



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

7 April 2016, 15.00 – 17.00, Boardroom House 1

Present:

Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (Chair)
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
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
Education Officer Students' Union
Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*
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

Apologies:

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Ms Sandra Kavanagh, Secretary's Office
Vice President Graduate Students' Union

In attendance:

Professor Claire Laudet, Senior Tutor
Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor Elect
Professor Michael Wycherley, BESS Programme Director
Professor Iain Atack, Head of Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies & Theology
Dr Katie Heffelfinger, Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI)
Professor Paul Browne, Head of School of Medicine, Trinity
Dr Stephen Meaney, Assistant Head of School of Biological Sciences, DIT

QC/15-16/036 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 15 March 2016

In relation to QC/15-16/030 (Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR) for Health Sciences), it was clarified, following a query, that College-level issues raised in the AFQRs will be addressed in a forthcoming summary report to Council. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer confirmed that the operational issues raised in the AFQRs will not be dealt with by the Quality Committee, as this is

not within the Committee's remit, but that the Committee would receive regular updates on how these issues are being progressed. Some of the issues highlighted in the AFQRs, and subsequently discussed at the QC, have been addressed and ruled on at Council leading to the development of new policies or a change to existing policies e.g. return of course work. The difficulty of locating academic policies on the College website was acknowledged, and the Academic Secretary reported that the development of a policy-specific page on the Trinity Teaching and Learning (TTL) website was underway, and relevant academic policies will be published on the new TTL webpage.

With regard to QC/15-16/031 (Review of Carlow College), the reference to 'Librarian' on pg 6, paragraph 2 should read 'Deputy Librarian'.

QC/15-16/037 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

QC/15-16/038 Revised Terms of Reference for Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs)

The Quality Officer invited the Committee to consider revised draft Terms of Reference for TRIs which were circulated with papers for the meeting. She reported that some changes to the document had been made following the QC discussion on the 15 March 2016, regarding the appropriateness of the language for TRIs based in the Humanities e.g. the Long Room Hub. The Committee agreed that the revisions addressed these concerns.

During further discussion of the revised document, a Committee member pointed out that the wording of section 3 (iii) suggests that TRIs have a role in hiring staff. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer clarified that no TRI recruits staff, and that all staff hiring is done through the Schools. She suggested that the point relates to the ability of TRIs, as centers of excellence and loci of activity around a certain research theme, to attract interest through participation in its seminars and programmes. She concluded that the language in this section was sufficiently broad that no amendment was required.

In response to a query, the Quality Officer reported that the requirement to '*demonstrate the continued added value of the TRI in supporting research in the corresponding field over and above doing so through Schools alone*' involved highlighting the added value of leveraging off the TRI versus what research would have occurred naturally in Schools.

In terms of the outcome of the review, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer emphasised that the TRI review is an assessment of the Institute itself, its governance and effectiveness in enabling research, rather than its research outputs.

The Committee approved the revised terms of reference.

QC/15-16/039 Quality Review of the Tutorial Service

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Clare Laudet, Senior Tutor and Professor Aiden Seery, Senior Tutor elect to the meeting.

The Senior Tutor reported that the review had been useful in terms of the self-reflection process. She expressed concern, however, that some of the Reviewers' recommendations reflect their experience in the UK tutorial system provides which is often more focused on monitoring academic progression and achievement of students and less on providing pastoral and personal support and advice, or advocating for students.

Professor Laudet welcomed the Reviewers' recommendation to explore ways in which to improve the attractiveness of the tutor role to academic staff, including ensuring more explicit reward for those who perform well as Tutors, better guidance and support, particularly when students present with complex or challenging difficulties, and the development of College-wide work allocation models that recognise the time devoted by staff to their tutorial role. She also welcomed the Reviewers' comments about the complexity of academic processes and progressions rules, and expressed the hope that the Trinity Education Project might bring forward simpler and clearer rules in this regard. In relation to the recommendations around student cases, she noted that while some are within the remit of the Tutorial Service others must be addressed at College level.

With regard to the Reviewers' recommendations around data collection, definition of KPIs and more formal record keeping by individual tutors, the Senior Tutor expressed concern that an over-emphasis on data collection and paperwork may dilute the quality and level of service currently provided. She also stressed the importance of ensuring that any IT systems introduced to record interactions with students and support the collection of management data are user friendly and do not lead to an increase in workload. She reported that a recent survey of tutors found that the most prevalent concern was an increase in form filling, and that this may contribute to making the role less attractive to potential tutors.

