



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

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The University of Dublin**

**Quality Committee**

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the  
1 December 2016

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**Present:**

Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer (Acting Chair)  
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences  
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 Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science  
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science  
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services  
Vice-President, Graduate Students' Union

**Apologies:**

Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer  
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science  
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer  
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian  
Education Officer, Students' Union  
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office

**In attendance:**

Ms. Orla Bannon, School of Medicine Administrator  
Professor Aileen Douglas, Head of School, English

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**QC/16-17/11 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 6 October 2016**

The minutes were approved with no amendments.

**QC/16-17/12 Matters arising**

The Chair reported that the Implementation Plans for the review of the School of Computer Science and Statistics (QC/15-16/059) and the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) (QC/16-17/04) will be presented to the Quality Committee on the 6 February 2017, as neither the Faculty Dean for Engineering, Mathematics and Science nor the Director of TCIN was available to attend the 1 December meeting.

The Deputy Librarian will provide feedback to the Committee at its next meeting on the possible benefits of a Library-specific ISSE report that highlights Library related issues from the ISSE data (QC/16-17/06).

In relation to the review of student evaluation processes (QC/16-17/08), the Academic Secretary reported that she and the SU Education Officer have met with seven Schools to date and have had constructive dialogue with both staff and students. They have found a range of student feedback methods and many examples of good practice, but have noticed recurrent issues relating to module evaluation and the need for more co-ordinated activity and dialogue around quality. The Dean of Health Sciences agreed that these are issues that need to be addressed in order to facilitate streamlining of quality assurance, reduce duplication of effort and gain maximum returns on the considerable resource investment in these processes.

The Academic Secretary reported that the Review of the Tutorial Service (QC/15-16/039) had been considered by Council in May 2016, where it had been agreed that an analysis of the key recommendations would be undertaken before an Implementation Plan was produced. A working party will be established in Hilary Term to undertake this analysis. The group will report to the Quality Committee and Council in Trinity Term, and the subsequent Implementation Plan will be considered in both fora.

### **QC/16-17/13 Progress Report for the School of Education**

The Chair invited the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Professor Darryl Jones, to speak to the progress report for the review of the School of Education, which took place in February 2015. The Dean reported that many of the recommendations had been completed but that others would require more time to fully address and implement, as by their nature they were more long term and strategic. The proposed review of the use of casual staff in the School, for example, has been delayed due to staff changes in 2015/16 and the Dean noted that any resulting recommendation to reduce numbers would impact on the School's ability to maintain their current provision. With regard to the recommendation to explore the potential role of the School in the planned Academy for Teaching and Learning, the Dean queried the current status of the Academy as it appeared that implementation of this recommendation had stalled.

The Chair thanked the Dean and invited comment from the Committee. Professor Walsh, a staff member in the School, welcomed the review and its recommendations, reporting that it had led to a review of the Masters in Education programme. With regard to the School's use of casual staff, he agreed that the School would like to reduce its reliance on casual staff, but suggested that any proposed reduction in numbers must be undertaken in stages in order that the School can continue to maintain its current taught provision. He reported that work had been undertaken on the Masters in Education programme to investigate ways in which greater involvement by full-time staff could be achieved if the course was run in a different way. The School is also looking at the quality assurance of its part-time staff, and would welcome the opportunity to mainstream contract positions.

With regard to the Academy for Teaching and Learning, the Academic Secretary reported that this has been subsumed into the activities of a new initiative called U-Lead, the purpose of which is to provide a framework to maximise impact and achieve greater coherency and integration of academic development and support activities across College.

A Committee member queried the process for following up on recommendations that have not been completed. The Quality Officer reported that while the progress report is the last step in the formal quality review process that issues would continue to be worked on at School level. As the quality reviews are cyclical, the implementation of recommendations will be addressed in the development of the self-assessment report for the next review.

A Committee member noted that the filling of vacant Chairs is a recurrent theme in reviews and wondered whether the Quality Committee had any role to play in highlighting this. The Faculty Dean welcomed the Committee's support in highlighting this issue and reported that as part of the Faculty's three year staffing plan it is intended to advertise the Chair in Education, which has been vacant since 2013. In closing, he noted that the filling of vacant Chairs is not just an issue for the School of Education.

