



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

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Quality Committee

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the
9 March 2017, 3.00 – 5.00pm, 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 Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer
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 Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services
Vice-President, Graduate Students' Union
Education Officer, Students' Union

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies

In attendance:

Dr Michael Wycherley, Director of BESS programme (for item QC/16-17/034)
Ms Sandra Kavanagh, Faculty Administrator, FEMS (for item QC/16-17/035)
Ms Lena Doherty, Faculty Administrator, HS (for item QC/16-17/036)
Professor Anne Marie Healy, Head of School, Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
(for item QC/16-17/037)
Professor Tim Savage, Associate Dean of On-line Education (for item QC/16-17/038)

The Senior Lecturer, acting as Chair, opened the meeting.

QC/16-17/032 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 6 February 2017

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 6 February 2017 were approved

QC/16-17/033 Matters arising

(QC/16-17/016) Policy/Procedure for Approval of Higher Education Institutions/Linked Providers' Quality Assurance Procedures - The Quality Officer reported that the Policy/Procedure for Approval of Higher Education Institutions/Linked Providers' Quality Assurance Procedures had been initiated with the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) and Marino Institute of Education (MIE). The RIAM has indicated their intention to submit their procedures on the 3 April 2017. The procedure calls for the establishment of a Linked Provider Quality Assurance working group to include nominee (s) from the Quality Committee. The Quality Officer invited interested Committee members to contact her in the first instance, noting that the final composition of the group will be determined by the Registrar.

(QC/16-17/023) Quality Committee performance – in relation to the discussion of the role of the Quality Committee in policy development, there was no further update on this item.

(QC/16-17/024) Progress Report on the Disability Service – the Chair reported that this will be considered by Board at its meeting on the 22 March.

(QC/16-17/025) White Paper on Statutory Guidelines for the QA of Research Degree Programmes - the Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the Dean of Graduate Studies' response to QQI, which was sent to the QQI after discussion at Graduate Studies Committee and circulated for information as B.1

(QC/16-17/028) Implementation Plan for the School of Computer Science and Statistics - approved by Council at its meeting on the 8 March.

(QC/16-17/029) Implementation Plan for the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) - approved by Council at its meeting on the 8 March

(QC/16-17/026) AHSS Annual Faculty Quality Report – the Deputy Librarian responded to a query from a Committee member which had arisen following discussion of the AHSS Annual Faculty Quality Report at the February meeting. The query concerned the impact of the change to the UK e-legal deposit system on the access and availability of library resources for students who are not based on-campus. The new legislation permits publishers to fulfill their legal deposit obligations through electronic submission of books but this has implications for on-line students, as the UK legislation only permits access to electronic content on designated computers in the Library where items can be viewed and printed under UK copyright law. The point was also made that the new legislation impacts how researchers can access library resources and that it particularly challenges the way reading is done in the Humanities, both for teaching and research. There are also issues around accessing archived material, and potential difficulties around accessing hardcopy works in the longer term.

The Deputy Librarian reported that the Library is addressing these issues by looking into patron-driven acquisition of hardcopy printed material, which has funding implications, and working with legal deposit websites to see what resources need to be archived for future research. The Quality Officer suggested that this issue should be included on the Library's risk register. The Academic Secretary emphasised the importance of addressing the archiving issue sooner rather than later, as it has long-term implications, and suggested that the Committee should have a role in highlighting and addressing this if it is not being dealt with elsewhere.

Action: The Deputy Librarian to liaise with the Librarian with regard to setting up a group to consider the implications of the UK e-legal deposit system.

QC/16-17/034 BESS programme review – implementation update

The Chair welcomed the BESS Programme Director Dr Michael Wycherley to the meeting to speak to an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the BESS Programme review.

Dr Wycherley reported that the Reviewers commended the programme's excellent reputation and student outcomes, but that they were concerned that the continued success of the programme is threatened due to inadequate resourcing of the Schools involved i.e. the School of Business and the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy.

He noted that some of the Reviewers' recommendations, for example to offer 5-credit modules for one term and streamline the examination process, tie in with planned changes as part of the Trinity Education Project (TEP).

With regard to the Junior Freshman business module, the Reviewers had suggested that this needs re-thinking. Dr Wycherley reported that the item was tabled at a Trinity Business School Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Committee meeting, and was explored with student representatives as part of the annual undergraduate quality review process, and that changes have now been proposed and implemented. Responding to the recommendation to appoint a dedicated Erasmus Officer in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, Dr Wycherley reported that additional administrative support has been provided by the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy for its Erasmus activities.

