



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

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The University of Dublin**

Draft minutes of the Quality Committee

6 October 2016, 15.00 – 17.00, Boardroom House 1

Present:

Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer *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
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IS Services
Education Officer Students' Union
Vice President Graduate Students' Union

Apologies:

Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer

In attendance:

Professor Mani Ramashwami, Director of TCIN
Professor John Boland, Dean of Research
Professor Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students
Ms Katie Heffelfinger, Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI)

QC/16-17/01 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 1 June 2016

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer opened the meeting by welcoming the new Dean of Graduate Studies (Professor Neville Cox) and the new Student Union members (Mr Dale Whelehan (TSU) and Ms Elisa Crespo Miguelez (GSU)) to the Committee. He also welcomed Ms Victoria Butler who is returning to represent the Secretary's Office. There were no corrections to the minutes of the 1 June 2016, and they were approved.

QC/16-17/02 Matters arising

The Academic Secretary reported that the Implementation Plan for the School of Chemistry had been approved by Council on the 8 June 2016, and that the Implementation Plans for the Chaplaincy, the Student Counselling Service and the College Health Service had been approved by Board on the 15 June 2016. She reported Council had requested further engagement with the School of Computer Science and Statistics in respect of the School's Strategic Plan; the Implementation Plan for the School of Computer Science and Statistics will be presented to the Quality Committee on the 1 December 2016.

QC/16-17/03 Progress Report for Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Research, Professor John Boland, to the meeting to speak to the Progress Report for Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I). Professor Boland reported that significant restructuring of Trinity Research and Innovation had taken place since the review of the unit in 2014, including the successful restructuring of the Office of Corporate Partnership and Knowledge Exchange (OCPKE), and the Contracts Office. Considerable progress has also been made in relation to industry engagement, with the OCPKE working to implement the College's industry engagement strategy. An additional full-time position has been externally funded through Knowledge Transfer Ireland (KTI) and co-supported by the Dublin Business Innovation Centre (DBIC) to focus on campus companies. A €60M venture fund has been launched with University College Dublin, which will support university spin-out companies in the pre-award phase and provide follow-on support to start-ups. The Dean reported that PitchBook's recently published *Universities Report* shows that Trinity is number 48 in the global rankings for universities on the number of undergraduate alumni who go on to found companies that receive a first round of venture capitalist backing. Trinity is the only European university to sit within the Top 50. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean for his presentation and invited comment from the Committee.

In response to a query, the Dean clarified that the focus of activity on industry engagement was not only being driven by internal targets in the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy, but also by the external landscape and the need for Trinity to be more relevant to and involved in the business community. The potential risk generated by vacancies in TR&I at senior management level was raised as an issue of concern, and the Dean explained that attracting and retaining suitably qualified staff for the key roles has presented challenges. In response to a query regarding TR&I's level of engagement with the Trinity Research Strategy and provision of support for Art, Humanities and Social Sciences, the Dean reported that the unit is providing support to the Ussher Programme, and that a project funded by the Wellcome Trust is currently underway through the Science Gallery to promote cross-disciplinary research by linking the humanities and neuroscience in a project. He stressed the need to focus the narrative around the kind of research that we do to engage the public, and cited the Science Gallery as an important initiative for facilitating and promoting this.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and closed the discussion.

QC/16-17/04 Quality Review of Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) Professor Mani Ramashwami to the meeting to speak to the report on the quality review of TCIN, and the joint response from the Institute Director, the Dean of Research and the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science (FEMS).

Professor Ramashwami began by welcoming the Reviewer's report which endorsed the recommendations that TCIN had outlined in its self-assessment report (SAR). Addressing the Reviewers' recommendation to appoint an external advisory Board to contribute to the Institute's scientific direction, Professor Ramashwami reported that following discussion it was agreed that

the scientific direction and mission for TCIN should be principally defined internally. Rather than having a permanent external advisory Board, the Institute will invite external advisors to contribute on particular issues. The current TCIN Board will be reconstituted and the Director will work with TCIN PIs and with the Dean of Research to suggest appropriate board members from within and outside Trinity. A Strategic Plan for TCIN is being developed which should be in place by 2017.

In response to the Reviewers' recommendations regarding improved communication between TCIN management and PIs, the Director reported that a number of strategies have been devised including an annual away day and monthly PI lunch meetings. In addition, it is hoped that the development of thematic strands with focus areas across disciplines will help to build and support transdisciplinary and collaborative research activities, and foster a greater sense of cohesion within the Institute. Professor Ramashwami outlined that the Reviewers' recommendation to appoint a Director for translational science will not be implemented, as there is concern that this would split the Institute and detract from a single point of oversight. With regard to securing further funding for the Institute, the Director reported that a Research Project Officer (RPO) will be recruited in Autumn 2016, 50% funded by Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I), to support the development of a funding strategy and submission of additional individual and large-scale research grant applications.

