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

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Minutes of the People and Culture Committee

Thursday, 2nd April, 14:00-16:00

Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.

Present: Professor Darryl Jones (Chairperson), Mr Séamus McManus (Committee Secretary), Director of Human Resources), Professor Rachel Moss (College Staff Member), Professor Eoin O'Sullivan (Senior Dean), Mr Garrett Byrne (College Staff Member) on behalf of Mr Noel Gorman (Chief Operating Officer), Mr Andrew Duffin (Group of Unions Rep), Ms Sylvia Draper (Dean of STEM), Mr Lucky Khambule (External Member), Ms Kathryn Whyte (External Member)

Apologies: Mr Noel Gorman (Chief Operating Officer), Ms Paula Hicks (College Staff Member), Professor Lorraine Leeson (Associate Vice-Provost for EDI)

In attendance: Ms Michelle Hogan, Ms Lara McKeown, Mr Joel Mc Keever, Ms Michele Ryan, Ms Fidelma Haffey, Ms Mary Leahy

Section A – Standing Items

Section A.2 Declaration of Conflict of Interest

PCC/25-26/41 The Chair advised the Committee that, in line with item 3.4 of the People and Culture Committee Terms of Reference, members were asked to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest relating to items on the agenda. The Chair further noted that this item would be included as a standing item on the agenda of future People and Culture Committee meetings.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

Section A.3. Minutes & Matters Arising

PCC/25-26/42 The updated minutes of the meeting of 27th November 2025 were approved.

The meeting minutes of 19th February 2026, which were approved by an online circulation dated Monday 9th March 2026, were approved.

PCC/25-26/43 Outstanding Actions

The Chair of the Committee discussed outstanding actions from the previous meeting. It was noted that a line from the November minutes referring to the contact people being integrated into the advisory function within the service had been removed as it didn't accurately reflect what happened in the meeting. The Committee were informed that a review of the DR&C service was taking place and further information would be provided when the report is presented to the Committee. The Chair noted that a workshop on Risk was planned for the May People and Culture Committee meeting, and that People and Culture risks with the highest residual risk scores would be examined.

The Committee revisited queries which arose from the Gender Pay Gap Report presentation at the previous meeting. A Committee member sought clarification on whether staff who were outside teaching time were included in the data, noting that some staff members return in June and that some teaching fellows were employed from September to May. It was queried whether this cohort was fully reflected in the report. The Secretary noted that the Gender Pay Gap Report had also been presented to the EDI Sub-Committee, where a number of queries and follow-up actions had similarly arisen. The Secretary advised that HR was reviewing these points and confirmed that an update would be provided to the Committee at the next meeting or circulated by email. Another committee member noted that in the past, some figures had not always been fully corrected. Reference was made to craft roles and associated allowances, and it was noted that it had not always been clear whether such allowances had been excluded from calculations. The committee member asked that the Committee be assured that the data related specifically to hourly pay. In response, the Secretary confirmed that the methodology used in the report was clearly defined and agreed that clarification would be sought from HR to address the concerns raised.

PCC/25-26/44 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes

PCC/25-26/45 To receive a verbal update from Committee Secretary & HR Director, Mr. Séamus McManus.

The Secretary to the Committee provided a brief update on work underway within HR. Work on Project Willow was ongoing, with continued engagement taking place with affected research centres, staff representatives, trade unions, and Research Ireland over the coming weeks. It was noted that a temporary Project Manager had been appointed to support this work. The Secretary further advised that an HR Partner had recently returned from a career break and would also provide support on the project. The importance of ensuring the appropriate level of support for impacted staff was emphasised.

An update was also provided on the AO1 Review. The Secretary advised that a meeting was being arranged with SIPTU to agree the draft Terms of Reference and finalise them. It was noted that a further update or holding communication was planned for AO1 staff. HR had been considering potential focused questions to support AO1 staff engagement. The Secretary confirmed that a more detailed update would be brought to a future Committee meeting.

A committee member asked whether the general principle, in circumstances where funding had been ceased, was that staff would be redeployed within the College. In response, the Secretary outlined that administrative, professional, and technical staff were covered by a redundancy clause, whereas different provisions applied to research staff. It was noted that where administrative roles were no longer required, the College reassignment register would be used to identify suitable alternative roles. The Secretary confirmed that this approach had been clearly communicated to staff and senior leadership and stressed the importance of actively supporting reassignment.

PCC/25-26/46 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 across the People Projects Programme.