The Reviewers recommended that *'More needs to be done to preserve the multi-disciplinarity of the programme beyond the first year'* but the Programme Director argued that one of the strengths of the programme is that the Junior Freshman year gives students an introduction to the different disciplines before allowing them to specialise in the disciplines that specifically interest them in subsequent years. In this way the Programme is common entry rather than multidisciplinary. He noted that BESS students already gain breadth and a multidisciplinary perspective in two ways. Firstly, they are exposed to a range of different approaches at a basic level through the first year introductory modules. Secondly, students can take modules on related topics from a variety of disciplines, depending on their degree pathways. Additionally, the School of Business and the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy are exploring the introduction of transferrable skills across their suite of undergraduate programmes, which BESS students would benefit from in terms of added breadth.

The Chair thanked Dr Wycherley and invited comment from the Committee.

During the discussion the following key points were made:

- The recommendation that Junior Sophister results should count towards the final degree was welcomed by the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy and the Trinity Business School, and is being considered as part of the implementation of the Trinity Education Project (TEP) via the working group on progression and awards.
- Potential overassessment due to the introduction of more continuous assessment and end of term assessments should be dealt with at School level. Module assessment is at the discretion of the schools, as final marks are generated by an aggregation of grades.
- In terms of clustering of marks, consideration should be given to including third year results in the overall degree result classification, e.g. using the ratio 30:70 or 50:50. In addition, consideration should be given to differentiating more finely among outcomes for students by using a grade point average rather than the insufficiently differentiated degree classification system currently employed.

The reviewers recommended more training for Teaching Assistants (TAs), and the Academic Secretary noted that this recommendation arises frequently in reviews. In terms of taking a more practical approach to TA training, it was suggested that opportunities for observation and practice would greatly enhance the current training, which is predominately theoretical in nature.

In response to a query from the Academic Secretary as to plans to include placements as an integral part of the programme, the Director suggested that this is limited by the resources of the individual Schools. He reported that the Business School has introduced a module where students gain credit for reflecting on a practical piece of work and reported that a pilot placement programme is in development in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy.

The Academic Secretary advised the Committee that the implementation of the BESS recommendations will dovetail with the implementation of the TEP. It is hoped that a revised structure for the BESS programme will emerge from this review in a similar way to the structural reform of the undergraduate Science programme.

The Chair thanked the BESS Programme Director and closed the discussion.

The Health Sciences Faculty Administrator joined the meeting.

QC/16-17/035 Annual Faculty Quality Report – EMS

The Chair welcomed the FEM Faculty Administrator Ms Sandra Kavanagh to the meeting and advised that the FEMS Annual Faculty Quality Report was being considered a second time by the Committee as late circulation of the report to the February meeting had not allowed Committee members sufficient time to consider it in advance of the meeting.

The Dean of Engineering, Mathematics and Science, Professor Vinny Cahill, reported that there was significant change taking place in the Faculty, which was being driven by three strategic initiatives – (i) the impact of the TR071 review and the work of the undergraduate science education working group; (ii) the on-going work of the Trinity Education Project (TEP) and its impact on the overall framework and design of the science programme, in addition to institution-wide changes to the term structure and assessment methods; (iii) the E3 project which is combining elements of engineering, computer science and natural sciences to develop new programmes. Recent reviews of the School of Computer Science and Statistics and the School of Chemistry, along with a review of the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) and accreditation visits for professional schools have also resulted in a focus on quality assurance within the Faculty.

In terms of student feedback methods, the Dean reported that Schools in the Faculty have been using a variety of methods, including industry standard tools such as Qualtrix which is accessible in a range of formats on different devices, and easily centralised.

The Chair thanked the Dean and opened the discussion to the floor.

A Committee member queried why the rate of undergraduate module evaluation was higher (98%) than that for taught postgraduate module evaluation. The Dean clarified that 33% of PGT courses were formally evaluated in 2015-16, and that the remaining courses were evaluated through informal interviews with students. The Faculty Administrator noted that some updates to the module evaluation figures would be required before the consolidated report goes to Council and undertook to submit a revised version of the Annual Faculty Quality Report to the Committee reflecting these changes.

In relation to informal feedback meetings with students which were reported as taking place in some Schools, a Committee member stressed the importance of keeping a formal record of these

meetings in order to facilitate accurate and transparent follow-up on issues raised. In terms of focus groups, the Dean of Health Sciences asked whether good practice guidelines exist for the management of focus groups and suggested that some guidance around, for example, who is the best person to lead a focus group would be useful.

The Dean of FEMS reported a diversity of views in relation to the use of module evaluation at the Faculty Quality Executive meeting. He suggested that while module evaluations have a role in eliciting useful feedback on course content and curriculum, the big issues are identified at programme level through meetings with student reps and School Directors, as in the TR071 review. The Academic Secretary reported that during her recent visits to Schools she noted that very few Schools wished to do away with module evaluations completely, and suggested that there is a role for both module and programme evaluation.

