



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

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**Minutes of the Quality Committee**

**15 October 2015, 3pm, Boardroom, House 1**

**Present:**

Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*

Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer

Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies

Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer

Ms Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office

Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences

Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services

Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian

Ms Molly Kenny, Education Officer Students' Union

Dr Liz Donnellan, Secretary to the Committee

**Apologies:**

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer

Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science

Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences

Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary

Ms Gianna Hegarty, Vice President Graduate Students' Union

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**QC/15-16/001 Introduction and welcome to New Members**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer opened the meeting by welcoming the new Committee members - Professor Peter Crooks (Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences), Professor David Lewis and Professor Aonghus McNabola (Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science), Professor Catherine Darker (Faculty of Health Sciences) and Ms Victoria Butler (Assistant Secretary to the College). She also welcomed the new student union Education Officer for 2015/16, Ms Molly Kenny.

She outlined the role of the Committee in contributing to the development of policies by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and in the discussion and approval of reports arising from internal quality reviews. She also informed new members that the Committee receives the Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQR) from the Faculty Deans. These reports present the outcome of local quality assessment processes such as module evaluations, the external examiner process, curriculum and quality reviews. Common issues arising from these processes are escalated to College level through an annual report to Council.

#### **QC/15-16/002 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 4 June 2015**

In relation to *QC/14-15/059 Quality Review of the School of Education*, a Committee member clarified that the review of the M.Ed. referred to in the discussion was not a programme review *per se* but was undertaken with a view to the development and strategic positioning of the course, in the light of the newly formed professional masters. There were no changes to the minutes and they were approved.

#### **QC/15-16/003 Matters arising**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer updated the Committee on progress with the approval of the Student Complaints Policy (*QC/14-15/054*), the Policy on Joint, Multiple and Dual Awards (*QC/14-15/058*) and the Education Recruitment Agents Policy (*QC/14-15/060*). She reported that the Implementation Plans for the review of the School of Education (*QC/14-15/059*) and the Chaplaincy (*QC/14-15/061*) were under development and would be brought to the Committee over the coming months.

In relation to the Implementation Plan for Sport & Recreation (*QC/14-15/005*), the Chair reminded the Committee that a project group, chaired by the Dean of Students, had been set up to advance a co-ordinated strategy for Sport and, in parallel, address the recommendations arising from the quality review of the Department of Sports & Recreation. This group has completed its work and a single platform for engagement with Sports (to include sports clubs) has been agreed. A report will be submitted to the Provost in the first instance and then to the Quality Committee, providing a response to the Reviewers' recommendations and outlining the strategic direction of Sport in Trinity.

A working group has also been established to advance the recommendations arising from the review of the School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies (*QC/14-15/028*), many of which had implications at Faculty and College level. A report will be considered by Executive Officers in early December 2015 and Quality Committee and Council after Christmas.

The taskforce to consider the recommendations arising from the review of the common entry science course TR071 (*QC/14-15/021*) has concluded its work. The key outcomes are agreement on the introduction of three entry streams to the course, the approval of the position of associated Dean of Undergraduate Science and the establishment of a TR071 working group which will work closely with the Education Project, to progress the next phase of reform.

## **QC/15-16/004 Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) update- publications and consultations**

### *(i) White Paper on Review of Higher Education Institutions*

The Quality Officer spoke to the QQI White Paper on Review of Higher Education Institutions which has been circulated across the sector for consultation and feedback. She advised the Committee that responses to the White Paper will frame the model for the next institutional review cycle.

Development and implementation of policies and procedures that comply with the European Standards Guidelines, in addition to QQI policies and procedures on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Access, Transfer and Progression (ATP), assessment of research degree programmes and flexible and distributed learning (Online) will be assessed as part of this review, and we will need to ensure that our procedures align with national and European standards in this regard. Preparation for our next institutional review in 2019/20 needs to begin now, through communication and engagement across College and addressing system capability to monitor and report against quality indicators and benchmarks.