With regard to the recommendation that TCIN should launch a strategic and tactical initiative to form international partnerships, the Director reported that the TCIN Executive Management Committee (EMC) will look to identify suitable international partners initially in Bangalore, India (NCBS and NIMHANS), the University of Edinburgh, University of Cardiff in Wales and the ETH in Switzerland, and that Wellcome Trust international strategic support funding has been secured for collaborative research. With regard to teaching activities, the TCIN will work with relevant Schools e.g. the School of Biochemistry & Immunology, to develop opportunities for engagement at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The Dean of Research stressed the importance of getting the new TCIN Board in place, and concurred that having an advisory panel from which members could be drawn as required was the correct approach. He reported that underuse of the MRI is being addressed through the recruitment of strong research-active PIs who will use the MRI facility. He noted the Reviewers' comments regarding the sustainability of the Comparative Medicine Unit (CMU), but acknowledged that this extends beyond TCIN.

The Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science stressed the importance of ensuring that the TCIN is providing value-add in terms of its activities, and is identifying large research project opportunities. He reported that the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI) has created a pool of new PIs from which TCIN can draw. With neuroscience activity happening in other places across College it is imperative to ensure that activities are coordinated within the Lloyd. The Dean noted that provision of space for neuroscience is an important issue, as PI's engaged in behavioural studies research require a large amount of space.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the participants and invited comment. In the discussion that followed the importance of developing an internal and external communication and marketing strategy was raised. In response to a query from a Committee member as to whether PIs could be integrated into the TCIN management structure, the Director outlined plans to appoint young PIs as leaders of research strands. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the TCIN Director, the Dean of Research and the Dean of FEMS, and closed the discussion.

QC/16-17/05 QOI White Paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degrees

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor Neville Cox, to speak to the QOI White Paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degrees which had been circulated with the papers. The Dean began by reporting that the White Paper had been discussed at the Graduate Studies Committee meeting of the 22 September 2016 and he referred the Committee to the minute of that discussion and subsequent feedback that he had received from Directors of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate (DTLPG). He reported that comments from the Committee would be incorporated into a final submission to the Quality Office for inclusion in the institutional response to Quality & Qualifications Ireland (QQI), and that the White Paper would be discussed at an upcoming meeting of the Irish Universities Association (IUA) Deans of Graduate Studies group.

The Dean raised the following points for consideration by the Committee: many of the issues arising from the paper are already covered by our Calendar regulations: those that are not covered are addressed through other processes e.g. career preparation for PhD students in the structured PhD process. The Dean noted that implementing some of the recommendations has resource implications e.g. the ability of supervisors to facilitate students' attendance at conferences and periodic review of the quality of PhDs would be limited by financial and staffing constraints. The Dean pointed out in relation to the discussion on supervision models contained within the White Paper, that a joint research supervision model works well in some cases and for some students, but should not be mandatory as there are some instances in which a single supervisory system is more suitable for the student, the Discipline or the School. He added that Trinity does not stipulate that its PhD theses are of publishable quality, but of PhD quality.

The Dean stated that the White Paper should stress that students have a responsibility to undertake and complete their own research work, and the need to manage students' expectations in this regard was emphasised. Related to this he advised that it is not possible to provide students with a definite date on which they will graduate, as there are a number of variables that will influence this including, for example, the availability of the External Examiner. There are additional supports for students provided through the structured PhD programme, the Postgraduate Advisory Service and the Directors of Teaching & Learning Postgraduate (DTLPG).

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean of Graduate Studies and in the ensuing discussion the Academic Secretary clarified that although this is a guideline document, Trinity will be assessed against its compliance with the recommendations contained therein as part of our institutional review, and will be asked to defend anything that is contrary to the policy. She further commented that the White Paper is trying to address different practices within and across the universities and the Institutes of Technology, and may be too prescriptive.

In relation to the issue of mandatory joint supervision, it was agreed that while joint supervision is already in place for some disciplines within College and works well in some situations, it should not be mandatory. Advisory panels exist in some disciplines and additional external input is provided through the structured PhD. It was noted however by the Vice-President of the Graduate Students Union that research students do not have a Tutor from whom they can seek advice or support. While joint supervision is not the standard model in Trinity, the option exists to appoint a second supervisor if the student requests it or if the supervisor feels it is appropriate. Co-supervision can provide valuable mentoring opportunities for new staff and is important for contract staff, who are not currently permitted to act as single supervisors. The need to formally recognise inter-institutional co-supervision commitments in workload calculations was also raised.