The Reviewers encourage College to explore the merits and demerits of the 'opt-in' and 'opt-out' tutorial system. The Senior Tutor expressed the view that the current opt-in model is the most appropriate one, provided that the value of tutorship is recognised by College and Schools in terms of workload models, promotions and size of chamber. She suggested that the 'opt out' model would present challenges for the Senior Tutors Office (STO), primarily by increasing the workload demands of the Senior Tutor and STO staff. If more staff were involved in terms of training, delivering workshops and supporting Tutors the 'opt out' option would be more manageable and less of a drain on the STO resources.

Professor Aidan Seery, Senior Tutor Elect agreed that the report presents useful recommendations, particularly in terms of raising the profile of the tutorial service and the use of social media to increase awareness of the service across the student body. He expressed concern, however, that the Reviewers viewed the service from a consumer rather than an educational support stance. He emphasised that the current model, whereby the relationship between tutors and students supports the educational development and growth of students is most appropriate in the Trinity context.

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences supported the introduction of an 'opt out' system, and suggested that there should be an expectation that all members of staff serve as tutors other than in very exceptional circumstances, i.e. where there is a conflict of interest. He suggested that the current difficulty in recruiting tutors coupled with the growing demands on the service, as students have higher expectations of the service and require greater levels of assistance, justifies the introduction of an 'opt-out' system.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited comment from the Committee.

In the discussion that followed support for retaining the 'opt in' model was expressed by a Committee member, along with concern that the quality of the service would be reduced if staff who are not interested or suitable for the role are appointed as tutors. The importance of retaining the core sense of volunteerism was also stressed.

The Education Officer from the Students Union referred to the reviewers comment on the importance of record keeping by tutors with respect to their interaction with students. This is

particularly important in the case of an appeal where records may need to be produced in support of an appeal process.

The Academic Secretary emphasised that consideration of the advocacy role is crucial, as it not only involves the relationship between students and tutors, but also the training and awareness around policies and regulations. She observed that the report is not suggesting that we do away with the advocacy role, but rather that we re-consider our interpretation of it.

The Dean of Graduate Studies remarked that there are more staff involved in tutoring roles than those listed as formal tutors, as many perform the role informally. Postgraduate students, for example, don't have tutors *per say* but course co-ordinators perform a tutoring role. In response to a suggestion that tutors are primarily female and at a lower level of seniority, the Senior Tutor reported that 56% of tutors are male, 44% female, and that 71% are assistant professors with only 6% being full professors, of which 91% are male.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Senior Tutor and Senior Tutor Elect and suggested that all of the issues raised in the report and its recommendations would need to be debated and discussed in terms of the culture, tradition and complexity of our systems. She reported that the report raised some fundamental questions about the way in which we organise the tutorial service which will be discussed at Council and addressed through an implementation plan.

The Quality Committee noted the Reviewers' report and recommendations, and the response from the Senior Tutor and Senior Tutor Elect, which will be brought forward to Council.

QC/15-16/040 Consultation on Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) Appeals Mechanism for Linked Providers

The Quality Officer, Ms Roisin Smith, reported that Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is expected to release quality assurance guidelines under section 27 of the QQI Act 2012 in the final quarter of 2015/16. Following the release of the guidelines, Trinity will be operating under the legislative framework of the Act with respect to our linked providers (Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), Marino Institute of Education (MIE), Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) and Church of Ireland College of Education (CICE)). She spoke to a memo outlining the requirement in the Act for the establishment, review and approval of quality assurance guidelines for linked providers by a Designated Awarding Body (DAB), and the facility to appeal against the decision of a DAB to withdraw approval of a linked provider's quality assurance procedures. With respect to Trinity linked providers, such reviews will not be scheduled until 2017/18 or 2018/19.

Ms Smith reported that an Appeals Process has been drafted by UCD and was discussed at the Irish University Association (IUA) meetings in June 2015 and January 2016. The discussion to date has resolved that:

- i. There is a preference for a sector-wide appeals procedure to be developed rather than an individual institutional appeals process for Designated Awarding Bodies;
- ii. There is a preference to establish an agreed standing pool of independent appeals persons rather than an independent appeals person per institution;

and following a suggestion at the UCD Academic Council in February 2016, that:

- iii. The nomination of the independent appeals person is deferred until such time as an appeal arises.

The Quality Officer reported that the issue would be discussed again at the IUA on the 4th April and she resolved to bring the outcome of the discussion to the next Quality Committee meeting.