The Deputy Librarian queried how the repeat issues identified in the AFQR would be addressed, and in particular the issues around Library access. The Dean of FEMS responded that issues around Library open hours can only be addressed at a College level. The Faculty Administrator also noted that work is on-going to address Library issues relating specifically to evening and part-time students, and that enhancements from a SITS perspective are required.

A Committee member commended the excellent initiatives outlined in the report and wondered what opportunities existed to share examples of good practice within and across the Faculties. The Dean of FEMS reported that ideas can be shared at the Faculty forum and the Faculty Administrator reported that the Faculty administrators meet informally after the AFQR process has concluded to compile and share good practice. The Quality Officer commended the approach taken to the FEMS Annual Quality Faculty Executive this year, which included representation by Heads of School, Directors of Teaching and Learning, and School Administrative staff. Presentations were made by the Faculty Student Convenor, the School of Computer Science and Statistics and the Quality Officer. The Chair thanked the Faculty Dean and Faculty Administrator, and closed the discussion.

Action:

- (i) an updated report to be submitted by the Faculty Administrator, for information, to the next meeting;*
- (ii) establish guidelines on the conduct of student focus groups.*

QC/16-17/036 Annual Faculty Quality Report – HS

The Chair welcomed the HS Faculty Administrator, Ms Lena Doherty, to the meeting and invited the Faculty Dean to speak to the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR), which was circulated with the papers.

The Dean reported that 100% of undergraduate modules were evaluated in the Faculty in 2015/16 but that response rates continue to be an issue. It is hoped that the piloting of Turning Technologies software across all three Faculties in 2017-18 that facilitates in-class module surveys will help to improve response rates. In relation to best practice for focus groups, the Dean agreed that a guidance document for focus groups would be useful.

The Dean emphasised that as the Faculty is educating healthcare professionals, additional processes to evaluate and improve quality are required, such as accreditation by professional bodies. These additional reporting requirements have workload implications and any opportunity to streamline the various quality processes would be welcomed by the Faculty.

Clinical learning is a key educational component for Schools in the Faculty, and the Dean reported that a recent review of clinical placements in the undergraduate Nursing programme confirmed that robust quality mechanisms are in place. She reported that the review of Clinical Placements will be extended to the other programmes in the Faculty, and be reported on in the 2017 Quality Report. The goodwill of clinical colleagues is vital to the success of clinical placements and their contribution is recognised through the Deans Award for Clinical Teaching, which was initiated in 2016.

The Faculty promotes inter-professional learning (IPL) as a means of emulating the workplace environment for students, as health professionals are required to work in a multidisciplinary team. The Faculty appointed an Assistant Professor for Inter-Professional Learning in 2016. A robust evaluation of the Faculty's activities to date in this area has been undertaken and will be a major feature of the 2017 Quality Report. Currently IPL it is optional for all but 3rd year medical students and if adopted more widely it needs to be done in a comprehensive way. The Dean reported that other schools in the Faculty have been asked to find space within their revised curricula for IPL assessments, and suggested that the use of on-line resources to support this should be investigated. She highlighted that feedback from medical students has revealed that they can experience difficulties communicating with other healthcare professionals in clinical environments which will need to be investigated further.

Other initiatives in which the Faculty is involved include the Dean's award for Teaching & Learning, introduced in 2016. The Dean reported that the first round of teaching innovations arising from this initiative are being used in classes this academic year, and will be captured in the evaluations to be included in the 2017 Quality Report

The Dean reported that in 2016 the Student's Union published a report on issues affecting the student experience in the BSc Midwifery programme. Arising from the report, a working group was established to address the students' concerns. The group developed an implementation plan to address the themes and recommendations arising from the report. The Group's work is ongoing and a number of outcomes have been achieved, including the development of a toolkit to support students and staff, the development and implementation of a Train the Trainers programme on positive safety culture, a review of the processes for student's evaluation of the Clinical Learning Environment and a review of preceptorship training, preparation and ongoing support. The Dean reported that there is interest in replicating this work across the whole faculty but that a different approach would be required in order to implement this on a Faculty-wide basis. The Education Officer is now meeting with Schools to progress this.

The Dean highlighted (i) the development of a revised template for data collection for the AFQR which would enable Schools to showcase the strategic direction their quality processes are taking, rather than focusing solely on retrospective data, (ii) space and physical infrastructure for the School of Nursing & Midwifery, (iii) Library borrowing rights for PG Certificate students and (iv) resourcing for Schools and for specific programmes as key escalations from the AFQR:

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Dean and invited comment from Committee members. In the ensuing discussion the importance of streamlining the quality review and accreditation processes was emphasised. The Quality Officer reported that discussions have been initiated with the Dental Council with a view to identifying opportunities for alignment and mutual recognition of standards, and that accreditation reports are submitted to quality reviewers to reduce the duplication of effort in preparing for a quality reviews. In terms of modifying the template, the Academic Secretary suggested that we need to include key metrics in a template and then allow for the inclusion of Faculty-specific sections with flexibility to include appropriate information. The Faculty Administrator reported that feedback from the School Administrators about the value of the AFQR has been positive.