With regard to the provision of training for supervisors, a Committee member remarked that while supervisory workshops provide an opportunity for sharing good practice and experiences, they should not be mandatory, and the Dean emphasised that supervisory skills are not taught but

learned over time.

The Academic Secretary highlighted the importance of achieving a consensus position with the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies especially in ensuring that co-supervision is not made 'mandatory'. Noting that while guidelines and regulations for research supervision already exist, the need for a College Policy on research supervision was stressed. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer closed the discussion by inviting the Dean and Academic Secretary to draft a College policy on research supervision for consideration by the Committee at a later date.

QC/16-17/06 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) report 2016

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Students to speak to a report on the 2016 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE).

The Dean reported that this is the first report on the revised survey implemented in 2016. The revision saw the number of questions reduced from 120 to 65 and the addition of two new indices - *Quantitative Reasoning* and *Reflective and Integrated Learning*. This revision removes the ability to compare the results of surveys over the last three years, and thereby conduct a trend analysis, but it is hoped to maintain a stable survey over the coming years. The survey structure is comprised of nine indices and twenty-two non-index questions

The Dean highlighted that the findings report consistency in scores across Trinity and the other six Irish Universities in seven of the nine survey indices. In 'Effective Teaching Practices' two questions resulted in Trinity attracting lower scores compared to ISSE University respondents (i) 29% of Trinity respondents compared to 23% of ISSE University respondents reported 'very little' experience in receiving prompt feedback on tests or completed academic work; and (ii) 66% of Trinity respondents compared to 72% of ISSE University respondents reported that they were taught in an organised way. The latter highlights the need to ensure that we are managing students' expectations and that the learning objectives are clear. Differences were also noted in the 'Quality of Interactions' index where 38% of Trinity respondents compared to 51% of ISSE University respondents reported lower scores on engagement with and support offered by administrative staff and offices in registry, finances etc.

The Dean suggested that there was an opportunity for exchange of good practice across the Faculties with respect to areas of strength reported in the findings e.g. Higher Order Learning (AHSS); Quantitative Reasoning (FEMS) and Collaborative Learning (HS).

'Effective teaching practice' attracted higher scores across ISSE Universities compared to Trinity (34.2 vs 31.7), and was particularly evident in YR1. The Dean noted that this is linked to the provision of feedback, and suggested that problems meeting the College target of 20 days may be associated with increased workload and class size.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and invited comment from the Committee. It was noted that although students are coming in to Trinity by choice, their overall level of satisfaction once they are here is lower. The Dean of Students reported that employment readiness is an issue for students, which came out in the open comments as well as in responses to the survey questions. He also noted that access to academics is an issue of concern, and that this is particularly important in a research-led institution. A Committee member noted that the backlog of student cases was another reason for student dissatisfaction, and placed additional stress on the administration system.

The importance of the information gathered was highlighted by the Dean of Students who reported that School-level reports would provide valuable information at local level. He also highlighted the

importance of the information for implementation of the Trinity Education Project (TEP) and as a reference point for the Teaching Fellows when liaising with Schools. The Education Officer of the Students Union noted that the quality of interaction with students that happens in the first few weeks is vital and suggested that the appointment of the Transition to Trinity Officer will help considerably with this. The Deputy Librarian queried how issues relating to the Library could be responded to and it was suggested that a Library-specific report should be produced.

The Dean of Students closed the discussion by acknowledging the work of Amy Murray in the Quality Office in the preparation of the report.

QC/16-17/07 Implementation Plan for Masters in Theology (M.Th.)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Dr Katie Heffelfinger from the Church of Ireland Theological Institute (CITI) to the meeting to speak, on behalf of the Reverend Canon Dr Maurice Elliott (CITI Director), to the Implementation Plan for the Masters in Theology (M.Th.).

Dr Heffelfinger reported that implementation of the Reviewers' recommendations is well underway. The Reviewers endorsed the proposed restructuring of the M.Th. as outlined in the self-assessment report (SAR), and a sub-committee of the Course Management Committee (CMC) has been established to consider and bring forward descriptors/learning outcomes for proposed new modules in Biblical Studies, Anglican Dogmatic Theology and a single combined Hermeneutics module. The Sub-Committee has also engaged in checking current module outcomes against the original course outlines. These have been discussed and agreed, and will be brought to the Course Management Committee for final approval. Agreement has been reached on teaching responsibility for all modules.

In relation to the recommendation to appoint a staff member to take responsibility for administrative duties, Dr Heffelfinger reported that CITI intends to recruit and appoint a part-time Academic Administrator with a view to commencement in early 2017. The provision of sabbatical leave has also been addressed, and it is envisaged that a pilot scheme with paired shared teaching might be introduced from 2017.

In relation to the recommendation that staff from the Loyola Institute be more involved in teaching on the course in order to relieve the burden on staff from the Department of Religions and Theology, the Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS) agreed that the heavy burden of teaching should be spread more evenly.

