinity's risk management approach and how the Risk Office can support the Committee. It was emphasised that risk management is centred on assurance, ensuring clarity around objectives, identifying potential blockers and demonstrating that risks have been considered in a systematic and honest way. Effective risk management enables leaders to take a step back, understand where to intervene and make conscious decisions about accepting or mitigating risk. It was noted that different areas under the Committee's remit, such as EDI, have a range of risks, and that the Committee has oversight of People and Culture-related risks across the University. The Risk Manager outlined three levels of risks within Trinity's risk register:

- Level 1: These are operational, detailed, day-to-day risks.
- Level 2: Risks that emerge repeatedly across different Schools or functions that help to identify wider patterns or issues.
- Level 3: Strategic risks that could significantly impact the achievement of the University's objectives.

It was noted that there are currently over 200 risks under People and Culture, including 181 Level 1 risks, demonstrating strong local engagement.

The Risk Manager emphasised the importance of framing risks in alignment with the University's strategic aims (including the Trinity Thrive strategy), and clearly setting out the cause, the event and the impact of each risk. A distinction was made between controls, which are the protections already in place, and mitigation actions, which are additional timebound steps needed where controls are not enough. If most actions sit under mitigation, the risk is not yet fully under control. Clear differentiation would help with better prioritisation of risks, resourcing and understanding of the impacts involved. It was further noted that the Risk Office provides an annual report to Board, supports Level 1 and Level 2 risk owners, and would be available to assist the Committee in reviewing risks. The risks circulated in advance of the meeting were for initial information only. A deeper review would be scheduled to take place at a future meeting, potentially in a workshop format, with templates and support provided. The Committee welcomed this.

The Risk Manager, Mr. Eoin O Cinneide, left the meeting at this stage.

The Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations, Lydia Brazil, joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/36 To receive an update from the Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations, Ms. Lydia Brazil, on the Gender Pay Gap Report.

The Chair noted that the Committee had previously discussed last year's Gender Pay Gap (GPG) results. The Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations provided an update on the 2025 GPG Report. It was outlined that the average hourly wage for male employees was 7.49% higher than that of female employees, and that this figure reflected the overall workforce profile and distribution of staff across grades and roles, rather than different rates of pay for the same work. It was noted that there continued to be a higher concentration of female employees in lower graded- roles. A total of 6,057 employees were included in the analysis.

The report followed the national GPG reporting framework and it was noted that while reporting is a legal requirement, it also provides transparency, informs long term workforce planning, supports progression pathways and leadership development, and helps identify structural gaps. The overall GPG had reduced from 2024 to 2025. Most job categories were below the institutional average, with several areas showing stability or continued improvement. Areas such as Research and Library showed minimal change and were relatively balanced.

The only category above the institutional average was Academic Medical, which still showed some improvement. It was noted that the gap in this area was structural rather than pay related, caused by the higher concentration of male employees in senior academic medical roles where turnover is low. It was suggested that this reflected broader issues such as career pathways, pipelines and promotion patterns. Representation in senior grades was improving, albeit at a slower pace than other areas. The Committee then received an overview by job category comparing the GPG figures for 2024 and 2025:

1. Academic Medical: The gap had reduced, mainly due to increased female headcount at Associate Professor Consultant and Senior Lecturer Consultant grades.
2. Administrative Staff: This group was predominantly female and several grades showed no gap. Improvements had been recorded at AO1 points 1–3. Overall, the gap continued to reduce year on year.
3. Buildings & Services: This gap was influenced by the concentration of women in lower paid roles and the impact of overtime in some male dominated senior roles. Sustained progress in this area would depend on progression strategies.
4. Academic: Most grades showed no or small gaps. A slight male majority in higher paid roles remained, but trends reflected improved representation at senior levels.
5. Research: The gap remained unchanged at 5%. Research Assistant roles had a slight female majority. This area remained one of the most balanced and stable.

Existing measures were outlined as follows:

- Addressing the over-representation of female employees in lower grades, including reviewing recruitment and job advertisements.
- Further work on balancing workforce composition, supported through the Good Employer workstream.
- Pay related actions, with a focus on occasional staff and salaried adjuncts.
- Career development, with continued emphasis on supporting engagement and ensuring access to progression pathways. Where gaps remained, these were described as structural in nature. The People Project was expected to support improvements, particularly in relation to pay transparency and career development.

A brief discussion followed the information presented on this item. It was agreed that clarification on the following will be brought to a future People and Culture Committee meeting:

- Further detail on how Teaching Fellows and term-time employees are captured within the data set.
    - It was noted that the data capture timing could potentially mean that some categories, such as occasional teaching and catering, could be underrepresented in the analysis. It was suggested that a supplementary section could potentially be included in future reporting to capture this cohort.
- Further details on the breakdown across gender for senior academic colleagues was requested
- More detailed information on the 1% decrease in GPG for senior management in the graph detailing the 2025 vs 2024 GPG.
- There was an interest in receiving further figures on the total number of staff and the breakdown by type.

Finally, it was noted that there is an interest in bringing information on the GPG to Board in the future and that the Committee would be updated once the item was secured on Board's agenda.

The Deputy Director of HR and Head of Operations, Lydia Brazil, left the meeting at this stage

The Head of Talent, Ms. Fidelma Haffey and Head of Employee relations, Ms Mary Leahy joined the meeting at this point.

The committee agreed that Item D4 would be taken after item B3 as Ms Mary Leahy was present for both items.