*Action/Decision: The Quality Committee noted the concern that was expressed by members regarding the number of vacant Chair posts identified in recent School reviews. It recommended the Progress Report for the School of Education to Council for approval, with the minutes of the Quality Committee discussion.*

### **QC/16-17/14 Preparing for the Institutional Quality Review**

The Academic Secretary advised the Committee that Trinity will undergo an Institutional Quality Review in 2020/21, co-ordinated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and led by an international panel of experts. She reported that the last Institutional Review, which occurred in 2011/12, had highlighted several shortcomings in Trinity's processes for ensuring quality across a range of areas and that in order to address these issues, and in light of the increasingly competitive global environment and emphasis on rankings, it is of critical importance that the 2020/21 review can evidence excellence in our processes and procedures for the delivery of education, research and related services.

She reported that feedback from Trinity's Annual Dialogue meeting with QQI in November was complementary of Trinity's efforts to date to address quality assurance and enhancement across a range of areas, and similar positive feedback was reported from the HEA with regard to the HEA compact. Trinity's recent success in winning research funding, its acceptance to the League of European Research Universities (LERU) and confirmation that it sits in 19th place in the list of 1,337 secondary and higher education establishments to have won Horizon 2020 funds is indicative of the quality of our research. These activities confirm that what we are doing in some areas is working, but there are three areas that need to be reviewed in advance of the 2020/21 institutional quality review, namely:

1. Policies, procedures and practices in respect of undergraduate and postgraduate education;
2. Student evaluation and engagement;
3. Governance and management.

In relation to the first of these, the Academic Secretary advised that the Trinity Education Project (TEP) will satisfy as a quality review of our undergraduate provision provided the process is transparent, benchmarked against international peer universities, has external expert input, and that approved documents/outcomes are published on our web pages for internal and external audiences. In terms of the postgraduate provision, she reported that a quality review of policy, procedures, and practices for the design and delivery of postgraduate taught and research education will be required, as this hasn't been done before. Terms of reference and plans for the review will be prepared in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies. In parallel, the development and publication of academic policies is progressing well.

With regard to student evaluation and engagement, there has been considerable progress in the development and implementation of a student evaluation strategy in Trinity, the effectiveness of which is currently under review, and further improvements to the process and procedures are expected in 2017/18. In terms of the student experience, however, the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) indicates that we are falling behind other Irish universities in five of the seven indices. The results of the International Student Barometer (ISB) also point to areas that need to be improved on in terms of meeting the expectations of international students. The Academic Secretary stressed that we will need to provide evidence in the institutional review that we are working to improve the student experience.

Several recommendations were made in the 2011/12 review in respect of central and local governance and management structures. The Academic Secretary advised that College governance and management structures normally support the assurance and continuous improvement of quality across education, research and related services and this would need to be considered in advance of the institutional review.

In light of the demands of implementing TEP on staff and resources across Schools, it has been agreed with QQI that 'School reviews' not occur in 2017/18 and 2018/19 (unless a School requests a review). It is recommended that a quality review of postgraduate procedures and practices is carried out in 2017/18. In 2018/19 and the first half of 2019/20, Trinity will be preparing the self-assessment report for the external institutional review.

In the discussion that followed, the Vice-President of the Graduate Students Union welcomed the proposed review of postgraduate procedures and processes, noting that as the numbers of students on courses has increased there is a danger that a reduction in quality will follow. In response to a query from a member as to why a gap in School reviews was warranted, the Academic Secretary clarified that as some Schools are entering their fourth cycle of quality reviews there is a need to step back and look at other ways in which their provision can be evaluated. She reported that the upcoming review of the Law school was a case in point, and that a review of the School's programmes rather than a full School review was deemed to be more useful. Similarly, the review of the TR071 science programme has produced very valuable information. She noted that thematic reviews give a College-wide view, and that the proposed reviews of governance and postgraduate processes will cross all Schools. Additionally, there are limited resources to undertake all of these activities. It was agreed that in communicating the rationale for taking this approach, framing it as a reflection point was important.

It was noted that students' negative experiences of administrative processes impact on their educational experience and that this is not just at the first point of contact but in regard to their continuing interactions with the universities' administrative systems. The impact of any system delays on the timely processing of Garda vetting applications, administration of vaccinations etc. is keenly felt in the professional schools and this is regularly revealed in student evaluations.

With regard to governance, it was suggested that the implementation of the Global Relations Strategy has created imperatives to recruit Non-EU students and it was important that governance around new course development to attract Non-EU students in short time-frames keeps up with these developments to ensure gaps in governance do not emerge.