An update was provided in respect of the Good Employer Project, which comprises four workstreams: Reward, Recognition, Career Development, and Good Employer/Wellbeing. The Committee was advised that all workstreams are progressing well, with one to two meetings having convened in respect of each, following preparatory discussions with the Chair, Lead, and Project Manager of each workstream. The inaugural meetings adopted a presentation format consistent with that of the first People Projects Management Group meeting held in January and included an overview of the history of reward and recognition delivered by the Head of Culture and Organisation Development. Each workstream was presented with its own Terms of Reference, which had been provisionally approved at the first Management Group meeting in January and were subsequently reviewed at the first meeting of each workstream. The workstreams have reviewed the relevant areas of the report and are in the process of identifying potential quick wins for consideration by the wider groups. It was noted that the Chair of the Recognition workstream had stepped down, and that the Chair of Reward had assumed the role of Interim Chair. The Committee acknowledged that this constitutes a substantial and emotive programme of work, and that overall engagement and progress to date have been positive.

An update was further provided in respect of the Employment Contracts Project. The People Projects Manager advised that, whilst workstreams are generally progressing, the Teaching Fellows and Adjuncts workstreams have been paused pending the outcome of the Academic Titles Review, in order to ensure alignment prior to further progression. One meeting of the Academic Titles Review has taken place, at which the Terms of Reference were approved. It was further noted that meetings had been held with the respective workstream Chairs and Leads. Each workstream has its own

Terms of Reference, derived from the report recommendations pertaining to each staff category, and is presently engaged in a mapping and exploration phase, including consideration of any progress made since the completion of the report. Appreciation was expressed to the Chairs, Leads, and workstream members of all workstreams for their continued engagement.

The People Projects Manager advised that the next meeting of the People Projects Management Group is scheduled for Thursday 9 April, at which prioritisation lists will be considered. It was noted that a number of initiatives are likely to require costing and will accordingly be referred to EOG for consideration prior to returning to the Committee for further deliberation. The Secretary observed that in excess of 100 individuals are participating across the various workstreams, reflecting both a strong appetite for the work and a diversity of representation, whilst also giving rise to scheduling complexities. A member of the Committee enquired as to timelines, and whether the Academic Titles Review and the People Projects workstreams would be aligned. In response, the People Projects Manager confirmed that the Head of Talent is engaged across both areas and is working in close collaboration with the People Projects Manager.

The Equality Officer (EDI Office), Joel McKeever, joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/47 To receive a verbal update from the Equality Officer, Mr. Joel McKeever, on behalf of the AVPEDI.

The Equality Officer provided a verbal update on key activities underway within the EDI Office. An update was provided on Athena Swan, including a reminder of the College's current accreditation status. It was noted that 22 of the 24 academic Schools currently held Athena Swan accreditation, including four silver awards, and that one professional unit (Global Engagement) also held accreditation. The remaining two Schools were expected to go through the process by 2027. The Committee was advised that a national review of Athena Swan was currently underway, with particular focus on how professional units were assessed.

The Equality Officer also outlined the All-Staff EDI Survey, which had been circulated to the College community both electronically and through paper formats. It was noted that this survey was conducted every two years as part of Athena Swan commitments and sought to capture staff experiences of culture and working environment that might not otherwise be reflected. The survey includes questions relating to areas such as awareness of training, perceptions of career progression, workload balance, dignity and respect. It is fully anonymous and confidential, and took approximately 15 minutes to complete. A response rate of 36% had been achieved the previous year. The survey was due to close on 24 April, confidential and encouraged to promote participation. It was noted that the survey informed Public Sector Duty requirements, Athena Swan submissions, and broader EDI activity. An overview was provided of EDI institutional reporting requirements, including reporting to the HEA. This included updates relating to the PATH 4 Inclusive Environments funding, anti-racism initiatives, national reporting on the Speak Out framework, reporting on ending sexual violence and harassment for the previous calendar year, demographic reporting, a general EDI progress update, and statutory disability reporting. It was noted that this reporting drew on data from a range of areas, including HR and the Disability Service, with reports often going through to the Provost's Office.

The Equality Officer provided an update on the Race Equality Action Plan, noting that this was a principal EDI action plan currently in place. The University Race Equality Action Plan Implementation Oversight Group (UREAP-IOG) had been established as a standing working group of the EDI Sub-Committee to oversee delivery of the plan's 36 actions, with its first meeting held in January. It was noted that several actions mirrored with the Athena Swan Action Plan. The Committee was advised that the Race Equality Officer role had recently become vacant and that the EDI Office would be going back to market soon to replace this role.