A Trinity response to the white paper will be submitted to QQI along with an IUA sectoral response. Key issues of concern are (a) the appropriateness of a single one-size-fits-all review model (b) how a 'for cause' review would be triggered and whether it is aimed primarily at smaller, private colleges (c) is the scope too broad, should it be including QA at programme and modular level and how much of the compliance aspect could be dealt with in the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) and the Annual Dialogue (AD) freeing up time to look at enhancement aspects during the site visit (d) clarity around what QA of research means i.e. Institutional research vs research programmes vs research institutions (e) consultation around enhancement themes – how will they be chosen? (f) composition of the review team (g) resourcing of the process (h) lack of QA guidelines, and in particular an agreed set of benchmarks and indicators for the sector.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and invited comment from the Committee. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- It is important to ensure that the focus of the review is at institutional level.
- It is important to ensure that any review does not include a review of research output.
- The size and scope of the review should be proportional to the risk posed by the institution.
- The composition of the review teams should be carefully considered, as different teams will have different perspectives. A common Chair would provide consistency.
- The use of language in the document is crucial in terms of successfully engaging staff in the process – overuse of 'business jargon' may alienate stakeholders.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the Committee's feedback would be communicated to QQI and taken into consideration in communications on the process across College.

### *(ii) Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes to International Learners*

The Quality Officer reported that the Code of Practice was published in July 2015. As yet, there is no information as to how and when institutions will be assessed against the Code. An internal gap

analysis has been conducted and consultation is ongoing with key stakeholders. An action plan to address identified gaps will be developed and will be brought to the Committee for discussion.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and reported that many of the identified issues were being addressed as part of the International Student Barometer (ISB). In response to a query from a Committee member regarding the timing of the ISB survey, the Dean of Graduate Studies clarified that the survey is undertaken at the same time every year i.e. November. Committee members queried whether a survey in Michaelmas Term would accurately capture the experience of first year students. It was noted that the timing would be more suitable for multiyear programmes and that as the survey was rolled out at the same time for all institutions, respondents would be equally disadvantaged. The merits of conducting a survey of Trinity's international students were discussed, and the VP/CAO undertook to raise this with the VP Global Relations. The Quality Officer reported that issues arising from the ISB are fed out by Global Relations to the relevant areas and that implementation and follow-up on these issues is reported through the Annual Faculty Quality Report and reports from service/administrative areas.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer requested an overview of how the various layers of review evaluation interact and the Quality Officer undertook to provide it for the next meeting.

The Quality Officer concluded by reporting that work is on-going with QQI in relation to the Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes, and Flexible & Distributed (Online) Learning.

#### **QC/15-16/005 Report on Quality Committee Survey 2014/15**

The Quality Officer reported that there had been a 56% response rate to the annual survey of Quality Committee members, and that seven of the nine respondents had provided open comments. In response to issues of concern that emerged from the survey, she reported that:

- Low-scoring areas identified in the survey will be monitored year-on-year to see that they are being addressed.
- The Dean of Students is already a regular attendee at the Committee for relevant items.
- In order to fit the framework in terms of skills requirement, recruitment of new members has targeted specific skills regarding data analysis, research experience and international experience.
- The appointment of Pro-Deans to the Quality Committee will not be considered as there is a need to maintain consistency. Attendance of the Faculty Deans is vital as issues discussed at the Committee support the academic activity in the Faculty.
- The director of the Academic Registry will be invited to discuss issues around SITS, including concerns around support for Schools during peak times e.g. examination and Courts of Examiners.
- Work has been undertaken this year to provide better guidance to Faculties on completion of the Annual Faculty Quality Report.

During the short discussion that followed, it was clarified that members can request items to be included on the QC agenda for discussion.

**QC/15-16/006 Implementation Plan for Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I)**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I), Professor Diarmuid O’ Brien, to the meeting. Professor O’Brien reported that the area had used the review as an opportunity to undertake a strategic planning exercise and that the resulting road map for change had been endorsed by the Reviewers. He reported that all of the review recommendations are either complete or in train.