The Dean of Health Sciences queried whether the institutional review should be included on the College risk register, as there is an institutional risk around non-compliance with the legislation through a poor review outcome. It was agreed that inclusion of the institutional review on the risk register should be considered.

*The Quality Committee noted the proposed approach to quality reviews for the period 2016/17 - 2019/20.*

### **QC/16-17/15 Implementation Plan for the B.Sc. Human Nutrition & Dietetics**

The Chair invited the Faculty Dean for Health Sciences, Professor Mary McCarron, and the School Administrator for Medicine, Ms. Orla Bannon, attending on behalf of the Head of School, to speak to the Implementation Plan for the four-year, joint (DIT) B.Sc. in Human Nutrition and Dietetics.

The Dean began by reporting that the Reviewers' recommendations in relation to recruitment have been addressed by two appointments - an Associate Professor in Human Nutrition in Trinity and an Assistant Professor in Inter-Professional Learning, which is a strategic post at Faculty level. A new programme structure has been developed in response to both the quality review and to an accreditation by CORU. The new programme structure will be ready to implement in 2017/18 and the relevant curriculum

changes will be introduced across all programme years. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that students feel connected to Trinity through a revised induction process. The School has been working with the Health Services Executive (HSE) to inform new strategies on practice placements, and a practice placement report has been completed by Suzanne Doyle in DIT, which will inform an enhanced business case to the HSE and the streamlining of processes.

The Chair invited the School Administrator to comment, and Ms Bannon concurred that many valuable changes had been made to the curriculum across all years on foot of the professional accreditation and the quality review. Evidence-based practice has been introduced into Year 1 and includes self-directed learning, reflective practice, problem-based and inter-professional learning, and is research led. New professional practice modules have been introduced in Years 2, 3 & 4 and include communication, behavioural change, professionalism and codes of conduct. She reported that the investment by the Faculty Dean in an Assistant Professor in Inter-Professional Learning post has been a very positive development for the programme and the new post-holder is already involved in many aspects of the programme.

As outlined by the Dean, the School has been working to make DIT students feel part of Trinity. Two Trinity induction sessions are now held with Year 1 students to include an understanding of their identity within Trinity. Part of the induction involves using Trinity library resources. All student vaccinations are now done through the Trinity College Health Service. The School is working with the Irish Nutrition and Dietetics Institute (INDI) to develop skills for outside the clinical setting, and this will also involve the new Professional Advisory Committee, which will include industry representation.

Work is ongoing with the Practice Education Co-ordinator - the first meeting took place on 17 October 2016 between teaching staff and Practice Placement-B Practice Educators, and further meetings are scheduled for 2017. A national strategy is being developed to strengthen the interface between academic and practice placement staff, with the aim of broadening the focus to the community setting where the greatest need is now and into the future. A case has been made to the HSE and the Department of Health for funding for a pilot study in 2017 to enhance practice placements in community dietetics, and the School is working with the HSE to inform a new national workforce planning strategy for dietetics. The introduction of a visiting lecturer series has received excellent feedback from students – the focus so far in 2016 has been on Paediatrics and it is hoped that next year this can be expanded to include Geriatrics, in order that students receive exposure to a range of related disciplines.

Ms Bannon reported that rebranding the course is almost complete and a new website is to be rolled out in December 2016. Work is continuing to streamline information between both institutions. The School is working with Global Relations to identify suitable non-EU markets and opportunities for students to enter the programme through the International Foundation Programme (IFP).

The Chair thanked the Dean and Ms Bannon for their detailed report on progress in implementing the recommendations, and in the discussion that followed the Committee was unanimous in its praise of the restructuring and the work required by the programme team and the School to shift the focus of the programme away from a purely hospital-based setting to a community-based one. The Academic Secretary noted the considerable amount of work that had taken place since the course was last reviewed in 2009 and credited the School and the Faculty for their efforts in that regard. In response to a query from the Chair as to whether students have the opportunity to engage in research it was clarified that there is a compulsory project in year 4. The Faculty Dean reported that efforts are made to link students to large scale research projects where they would have access to large data sets (e.g. in the Coombe Maternity Hospital or in the long-term studies on aging). In response to a query on whether opportunities exist to link with other Disciplines and share best practice, Ms Bannon reported that the School is currently linking with five other programmes that have practice placement elements and the Dean reported that opportunities exist at Faculty level to share information and procedures via the Directors of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate.