The Equality Officer outlined a number of additional initiatives, including work supported through PATH 4 funding. This included targeted anti-racism training for senior leaders, facilitated by Kevin Coutinho, an EDI consultant who had contributed previously to the Athena Swan and Race Equality Action Plans, with an aim to reach approximately 100 leaders. It was noted that the first phase had been largely completed, with approximately 45 participants having undertaken the training. Further culture-focused initiatives were outlined, including work to improve representation of minority groups in the College through updated corporate communications image banks, particularly in relation to Traveller and Roma communities. Engagement with community groups was underway, and a staff photo competition focused on racial and ethnic belonging at Trinity had been run to support this work. Funding was also being used to support community-based events and partnerships with internal services, external community groups, and student societies.

It was noted that an additional anti-racism training programme (EMBRACED), developed through national collaboration, would be rolled out more broadly to staff of all levels in the next academic year following completion of a pilot phase. Further updates were provided on HEA-funded projects, including work on the HEIs as Places for People project relating to accessibility within the heritage campus. It was noted that a final symposium for this project was scheduled to take place on 20 May 2026 in the Trinity Business School. The Equality Officer also advised that a number of policy reviews were underway, including the central College Equality Policy, which had not been fully reviewed since 2016 and required updating to align with Public Sector Duty requirements in addition to other legislative and policy developments. Reviews of policies devolved from the Equality Policy, such as the Gender Identity and Gender Expression Policy, and Meeting Hours Policy were also noted. The Committee was advised that the Staff Disability Working Group (SD-WG) had held its first meeting earlier that day. Work was underway to broaden membership with representation from Estates and Facilities, IT Services, HR, and staff with lived experience of disability, and a wider call for expressions of interest was being considered. It was further noted that an informal initial meeting of the new Trinity

Equity, Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Group (T-EEDI) was expected to take place in the coming weeks, in line with commitments under Athena Swan.

A committee member welcomed the update on the corporate communications image banks and asked whether benchmarking data was available comparing the College's position with other universities. In response, the Equality Officer noted that an EDI data analyst supported this internally. It was outlined that some data limitations existed, such as the collection of nationality rather than ethnicity for students, and low levels of self-declaration in relation to staff disability, which could also change over time, and is the focus of several encouragement actions. A committee member asked whether Athena Swan awards were held for a five-year period and sought clarification on how support was prioritised between Schools renewing awards and those entering the process for the first time, given resource constraints. The Equality Officer confirmed the duration of awards is five years and advised that prioritisation was based on need at a given point in time, noting that while some renewals could progress locally, additional support might be directed to Schools facing greater challenges. The overarching aim was ensuring all Schools achieved accreditation.

Section B – Items for Noting / Approval

PCC/25-26/48 To approve the revised Guidelines and Procedures for Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English Interpretation Provision for Staff from the Equality Officer, Mr. Joel Mc Keever.

The Equality Officer provided context for the revised Guidelines and Procedures for Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English Interpretation Provision for Staff. It was noted that the College currently provided ISL/English interpretation through a number of ways and that, as of 2026, this provision had been strengthened Two ISL/English interpreter roles based in the EDI Office being made permanent and the appointment of a Staff Disability Liaison Officer, based between the disAbility Service and HR, to support awareness and access to the provision. The Committee was advised that the purpose of the revised procedure, which had been designed with input from HR, disAbility Service, and the EDI Office including the ISL/English Interpreter team, was to streamline existing arrangements and to clearly set out expectations regarding how interpretation support could be requested, associated timelines, and guidance on best practice when working with interpreters to ensure effective engagement. The procedure also outlined the process for engaging and funding external interpretation services where internal provision was not available and clarified how student interpretation needs were managed through the Disability Service.

The Committee approved the revised Guidelines and Procedures for Irish Sign Language (ISL)/English Interpretation Provision for Staff*.*

The Equality Officer, Joel McKeever, left the meeting at this point.

