



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

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The University of Dublin**

Minutes of the Quality Committee

15 March 2016, 11.00 – 13.00, Boardroom House 1

Present:

Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (Chair)
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. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
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
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IS Services
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms Sandra Kavanagh, Secretary's Office
Education Officer Students' Union
Vice President Graduate Students' Union

Apologies:

Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*
Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences

QC/15-16/025

The Academic Secretary, as acting Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming Ms Sandra Kavanagh and Ms Nicola Byrne to the meeting. She informed the Committee that Ms Kavanagh has replaced Ms Victoria Butler as the representative from the Secretary's Office and that Ms Byrne would be replacing Dr Donnellan as Secretary to the Quality Committee from the beginning of the academic year 2016/17.

QC/15-16/026 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 21 January 2016

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 21 January 2016 were approved.

QC/15-16/027 Matters arising

There were no matters arising

The Academic Secretary welcomed the Head of the School of Chemistry, Professor Sylvia Draper and the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science, Professor Vinny Cahill to the meeting.

Professor Draper welcomed the Reviewers' report and thanked the review team for their very insightful observations and helpful recommendations, which she feels will help to rejuvenate operations at School level and redefine the discipline within the College. While the report complements the School on its high-profile research successes and its on-going commitment to teaching excellence, it acknowledges that this has been achieved despite a difficult external funding climate and increased administrative burdens.

The impact of fragmentation caused by the distribution of the School across eight sites on- and off-campus, the increasing commitments of staff to Institutes and the School, the complex management structure and resulting duplication of effort across three disciplines, and the lack of a cohesive strategic plan for the School are highlighted by the Reviewers as threats to the core skills and identity of Chemistry. On-going tensions between the School and its cognate Institutes, highlighted in the last School review, remain unresolved and raise concerns about the 'disproportionate influence' of the Institutes in setting the research agenda of the School and on staff recruitment.

To address these key issues the Reviewers recommend that the relationship between the School and the Institutes should be re-examined and that a strategic plan be developed, with defined deliverables, that all staff will have an awareness of and input to, and which is supported by a business case for a purpose-built site for the School of Chemistry.

Professor Draper reported that the process of addressing these recommendations has commenced. The School management is exploring options for a new Chemistry site with the Dean of FEMS and the process of developing a strategic plan and business case for a single site is underway. Improvements in communications with internal stakeholders have already been initiated through a re-alignment of the School's Executive Committee and School Committee meeting schedules, and an expansion and revision of its committee membership to ensure greater interaction between the School Executive and the staff as a whole.

The School supports the Reviewers' recommendation that non-EU student recruitment be more narrowly focused, and specifically towards the US market.

The Reviewers were critical of the extent to which good safety practices are enforced in the School, and Professor Draper reported that the School has already taken steps to increase awareness of the School safety policies. The School agrees with the recommendation that its research laboratories should be equipped with additional fume-hoods however there are currently no resources to implement this recommendation. The proposed Chemistry extension may address this issue.

The Reviewers emphasised the importance for the School and its students of regaining Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) accreditation, and recommend that the practical chemistry provision is

maintained at a level required for RSC accreditation. The School reported, however, that due to resource constraints and timetabling issues associated with the large numbers in first year, students currently do not meet the prescribed laboratory contact hours to meet RSC accreditation and that negotiations are currently underway with the RSC to see how this can be resolved.

The Faculty Dean reiterated that Chemistry is a core discipline for other STEM subjects and reported that although the School is small, there is a breadth of activity and a high degree of multi-disciplinarity, with nearly all staff being members of at least one TRI. As there is no one locus for Chemistry activity this leads to fragmentation and poses a potential threat to identity for the School. He stressed the importance of making sure that there is a cohesive presence for the School whilst recognising that colleagues want to be involved in TRIs. He emphasized the need to strike a balance in this regard. In relation to the structure of the School, Professor Cahill supported the Reviewers' recommendation to review whether three disciplines add value to the delivery of the School's mission. He agreed that in terms of non-EU recruitment there is a need to narrow the focus and identify markets into which Trinity can offer something that is different and unique. He supports the School in developing a strategy to address this.

The Academic Secretary invited comment from the Committee and a discussion on RSC accreditation followed during which concerns were expressed as to whether a lack of accreditation would impact the attractiveness of the course to potential students. The Head of School reported that one of the issues under negotiation with the RSC is whether, under the new undergraduate entry pathway to Chemistry, laboratory contact hours for subjects other than pure Chemistry (e.g. biology or physics) would count towards RSC requirements.

The Academic Secretary thanked the Head of School and the Faculty Dean, and closed the discussion.

QC/15-16/029 Progress Report for the School of Mathematics

The Academic Secretary invited the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science to speak to the Progress Report for the School of Mathematics. Professor Cahill began by acknowledging that the School has been pro-active in addressing the recommendations arising from the review. The School has made significant progress in recruiting new Non-EU and postgraduate students, with the Hamilton Scholar initiative having brought in funding for two PhD students and one postdoc. It is hoped that philanthropic funding will revitalise the Hamilton Institute as a focus for research and help to attract further funding.