*Action/Decision: The Committee recommended the Implementation Plan for the joint B.Sc. in Human Nutrition and Dietetics to Council for consideration, with the minute of the Quality Committee discussion.*

*The Dean of Health Sciences left the meeting.*

### **QC/16-17/16 Revised Policy/Procedures for Approval of Higher Education Institutions/Linked Providers' Quality Assurance Procedures**

The Quality Officer spoke to a revised procedure for the Approval of Higher Education Institutions/Linked Providers' Quality Assurance Procedures, which was first presented to the Quality Committee on the 12 May 2016.

She informed the Committee that the document had been revised to (i) clarify in the scope statement that it only applies to 'validated' programmes of education with Linked Providers, (ii) further define Linked Providers in their relationship with Trinity, (iii) reinforce the independence of the approval process of linked provider quality assurance policies and procedures and (iv) address ongoing approval of Linked Providers' quality assurance procedures outside the initial approval process. She reported that the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) and the Marino Institute of Education (MIE) had already been informed of the changes to the procedure.

*Action/Decision: The Quality Committee approved the revised policy for Approval of Higher Education Institutions/Linked Providers' Quality Assurance Procedures.*

### **QC/16-17/17 Compliance costs for Linked Providers**

The Quality Officer reported that Trinity is expected to formally initiate compliance activities with Linked Providers (LPs) in its capacity as a Designated Awarding Body (DAB) in January 2017. These activities are new to Trinity under the QQI Act 2012 and are therefore not reflected in current arrangements with Linked Providers' in their Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) and Fees Schedule. The Quality Assurance of Linked Providers will be a key focus of the next institutional review, but there are no additional resources for this new element of our relationship with them. The Quality Officer informed the Committee that a costing estimation to meet these new responsibilities had been developed in consultation with Financial Services Division (FSD), the Academic Secretary and the College Registrar. She asked the Quality Committee to recommend approval to University Council and College Board to allocate these compliance costs to Linked Providers.

The Chair thanked the Quality Officer and invited comment from the Committee. In response to a query, the Quality Officer advised that considerable work will be required in order to successfully guide Linked Providers through this process, particularly those that have not been reviewed before. As quality reviews are on a seven- year cycle, she suggested that the costs to the Linked Provider may be spread over a number of years but that this would need to be discussed with FSD. The Academic Secretary agreed that there will be a heavy workload associated with these reviews, and emphasised the need to charge accordingly.

*Action/Decision: The Quality Committee recommended the allocation of compliance costs to Linked Providers for approval by the relevant Committees.*

*The Dean of Graduate Studies joined the meeting.*

### **QC/16-17/18 Implementation Plan for the School of English**

The Chair welcomed the Head of School, Professor Aileen Douglas, to speak to the Implementation Plan for the Review of the School of English, which took place in April 2016.

Professor Douglas reported that work was on-going to address the Reviewers' recommendations. The Appointment of Professor of English (1867) for the 2017-18 academic year will provide academic leadership across the full range of disciplines, and the School will seek the appointment of the 1977 Chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature. The School's workload model is being revised and will be aligned to the implementation of the Trinity Education Project (TEP). A syllabus review of the undergraduate programme is continuing in tandem with preparations for the TEP and work is underway by the Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning (DPGTL) to harmonize the M.Phil. courses. A proposal for a new role to support the direction and oversight of all taught PG programmes has been developed by the Director of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate (DTLPG) and will be considered by the School Committee in Michaelmas Term. Professor Douglas reported that the recommendation to achieve greater parity regarding the M.Phil. student experience is a more challenging one, particularly regarding access to shared spaces, but that the School has initiated a number of social events for M.Phil. students in order to stimulate collegiality. Regarding electronic submission of assessed work, she reported that this will be initiated once Turnitin is embedded in Blackboard.

The Dean of Graduate Studies congratulated the School on its events for M.Phil. students, noting that collegiality can be generated by small actions. Professor Douglas agreed that the benefits arising from these simple initiatives has been considerable, and are greatly appreciated by the students.

The Chair thanked Professor Douglas and reported that the Committee would recommend the Implementation Plan to Council for approval.