PCC/25-26/37 To receive an update on the proposed changes to the College's Probation Policy and approve same, from Head of Talent, Ms. Fidelma Haffey, and Head of Employee Relations, Ms. Mary Leahy.

The Committee were informed that the purpose of the changes to the Probation Policy was to implement a single, updated policy and process reflecting legislative changes. It was noted that legislation now required that probation periods should not exceed 6 months, with an absolute maximum of 12 months in certain circumstances. As a result, the proposed policy included a reduction of the probation period for colleagues on permanent contracts, fixed-term contracts longer than 12 months, and specific purpose contracts with expected durations longer than 12 months would reduce from 11 months to 9 months. It was further noted that probation could be paused in exceptional circumstances e.g. statutory leave.

The Committee heard that two separate existing policies, one for academic staff and one for professional, administrative, technical and research staff, would be merged into one unified policy applicable to all staff, making the process simpler and easier to navigate. The Probation Review Form would also become a single form for all staff. Key changes to the form were outlined, including objective-setting for all staff, which had previously applied only to academic roles, clearer recording of sick leave, and improved signposting in notifications sent to new starters and line managers, including reminders about the policy, review points, and objective-setting requirements. The Committee noted that probation durations had been streamlined to align with legislation. Where contracts are expected to beyond 12 months, the probation period would change to 9 months, with a review at month 4 and a further review at month 8. It was noted that for academic grades, a single probation review would take place at month 8 with an informal check-in at month 4 (in line with current procedures). For other staff on Fixed-Term or Specific Purpose contracts that were for a duration of 12 months or less, there would be a probation period of 4 months.

The Committee was informed that extensive consultation had taken place across the University, including with the Group of Union Reps, EDI, self-selected line manager focus groups across faculties, a group of Heads of School nominated by the Secretariat group, external universities, and IBEC. The planned timeline was to submit the policy to Board following the Committees approval, with rollout of the new policy and form between April 2026 and September 2026, followed by further system improvements. As part of Digital Transformation, the aim was to make the process more intuitive and to emphasise the value of the probation conversation rather than the administrative process.

A member of the Committee noted the appreciation on behalf of the Group of Unions representatives for the work completed on the new proposed policy and the consultation that had taken place during the development of the new policy.

37.01. The Committee considered and approved the proposed changes to the College's Probation Policy

PCC/25-26/38 D2. Recognition and Procedure Agreement between the University of Dublin Trinity College and Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU).

It was noted that Trinity had been engaging with SIPTU on this work and that it had been approximately twenty years since the previous agreement was updated. The Committee heard that the main changes related to updated terminology, the removal of a section concerning grievance hearings, the inclusion of a newly agreed section on work standards (PIPS), and updates relating to employees on probation.

38.01. The Committee were satisfied with the proposed.

The Head of Talent, Ms. Fidelma Haffey, and the Head of Employee Relations, Ms. Mary Leahy, left the meeting at this stage.

The Deputy Secretary to the College, Ms. Anne Marie O 'Mullane, and the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Siobán O'Brien Green joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/39 To receive an update from the Deputy Secretary to the College, Ms. Anne Marie O 'Mullane, and the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Siobán O'Brien Green, on the updated College Public Sector Duty Statement and Action Plan and approve same.

Firstly, it was noted that a similar item had been brought to the Committee at the same time last year, when approval had been granted for the Public Sector Human Rights statement. The Committee heard that the statement was a live document and was being brought back following several developments over the past year. The Strategic Plan had provided the necessary foundation to progress this work, and the updated statement now incorporated the University's commitments under the Strategic Plan.

The Committee was informed that work was underway for an assessment action plan, drawing elements from the Athena Swan Action Plan and ongoing policy development work. The first element of the updated plan set out outcomes demonstrating the University's commitment to implementing the Public Sector Duty, some of which were higher-level than those reflected in the Strategic Plan. It was noted that the Strategic Plan itself was also a live document and subject to future updates.

The Committee heard that the updated approach aimed to weave together existing initiatives, including ongoing work to advance gender equality across the institution, and to report on progress. A new component of the policy process, the policy record sheet and performance management framework, was woven into the process of creating and updating policies. Staff could contact the Secretary's Office or the EDI Office for guidance.

The governance steps that had been taken went to the Strategic Plan Working Group, and to the EDI sub-committee on 27th January 2026. It was noted that the University would remain partially compliant for a period while the final stage, the report, was being prepared. The approach was described as building on existing work and moving towards full compliance under the legislation. The Committee was asked to consider both the updated statement and the draft action plan.

In discussion, the Chair asked when full compliance was expected. It was noted that reporting could likely begin next year, subject to the timing of the annual report cycle. The EDI Office want to ensure the process was completed in the correct way. A Committee member welcomed the update and noted that the previous lack of public facing references to the Public Sector Duty had been a barrier to progress, but that awareness and discussion had increased. It was also noted that many of Trinity's IUA colleagues were already compliant.

39.01. The Committee considered and approved the updated College Public Sector Duty Statement and Action Plan.

The Deputy Secretary to the College, Ms. Anne Marie O 'Mullane, and the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Siobán O'Brien Green left the meeting at this stage.

Section C – Items for Discussion

PCC/25-26/40 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked Niamh McKeown who had been providing secretarial support to the Committee to date and welcomed Megan Josling who would be taking on this role going forward. It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 2nd April 2026.

Signed: ……………………………

Date: ………………………………