The government's new five year strategy on research and development, science and technology - Innovation 2020 - may also provide greater funding streams for pure mathematics research. Professor Cahill reported that the recommendation to develop of a new taught M.Sc. in Mathematics and Physics will have impact on the undergraduate curriculum for Mathematics and Theoretical Physics and therefore must await the recommendations of the Trinity Education Project (TEP) on undergraduate curriculum architecture.

The School is currently split between the Lloyd Building and Westland Row. It aspires to a contiguous fit-for-purpose space to facilitate co-location of as many staff members as possible and accommodate additional laboratory teaching space required for the M.Sc. in High Performance Computing. In this regard, the Dean expressed the hope that capital developments across College may free up more space, in the future.

In the discussion that followed it was suggested that targeting the North American market in order to recruit non-EU students may be a more efficient use of the School's resources, and it was reported that activities in this regard had commenced. In relation to the filling of the Erasmus Smiths Chair, the Academic Secretary stressed that funding for this post related to the College's rather than the School's financial position. She suggested that resources may be unlocked through College-level projects or philanthropic funding.

The Academic Secretary thanked the Dean of FEMS, and closed the discussion. The Dean retired from the meeting.

QC/15-16/030 Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR) – Faculty of Health Sciences

The Academic Secretary invited the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Mary McCarron, to present the Annual Faculty Quality Report to the Committee.

The Dean raised the following key points in her presentation:

- The Faculty has retained 92% of its 2014-15 new entrants, exceeding the College's strategic goal of 90% retention. Health Sciences is also the highest performing faculty in the ISSE report 2014-15. Of particular note are Health Sciences' scores on Work Integrated Learning, General Learning Outcomes and General Development Outcomes.
- 393 (96%) of undergraduate modules were evaluated in 2014-15, an increase from 337 (93%) in 2013-14 and 98% of postgraduate taught programmes were evaluated in 2014-15, which marks a significant improvement on 2013-14.
- There is growing concern regarding decreasing response rates to undergraduate student course and module evaluation surveys, particularly in the School of Nursing & Midwifery.
- Online surveys were issued to all PGT students via Survey Monkey and the response rates varied from 0% to 50% with the average being 19%. Small student numbers on postgraduate programmes continues to be a problem when reviewing student feedback and so Schools consider the feedback in this context.
- A thematic review of clinical placements is being undertaken across the Faculty with a view to gaining more oversight of the audits of clinical placements, including what training is provided currently, and what is being done to address any gaps which may be identified.
- The Faculty plans to introduce a Deans medal to award to clinical colleagues in recognition of their work;
- The Dean launched the Dean's Awards for Innovation in Teaching in 2015, which saw 16 applications from across the Faculty. This award will be offered annually and the impact of the innovations will be measured for inclusion in future quality reports.

In terms of overarching issues for escalation:

- The Faculty Executive re-iterated concerns expressed in the 2014 annual faculty quality report that the current policy of evaluating every undergraduate module every year may not be the optimal method of evaluation;
- The Dean requested that a holistic approach be taken to the quality process in order to ensure that duplication of effort is reduced, as evaluations by accrediting bodies, the quality review cycle and the annual faculty quality report place a considerable workload on Schools;
- Feedback from academic module co-ordinators in the School of Medicine is that roll over on Blackboard is too late in the year, especially to accommodate the clinical years beginning from the end of August and that Blackboard training is required over the summer for new Lecturer/Registrars who take up post each July.
- Students in the School of Nursing & Midwifery feel unable to engage fully in the Trinity undergraduate experience due to off-campus location of the School and also identified the deteriorating physical environment in D'Olier St. as a recurrent theme in student feedback.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences requests that the Quality Office take a more structured and systematic approach to addressing the issues highlighted in the Faculty Quality Report. The Faculty Executive was disappointed to learn that most of the issues raised in the 2014 Health Sciences Quality Report have yet to be resolved. A quarterly report on the progress of issues raised would be welcome.

The Academic Secretary thanked Professor McCarron and in the discussion that followed it was acknowledged that while devolution of module evaluation is College policy, the implementation of the policy has raised issues around survey fatigue, survey timing, evaluation methods and perception of impartiality which warrant further investigation. The usefulness of programme over module evaluation as an indication of the overall student experience was raised, and the Academic Secretary reported that programme evaluations that were introduced as part of programme review process provide useful information on the student experience including placements, whereas module evaluations provide useful feedback on teaching. In relation to follow-up on the College level issues identified in the annual faculty quality reports, the Dean of Health Sciences suggested that it would be useful to have a response on each of the items identified in the 2014/15 HS report and an on-going report on how they are being progressed.