The Head of Talent, Ms Fidelma Haffey, joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/49 To approve the appeals mechanism added to the Probation Policy from Head of Talent, Ms. Fidelma Haffey.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the Probation Policy had been approved at the meeting held on 19 February, and that the current request related to the addition of an appeals mechanism to the policy. The Head of Talent advised that, at the time of the February meeting, HR had been awaiting external advice, which was then received after the meeting. Based on HR best practice, it was considered appropriate to include an appeals mechanism, specifically in circumstances where the outcome of a probation review was termination of employment. The appeals mechanism was positioned within the policy to clearly outline the process. The Committee was advised that, under the proposed approach, an employee could lodge an appeal within five working days of the decision, in line with disciplinary procedures. HR would coordinate the appeal, the line manager would be advised, and the appeal would be brought to the next level of management. It was emphasised that an appeal was not a re-run of the probation review. The draft wording had been shared with the Group of Unions earlier in the week, who provided feedback on the definition of *de novo* and the importance of ensuring appeals were actioned as quickly as possible. It was noted that the intent of the policy aligned with the Strategic Plan, placing the employee at the centre of the process.

Committee members raised queries regarding the grounds for appeal, noting that the policy did not currently specify what constituted legitimate grounds and that this could leave the process open. There were also queries regarding the definition of *de novo*, with clarification sought as to whether appeals should be restricted to procedural grounds. It was suggested that clearer guidance be provided on who would conduct the appeal and the basis on which it would be assessed, to ensure fairness and consistency. Several committee members also questioned the absence of defined timelines within the policy, noting that a lack of specificity could present a risk if appeals were not progressed quickly enough. In response, the Head of Talent advised that appeals would be prioritised and expedited as quickly as possible, but that it was not feasible to commit to fixed timelines. Further discussion took place regarding the interaction between the appeals process and probation timelines, including whether the lodging of an appeal could result in an effective extension of employment. It was noted that probation could be extended in extenuating circumstances, but that the submission of an appeal would not automatically result in an extension of the probation period. The Head of Talent advised that, while a formal appeals mechanism had not existed under the previous policy, two appeals had occurred in practice and that the absence of a defined process could present a risk. Following discussion, the Chair requested that the appeals wording be refined further, particularly in relation to legitimate grounds for appeal, and that the revised wording be circulated to the Committee by email for noting.

The Head of Talent, Ms Fidelma Haffey, left the meeting at this point.

The Head of Culture and Organisational Development, Michele Ryan, joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/50 To receive a presentation from the Head of Culture and Organisational Development, Ms. Michele Ryan, on Learning and Leadership Development Programmes as relevant to the remit of the Committee

The Committee was advised that the primary remit of Learning and Organisation Development was to strengthen individual and team performance, with a focus on supporting a sense of belonging, career progression, and transitions across roles. Three core elements were cited: personal effectiveness, core competencies, and strategic enabling practices.

Headline activity since September was outlined, with approximately 1,100 participants having engaged across programmes, noting a slight reduction in number of courses delivered compared to previous years due to reduced team capacity and a focus on prioritising core activity. Baseline programmes such as induction and early-career academic programmes had been prioritised, alongside an increased focus on managers development they can maximise beneficial impact in their teams. A shift from shorter courses to longer, in-person programmes was noted, and behavioural values had been embedded into all programme offerings. New tools and resources had been put in place to support leaders and managers, and leadership development programmes had expanded in response to increased demand for both personal and team development. Strong collaboration across the University was highlighted, including with EDI and Postgraduate Renewal initiatives.

It was noted that uptake in the Aurora women's leadership development programme was so high that the number of places offered has been increased every year, while other universities are seeing a decline in applications for this programme. The Aurora graduation had recently been held, which reinforced reflection with mentors and managers. Further updates on this programme included positive outcomes for participants in terms of increased confidence and career progression, and three successful fellowships had been awarded to participants. A number of mechanisms had been introduced to increase and retain participation. The Committee was advised that participation in development programmes required line-manager approval which helps to support meaningful development conversations and planning between employees and their managers. Measures introduced to reduce late cancellations had resulted in improved attendance and engagement. Areas for improvement were also outlined, including better alignment of the learning catalogue with competencies and behavioural values, challenges relating to space and time for courses and programmes, and the need to further promote non-formal learning opportunities and LinkedIn learning.

It was noted that participation levels remained predominantly female, with similar trends reported across the sector, and that further work was planned to understand and address this imbalance. An overview of the three-tier leadership development programmes was provided. Leadership Development 1 programmes were noted to provide strong foundations in management theory and practice, while Leadership Development 2 and 3 programmes focused on clarity of learning goals, problem-solving, and effective feedback. Strong feedback was reported. A call to continue the opportunity for peer learning led to a pilot peer-learning group being run, which had positive feedback. All programmes reported the benefit of greater self-awareness, and are fostering a sense of community and breaking down silos across the community.