QC/15-16/041 Quality Review of the BESS Programme

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the BESS Programme Director, Professor Michael Wycherley to the meeting to speak to the Reviewers' report for the programme. Professor Wycherley began by noting the Reviewers' positive comments in relation to the Programme's reputation and excellent track record, and the commitment of its students, lecturers and administrative staff. While acknowledging that BESS is a successful programme, the Reviewers suggest that it may no longer be fit for purpose as it does not fully deliver on its own ambitions of being a multi-disciplinary programme. Additionally, large class sizes, particularly in the sophister years, threaten the small group teaching which is a key part of the Trinity educational experience. The impact is felt in terms of the range of module choice for students, the quality of the course delivery, and the timeliness of feedback.

The Reviewers recommend that more needs to be done to preserve the multi-disciplinary nature of the programme beyond the first year and Professor Wycherley endorsed this view, expressing concern that the BESS programme risks evolving into a specialized pathway to Business and/ or Economics degrees rather than the entry point to a wide range of degrees.

The Faculty Dean welcomed the review and noted that the enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism of staff on the programme are recorded in the Review report. He agreed that the complexities of delivering a multi-disciplinary programme are issues that the course needs to engage and deal with, and noted that the large class sizes, which are a feature of the Social Sciences generally, pose a risk to the international brand of BESS.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Programme Director and opened the discussion by echoing the concerns expressed regarding any reduction in traction for the multi-disciplinary BESS brand. Professor Wycherley reported that while core subject skills are embedded after year 1, the Reviewers' recommendations around pairing subjects in years three or four, and the development of a second-year module exclusively for BESS students to focus on a number of themes from different disciplinary perspectives may offer a solution, but would have resource implications. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that the Trinity Education Project will provide the context for addressing many of these fundamental questions.

The Reviewers stressed the need to emphasise the distinctiveness of the course and to differentiate it from the new undergraduate course in Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology (PPES). Although there is growing tendency for students to select Business and Economics, the Academic Secretary emphasised the importance of ensuring that the structure of the BESS programme facilitates subject choice for all of its students.

The Reviewers raise the issue of funding and resource allocation to support large programmes in College, and the consequent perverse incentives which may require a reduction in the intake to the BESS programme in order to maintain quality. While consideration should be given to targeting non-EU students as a way of increasing income, it was suggested that programme may not have a sufficiently competitive edge to successfully attract international students resulting from a reduction in infrastructure and administrative support.

In relation to the low return rate for module and programme surveys, it was noted that this is a recurrent theme in School reviews. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that Schools have the option of using a range of other feedback mechanisms and that low response rates are often accepted as a fall-out of the requirement for mandatory surveys. A Committee member suggested that completion of the online survey in class time may improve response rates while keeping administration costs down. The Academic Secretary stressed that the key issue is whether to survey at programme or at module level, and she reported that a review of student evaluation will

be undertaken in the coming months, the outcome of which will be discussed further at the Quality Committee. The Quality Officer reported that there will be a greater emphasis in the future on evaluating the quality of Trinity's awards, which are at the programme rather than module level.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Wycherley and informed the Committee that the review would proceed to Council for approval.

QC/15-16/042 Quality Review of the Masters in Theology (M.Th.)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Iain Attack (Head of the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology) and Dr Katie Heffelfinger (Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI)) to the meeting to speak to the review of the Masters in Theology (M.Th.).

Professor Attack drew the Committee's attention to the Reviewers' praise of the high academic quality of the programme, as well as its successful integration of the academic and practical elements necessary for the degree. They state that the M.Th. compares favourably with best practice in ministerial training in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe. The Reviewers also comment on the strong commitment of CITI and Trinity staff, both academic and administrative, to the delivery of the MTh programme. Professor Attack welcomed the Reviewers' recommendations in relation to course content, which it is hoped will have implications for staff workloads. He also welcomed the recommendation that administrative processes are strengthened between CITI and the Academic Registry in Trinity, and that a contact staff member is identified to liaise with on system issues. With regard to the financial sustainability of the programme, Professor Attack noted that there is no explicit recognition of the financial burden imposed on the School by providing teaching on the M.Th., and that there is no direct compensation to the School or Department through fee income from the M.Th.

Dr Heffelfinger thanked the Quality Officer, Ms Roisin Smith, for her guidance throughout the review process. She also noted the helpful collaboration with Dr Caitriona Russell from the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology, which facilitated discussion with widely dispersed staff. In welcoming the report and its recommendations, she stressed the importance of retaining the core function of the M.Th. in providing professional ministerial training in any future development of the programme.