*Action/Decision: The Quality Committee recommended the Implementation Plan for the School of English to Council for approval.*

#### **QC/16-17/19 Revised QQI White paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes**

The Chair invited the Dean of Graduate Studies to speak to a revised Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) white paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes, which had been circulated with the papers. The Dean reminded the Committee that a first draft of the guidelines had been issued for consultation in June 2016, and that the Quality Committee had considered this draft at its October meeting. Following feedback from various institutions the paper was withdrawn and it was decided to develop a more high-level set of statutory Quality Assurance guidelines, in addition to a supplementary document with more detailed good practice guidance. This document will be developed, in consultation and collaboration with all HEIs providing research degrees, once the next version of the statutory QA guidelines is agreed.

A second draft of the high-level QA guidelines has been developed accordingly and was issued for comment/feedback on the 18 November with responses due to QQI by the 5 December. This will be considered by the QQI Policies and Standards Committee on 9 December, after which there will be a further open consultation process in January before guidelines are finalized.

The Dean of Graduate Studies began by noting that the revised document is not greatly changed to the first draft, and he outlined three key concerns in relation to its content: (i) the document is too prescriptive, (ii) it makes demands on resources without recognising current financial constraints and (iii) it fails to recognise that research supervision is an 'art form'. Referring to section 6.3 of the document, which recommends that students are facilitated to present their work at conferences, he suggested that institutions may not be in a financial position to support this recommendation due to resource constraints. With regard to the procedural nature of the guidelines, he expressed concern that they will operate as a formula for good research supervision and do not acknowledge the more nuanced skills required to be a good supervisor, which are learned over time. He noted that the revised draft has moved away from the requirement for joint supervision, but that there is now a requirement for PhD supervisors

to have a PhD themselves. Additionally, the recommendation to have an independent expert at the confirmation meeting is not practical and eats into the pool of available external examiners in what can often be specialised areas. Finally, he noted that the document does not make a distinction between PhD, M.Sc. and M.Litt. students.

The Chair thanked the Dean and invited comment from the Committee. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- It is the responsibility of the external examiner to ensure that an individual thesis meets quality standards;
- The document does not specifically mention structured PhDs;
- It is not possible to meet the requirement for physical facilities for research outlined in section 5.5;
- The document does not specifically mention the responsibility of students to undertake the work (section 4.4);
- There is a danger that this will be a box ticking exercise;
- The guidelines do not address the key issue of bad supervision;
- The document should address students' expectations of their research experience;
- The document doesn't recommend that supervisors should be research active.

The Chair thanked the Dean and noted that feedback to QQI is due by the 5 December. The Academic Secretary expressed concern with the feedback process with the QQI, and suggested that a face-to-face meeting with the drafters of the paper might be more worthwhile. The Dean agreed that direct contact may be more productive and agreed to consider this approach.

*Action/Decision: The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed to consider making direct contact with QQI with regard to providing feedback on the White paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degree Programmes*

#### **QC/16-17/20 Update on review of Carlow College Undergraduate Humanities course proposal**

The Chair invited the Academic Secretary to provide an update on the status of the review of the Humanities Course Proposal from Carlow College.

The Academic Secretary reported that Carlow College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Trinity in November 2007 and that there have been some shared teaching activities between the two institutions since then. The College had invited Trinity to consider validating its suite of undergraduate programmes and one postgraduate programme, all of which are currently validated by the QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland). The first step in the process is an evaluation of the large BA in Humanities programme. A new curriculum proposal was developed and submitted to Trinity and this has been assessed by a panel appointed by the Dean of AHSS. The panel's constructive recommendations and feedback on the proposal have been communicated to Carlow College both in written form and in a face-to-face meeting with staff from Carlow. The next step will be the submission of a revised curriculum proposal, at which stage the panel will make a firm recommendation on whether the programme meets the standards for validation by Trinity.

The Chair thanked the Academic Secretary for her update. In the ensuing discussion the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences reported that the appointment of two shared academic posts had initiated discussions with Carlow regarding Trinity validation of their taught provision, and that there was keen interest in Carlow to bring this to fruition. He commented on the process in place as being fair and stressed the importance of following due diligence.

#### **QC/16-17/20 Any other business**

With regard to item QC/16-17/14 the Academic Secretary sought approval from the Dean of Graduate Studies to implement the proposed review of postgraduate procedures and processes, as the Dean had not been in attendance for that item.

*Action/Decision: The Dean of Graduate Studies approved the proposed approach to the quality review of postgraduate procedures and processes, and undertook to work with the Academic Secretary to develop a process for the review.*

The Academic Secretary drew the Committee's attention to the schedule of reviews for 2016/17 which had been circulated for information.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.