The review has supported an overarching change agenda for TR&I, including a skills audit and additional recruitment to rebalance skills. The focus is on determining what success is for TR&I, how it aligns with College’s mission and how the area can work smart to get better efficiencies. The quality process has been helpful to provide a lens to focus change and the report has helped to validate this. There is an identified need for College to be more specific about how it can train and upskill staff, and Professor O’Brien stressed the importance of continuous professional development to the effective functioning of the unit.

In response to a query on the stability of the external funding environment, the Director of TR&I reported that TCD has always performed well in terms of impact. He stressed the need to understand where the office can make a difference and to direct support to where the best returns can be achieved. To this end, Horizon 2020 has been a focus, with TCD achieving more funding per faculty member than other Irish institutions.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor O’Brien. In closing the discussion, she reported that staff training, in particular for Heads of School, has been identified as a strategic priority for the College, and acknowledged the need for ongoing training and continuous professional development.

**QC/15-16/007 Implementation Plan for the Disability Service**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O’Kelly, and the Director of the College Disability Service, Mr Declan Treanor, to the meeting to speak to the Implementation Plan for the Service.

The Dean of Students reported that two key issues have arisen from the quality review (i) the need to integrate the Disability Service’s information management systems with those of College, primarily by having a disability module in SITS and (ii) the need for College to take a more pre-emptive role in the consistent and robust implementation of policy around disability, for example in course development and approval.

Regarding information management, Mr Treanor reported that in the absence of a disability module in SITS, student information is currently stored locally on a shared drive. This practice poses a significant risk that the information is not always up to date, or accessible to those who need it. A disability module in SITS would facilitate an audit trail and allow the identification of recurrent issues and themes. The implementation of a disability module in SITS is planned in G2.

The Implementation Plan outlines a number of initiatives that are currently underway in College to review existing disability-related policies and to implement relevant strategies. Mr Treanor stressed

the importance of robust and consistent application of existing policy to ensure that College is fulfilling its obligations to the disabled student community. The Education Project presents a renewed opportunity to ensure that the implementation of relevant policy is embedded in all course design, approval and assessment processes.

The Dean of Students reported that the new Director of Student Services will be tasked with funding and income generation for student services. It was noted that a point-of-use charge cannot be levied for the Disability Service as there is a legal requirement to provide supports for students with a disability. The Reviewer's recommendations around physical resources for the Service have been resolved with the planned move to Oisín house. All other recommendations are being acted upon.

The Chair opened the discussion to the floor and the following points were made:

- The usefulness of Blackboard VLE as a support for students with a disability could be optimised if uploaded content meets accessibility requirements as outlined in the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum (TIC) - CAPSL templates are available to facilitate this.
- Greater awareness of the TIC could be promoted if it was relaunched as an integrated component of the Education Project, and included in HR staff training modules. Greater engagement with the TIC and VLE would also help to ensure TCD's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training for International Students. The availability of relevant training sessions for staff based off-campus should be reviewed.
- A full accessibility audit of College buildings has been conducted and funding will be directed to those projects with the most impact. There is a legal requirement for all strategic College buildings to be accessible by December 2015 – currently 80-90% of strategic spaces are accessible.
- College needs to think more strategically about space usage, particularly the location of services, societies and teaching spaces at ground floor level.
- The room booking system should include a description of rooms in terms of accessibility, and Schools should be encouraged to release rooms 'owned' by them for general use, thus widening the pool of available rooms.
- The need to review change of room usage – not all teaching spaces were designed as such e.g. Goldsmith Hall. The suitability of rooms in terms of lighting and acoustics should be considered in any audit.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Committee for their input and noted the on-going process of works to address issues raised in the review. She stressed the need for a co-ordinated approach to space allocation at College and local level, and reported that the absence of HEA funding for minor works in recent years had impacted on-going work to improve teaching/student spaces. She reported that the Bursar is conducting a space audit with a view to developing an estate master plan, and stressed the importance of considering the needs of the disabled community in any decisions that are made going forward.

QC/15-16/008 Any Other Business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.