The Academic Secretary thanked the Dean and closed the discussion.

QC/15-16/031 Review of Carlow College

The Academic Secretary invited the Quality Officer, Ms Roisin Smith, to speak to a memo circulated with the papers. Ms Smith reported that Trinity signed a partnership agreement with Carlow College in November 2007 with a view to developing a 'programme for further cooperation'. Since then there has been on-going engagement between the two institutions, specifically in relation to the Humanities. More recently Carlow College has invited Trinity to consider validating their suite of undergraduate programmes and one postgraduate programme, all of which are currently validated by the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland).

An implementation plan is currently under development to stage the submission and review phases for all course proposals, with a view to having this first stage completed by November 2016.

If the University Council deems all the programmes eligible for validation it will be necessary, as the Designated Awarding Body (DAB), to proceed to the second stage of the process and to carry out a full quality review of the institution. If both phases are successful, the final step in the process will be a recommendation to the College Board to enter into a formal statutory relationship with Carlow College as prescribed under the *Quality and Qualifications Ireland Act 2012*.

The Academic Secretary thanked the Quality Officer and in the ensuing discussion it was clarified in response to a query from the Deputy Librarian that students of Carlow College will not be registered as Trinity students and that there are therefore no library access issues. With regard to whether the validated courses would present any direct competition to existing Trinity courses, the Dean of AHSS clarified that there would be no direct competition.

QC/15-16/032 Update on SITS enhancement programmes

The Academic Secretary welcomed Ms Leona Coady to the meeting to present an update on the SITS enhancement programme. This update was requested by the Committee as a number of system-related recommendations had arisen from recent quality reviews, in particular issues around SITS and support for Schools during turnaround times for Courts of Examiners, Academic Appeals etc.

Ms Coady reported that the objective of the programme was to enhance the Academic Registry (AR) and ensure that it can provide the services required to support the student lifecycle, support schools in delivering College's mission (including growing student numbers), impact positively on the reputation of the College, reduce the significant risks associated with the current environment and provide a solid foundation for future enhancement of the SITS system.

Ms Coady reported that a new organisational structure has been put in place, consisting of three main pillars - Operations, Service, and Business Support & Planning, each with a dedicated Head. A best practice infrastructure for service provision has been put in place, with service commitments across all operational areas in terms of measurable key performance indicators (KPI's) and a new senior position responsible for AR operations. All developmental work has been completed on the identified systems enhancements, and a very large number of processes has been re-engineered, the benefits of which will accrue over the coming academic year.

Ms Coady reported that the service and communications improvements which have been introduced are receiving positive feedback from students and staff, and 97.6% of the student data from the Admin5 system has been migrated to SITS. In relation to modularisation, the provision of a SITS-based solution is possible but is very expensive and high risk. An approach has been agreed to look at a non SITS-based pilot and this will be brought forward to the Dean of Graduate Studies and then EOG for discussion. In response to a query from the Committee, Ms Coady clarified that the objective of the modularisation work stream was to provide modularisation for post graduate taught only (not undergraduate) programmes. This was to allow students to select optional modules from the portal as part of the application process. A working group on module enrolment for visiting students has been established and it is hoped to pilot a process in September. Additionally, an agent portal for visiting students is currently being piloted.

The Dean of Health Science complimented the Director for her work in bringing the AR to its current stage, acknowledging the enormity of the task.

The Academic Secretary thanked the Director of the Academic Registry for her presentation and closed the discussion.

QC/15-16/033 Consultation on Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) Appeals Mechanism for Linked Providers

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

QC/15-16/034 Terms of Reference for Review of a Trinity Research Institute (TRI)

The Quality Officer reported that a cycle of review of Trinity Research Institutes (TRI) has been initiated in 2015/16, with a review of the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) taking place from the 25-27 April 2016. The focus of the review is on the TRI's management, governance, strategy and quality assurance processes and not on the quality of its research. In response to a query, she clarified that this review is not related to the recently completed College-wide research themes review, although the output of that review can be submitted as supporting documentation. Additionally, this review fulfils a requirement outlined in the Trinity Policy on Research Institutes that all TRIs to undergo a quality review every five years in order to maintain their TRI status. The circulated draft Terms of Reference aim to capture and clarify these various elements of the review of TRIs.

In the course of the discussion, a Committee member expressed concern that the language and criteria used in the generic terms of reference would not be applicable to all TRIs, particularly those in the Arts Humanities, where appropriate forms of collaboration and partnership might include museums, archives and other national cultural institutions in addition to a focus on industry partners. Additionally, the use of the term 'Principal Investigator' does not translate appropriately to an Arts-based TRI and reference to bibliometrics in the humanities may also not be appropriate. The Quality Officer thanked the Committee for its feedback.

It was agreed that to amend the policy to reflect the discussion and to liaise with committee members on the issues raised. A revised policy will be brought to the next meeting of the committee for approval.

QC/15-16/035 Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.