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences highlighted Reviewers' strong endorsement of the programme in terms of international best practice and was pleased with the overall level of student engagement with the review process. In terms of the financial concerns raised by the School, he felt it was worth stressing that income generation for the programme is not treated differently than other masters' programmes, and that a portion of fees will devolve back to the School through the ABC process.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr Attack and Dr Heffelfinger, and invited comment from the Committee. In relation to the opening hours of the campus Library, it was clarified that the library referred to in the report is the Library on the CITI site, which is not owned by CITI. With regard to the Reviewers' recommendations that the role of the External Examiner include checking a sample of assessed work relating to modules taken in the first two years of the course, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the role of the External Examiner at Trinity does not routinely include an assessment of work outside the final year dissertation.

In response to a query concerning workload pressures, the Head of School reported that the proposed structural and curriculum changes, which include a staggered intake and shortened course

should help to address these issues. In relation to the recommendations around IT and systems supports, the Academic Secretary reported that the Registrar is liaising with the Academic Registry in this regard.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the Reviewers' endorsement of the academic content of the programme is a welcome affirmation of the curriculum, which was newly developed to replace the B.Th.

The Quality Officer reported that the next steps in the process involve awaiting the outcome of the House of Bishop's review on changes to the formation for Ministry with the subsequent need for a revised MOU between Trinity and CITI to reflect responsibilities under the revised programme and the QQI Act 2012.

The Committee approved the report and responses from the School and the CITI, and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review would be considered at the next meeting of Council.

QC/15-16/043 Quality Review of the joint B.Sc. in Human Nutrition and Dietetics

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Paul Browne (Head of the School of Medicine, Trinity) and Dr Stephen Meaney (Assistant Head of the School of Biological Sciences, DIT) to the meeting to speak to the review of the joint B.Sc. in Human Nutrition and Dietetics which is delivered by DIT and Trinity.

Professor Brown welcomed the Reviewers' positive comments in relation to the pioneering nature of the programme in the education of dietetics and nutrition professionals. He also welcomed their endorsement of proposed changes to the governance and management structure of the programme, which it is hoped will streamline decision making and reduce duplication of effort related to the joint administration of the programme by the two institutions. The Reviewers support the implementation of proposed changes to the curriculum, including the introduction of professional practice modules, and recommend an increased focus on the development of transferrable skills to prepare graduates for employment outside of the clinical setting.

The management and assessment of placements was identified by the Reviewers as a quality issue, and they recommend that a structure should be put in place to support the further education of practice educators, and to strengthen the interface between the institutions and placement providers. Professor Brown reported that the School has developed a plan to address these issues, building on the experience of placement models for other courses in the Faculty and utilising a network of placement providers within the healthcare system. The School will continue to explore ways in which inter-professional learning can be implemented across the programme.

Dr Meaney noted the Reviewers' recommendations in relation to continuous professional development and research-led teaching, and highlighted the need to raise awareness amongst students of the 'research lines' of their lecturers and the related opportunities to undertake research.

He stressed the need to ensure students have an identity in both institutions, as currently there is a greater identity with DIT, and noted that the Reviewers recommend additional induction and orientation activities at Trinity in year 1 and year 3 to support this. He concluded by suggesting that, with increasing obesity issues in the population, there is a legitimate case for further development of the course.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Brown and Dr Meaney, and invited comments from the Committee. In response to a query regarding the timeframe for implementation of

the additional induction sessions, Dr Meaney reported that that this would be rolled out for the next intake of students and also made available for existing students where possible. It is further expected that the delivery of more modules in Trinity and the implementation of inter-professional learning across the programme through the involvement of colleagues in Trinity's partner hospitals will promote a greater identity with Trinity. The quality of clinical placements has been raised in other reviews, and is an important element in retaining accreditation by professional bodies. The Committee noted the importance of fostering goodwill with placement providers, and facilitating clinical professionals to provide placements, and that this should be recognised by the HSE and the Department of Health.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer closed the discussion and reported that the review would be forwarded to Council for consideration.

QC/15-16/044 Any other business

The Quality Officer reported that the QQI report on "Quality in an Era of diminishing resources" which was recently published will have a soft launch and attempt to garner media attention and discussion with the new Minister once appointed. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the report and stressed the importance of raising the issue at a sectoral and government level.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.