The Leadership Speaker Series for senior leaders was also outlined, with monthly sessions being run with speakers that are aligned with the Strategic Plan. Wellbeing initiatives supporting a healthy Trinity were noted, including a 10-week Arts programme and an 8-week mindfulness programme. Future priorities included redesigning central induction to better embed the College's values and continued building of the "Let's Talk" tool kit.

A committee member queried the gender balance across development programmes and asked whether participation figures were skewed by the women-only leadership programme. In response, it was noted that, excluding that programme, women accounted for approximately 73% of overall participation, rising to approximately 85% within development programmes specifically. It was clarified that participation in LinkedIn learning courses was not included in these statistics and that the women’s leadership programme accounted for only a small proportion of overall participation (26) relative to the total number of attendees (1,100). The Head of Culture and Organisational Development emphasised that similar participation patterns were being reported across the sector and that focus groups were planned to better understand whether the issue is organisational or sectoral. The Secretary noted that the women’s leadership programme was a national initiative delivered across all universities and that the College had been identified by Advance HEas being the most well subscribed. It was noted that programmes supporting under-represented groups aligns with the Public Sector Duty, while the aspiration to expand capacity to support additional groups was also acknowledged.

A committee member suggested that individuals taking up senior academic roles could be proactively contacted and made aware of relevant leadership development supports. It was noted that this approach was already in place for certain roles, though challenges remained in engaging new role-holders early in the academic term. The importance of linking leadership development more closely with succession planning and earlier engagement ahead of role commencement was noted.

The Head of Culture and Organisational Development, Michele Ryan, and Prof Rachel Moss, left the meeting at this point.

The Head of Employee Relations, Ms Mary Leahy, joined the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/51 To receive and approve Terms of Reference for the Promotions Sub-Committee of People & Culture from the Head of Employee Relations, Ms. Mary Leahy.

The Committee was advised that a working group had been convened to draft a Terms of Reference for the Promotions Sub-Committee. The sub-committee comprised senior management representatives, HR, and trade union representatives, while being chaired by Kevin Foley, former chair of the Labour Court.

It was outlined that the purpose of the Sub-Committee was to review previous Trinity promotions processes for Professional, Administrative, Library and Technical grades under Procedure 47, 48, 49 and 50 which ceased in 2017. · To identify potential actions that can be taken to address areas of concern. And to develop and make recommendations to the People and Culture Committee for onward approval of the Board.

A committee member suggested that wording relating to understanding and relaying full costs could be clarified. The Head of Employee Relations noted this feedback. It was noted that the first meeting of the Promotions Sub-Committee would confirm the Terms of Reference and that updates would be reported back to the Committee. The Committee approved the Terms of Reference, subject to the minor wording clarification noted.

It was noted that this process was distinct from role grading which was not intended to be a replacement of the promotions process ceased in 2017.

The Head of Employee Relations, Ms Mary Leahy, left the meeting at this point.

PCC/25-26/52 To receive an update on Role Grading Statistics from the Senior Dean, Mr. Eoin O'Sullivan.

The Senior Dean provided an update on the work of the Role Grading Committee. It was noted that the Committee first met on 21 March 2022 and had convened on 57 occasions to date. The Committee structure was outlined, including equal representation from HR and the Group of Unions, with the Chair acting as a non-voting member. The Committee was advised that 246 roles had been reviewed to date, with approximately 57% resulting in an upward adjustment in salary. It was noted that roles could not be re-graded downwards.

The Role Grading Committee met monthly and typically reviewed five roles per meeting. A committee member queried whether trends within particular organisational areas, including CSD, might indicate something about organisation structures as a whole. The Secretary suggested that additional context for this area could be included in future reporting.

The Senior Dean also advised the Committee of a recommendation from the Research Integrity Officer and Research Ireland relating to the potential inclusion of a self-declaration within HR. It was noted that this matter had been under consideration for a number of years and that further engagement would take place with relevant stakeholders, including the Group of Unions.

The Chair asked for this work to continue and requested that an update be brought back to the Committee.

Section C – Items for Discussion

PCC/25-26/53 Any Other Business

The Chair asks the Committee to confirm their attendance for an additional meeting proposed for 8th June 2026 via email.

Signed: ……………………………

Date: ………………………………