In response to a query, it was clarified that the Bishops of the Church of Ireland have a role in co-ordinating the mentoring of Mode B students, as this is managed locally by diocesan clergy. In relation to the issues around provision of creative distance-learning permutations for the small group of Mode B students, Dr Heffelfinger reported that Trinity School staff have been encouraged to speak to Trinity On-line Services about the development of online provision supports, however, the small student cohort was identified as an obstacle to prioritisation of such resources in this regard.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr Heffelfinger and the meeting closed.

QC/16-17/08 Student Evaluation of modules

The Academic Officer spoke to this item noting that the Quality Committee at its meeting of the 15 March 2016 considered the Council-approved policy in respect of mandatory student evaluation on an annual basis of all undergraduate modules delivered. The meeting felt that the implementation of the policy raised issues around survey fatigue, survey timing, evaluation methods and perception of impartiality, all of which it was felt warranted further investigation. As a result of these discussions, Ms Helen Condon and Ms Elaine Egan, Trinity Teaching & Learning, conducted

some desktop research on existing practices in peer institutions as well as a high level literature review of research in the area, and she drew the meeting's attention to these reports.

The Academic Secretary informed the meeting that the literature review shows that many of the topics/concerns discussed by different committees, including the Quality Committee, are common across the higher education sector; these include concerns with respect to the validity of student evaluations; the use of the outcomes; need for multiple sources of information in order to make reliable judgements; importance of feedback; use of online vs paper questionnaires. The research suggests that despite concerns, student evaluations are a useful tool for evaluating programmes and teaching effectiveness but that the usefulness of evaluating every taught module is questionable.

She noted that we are now in year four of implementing the Council approved policy that all taught undergraduate modules and all postgraduate courses be reviewed annually, and the Faculty Quality Reports suggests that, on the whole, the policy is being implemented. Schools use different methods of evaluation and report that any changes made to a module/course arising from the process are communicated to students; the method of communication varies depending on the School/course involved.

A programme review of TR071 (Science) and BESS was also conducted in the past two years and this review involved a survey by questionnaire and a number of student focus groups in each of the four years of the programmes. These surveys provided useful data and highlighted good practices as well areas for improvement across the programmes.

The review of existing practices in the other six Irish universities and a select number of high ranking international universities also shows that there are common practices in place. Module evaluation annually is a common practice in the Irish universities, whereas there appears to be a greater prevalence of course evaluation rather than module evaluation in the International universities surveyed. The research also shows that the administration of module/course evaluation is managed locally in 11 of the 21 universities reviewed, 8 centrally, and the practice is unclear in the case of two international universities.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Secretary and invited the Committee to consider the findings of the report with a view to re-thinking the current module evaluation process.

In the discussion that followed the Academic Secretary clarified, in response to a query, that under the legislation we are obliged to evaluate programmes, and to give students an opportunity to provide feedback on their educational provision. The Education Officer of the Students' Union noted the importance of providing feedback mechanisms that are tailored to the needs of individual disciplines and student cohorts, and suggested that the current methods of evaluation attract the extreme ends of the bell curve. He also suggested that the practice of giving feedback at the end of a module is not as useful as providing feedback at the midway point, which would allow students to see any changes that are implemented in response to their comments. One member commented on the need to retain module evaluation as it did provide feedback to the course coordinators and school, but accepted that it must add value and the mechanisms employed should be discipline specific.

With regard to the Trinity Education Project, the Senior Lecturer highlighted the importance of identifying a suitable point in the programme at which to evaluate, as experience shows that Sophister students provide more constructive feedback than Freshmen. The Dean of Graduate Students highlighted the importance of ensuring that ownership of feedback resides at School level.

The Academic Secretary suggested that in order to respond constructively to this issue, further engagement with schools was warranted to assess experience and other responses on how to best include the student experience in enhancing the curriculum. The Education Officer agreed to work with the Academic Secretary to collect feedback from Schools and students. A Committee member recommended that any meetings at School level to elicit feedback should include both staff and students.

The meeting agreed that the Academic Secretary and the SU Education Officer meet with Schools on this matter and prepare a recommendation for consideration by the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Quality Committee in due course.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Secretary and closed the meeting.

QC/16-17/09 Quality Committee Performance 2015/16

This item was rescheduled to the December meeting

QC/16-17/10 Any other business

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the following documents which were circulated for information:

- B.1 Annual Institutional Quality Report 2014/15– Trinity submission.
- B.2 QA Guidelines for Designated Awarding Bodies
- B.3 Progress with Quality Reviews
- B.4 Quality Committee Action log
- B.5 Revised Terms of Reference for Quality Committee 2016/17