In response to a query as to how issues with English language proficiency can arise when there are language requirements in place for course entry, the Faculty Administrator reported that difficulties primarily occur in clinical settings. Confidence issues, cultural differences, the use of technical language and the application of consultation skills were cited as possible contributing factors. It was suggested that this could be addressed if pre-entry language courses for these students could be more technically focused. The Academic Secretary stressed the need to understand these issues given the strategic drive to increase non-EU student numbers, and she suggested that we need a new policy to address this.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Dean and the Faculty Administrator, and suggested that a representative from the Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching in the School of Linguistics, Speech and Communication Sciences would be invited to attend a future meeting to speak to the issue.

Action: Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching to be invited to attend the April meeting.

QC/16-17/037 Review of the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

The Senior Lecturer welcomed the Head of the School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences Professor Anne-Marie Healy to speak to the recent review of the School. Professor Healy reported that the School welcomed the Reviewers' report and noted that many of the issues raised in the review had already been identified by the School in its strategic plan and self-assessment report (SAR). She noted the Reviewers' praise for the new UG Pharmacy degree, and agreed that a greater structure for graduate school life was necessary to better support postgraduate education and research. She suggested that College support would be required in the areas of international student recruitment and online education in order to deliver on the key revenue generating areas of the School's strategic plan, and reported that the School is liaising with the Global Relations Office to meet international collaborations and student recruitment targets. The recommended renewal of the School's Instructional Designer's contract is welcomed by the School, and would greatly facilitate the expansion of online content in existing programmes and the development of new continuing professional development courses. In terms of succession planning for the School's leadership, Professor Healy reported that the School is confident that it has suitable candidates to take over from the current Head with proper planning, and that it has the opportunity through current and imminent recruitment to add to this pool.

The Faculty Dean supported Professor Healy's comments and thanked her for her leadership of the School. She noted that the implementation of the new Pharmacy degree along with reduced resources has taken its toll on the School's research activities, and endorsed the reviewers' recommendations in this regard and the School's proposals to re-energise the School's research profile. She noted that while additional supports are required for online education, discussions are underway at College level to determine whether the appointment of specialized staff as Instructional Designers is the best use of resources.

In the ensuing discussion the following points were raised:

- The importance of succession planning and mentoring for new and future Heads of School was emphasised;
- The role of the Global Relations Office in the recruitment of non-EU students needs to be expanded to include representation at recruitment fairs abroad, as academics should not be tasked with making this initial contact with prospective students;
- Current College structures are not designed to provide timely and flexible support for the development and maintenance of on-line content in Schools as the Online entity has a

commercial brief that requires them to generate revenue. School's need an integrated system that can also support courses internally.

The Senior Lecturer thanked the Professor Healy and noted that the issue of support for on-line courses was an important one that needs to be addressed. The Academic Secretary advise that the review report would be forwarded to Council in April for approval.

QC/16-17/038 Virtual Learning Environment Policy (VLE)

The Chair welcomed the Associate Dean of Online Education Professor Tim Savage to the meeting to speak to the draft Policy on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Professor Savage reported that the need for a VLE Policy has emerged through a number of College-wide initiatives including (i) the Trinity Educational Project (Strand 5: Technology Enhanced Learning), (ii) the HEA Compact Performance Compact which includes a measure that 60% of all modules will have VLE activity and (iii) the IT Services VLE Project.

A Policy on the Virtual Learning Environment is required in order to ensure that students are provided with a modern educational experience and enables the College to build its digital capacity. It also support academics in enhancing their academic practice and facilitates participation and engagement of a more diverse student population such as mature students, part-time learners and international students.

Professor Savage outlined that the policy applies to credit bearing modules and programmes delivered to registered undergraduate and postgraduate students, and does not include extra mural activities. Additionally, the policy applies to teaching and learning activities and not to the technical service level to support the institutional VLE. The three core principles of the policy are (i) the establishment of a single institutional VLE platform for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes, (ii) that the VLE is key to Trinity's ongoing commitment to enhance the undergraduate and postgraduate educational experience through the promotion of appropriate technology enhanced learning and the meaningful use of technology and (iii) that digital capacity and innovation in the use of technology enhanced learning will be promoted and supported.

The Chair thanked Professor Savage and invited comments from Committee members. Responding to a query regarding the level of supports available to upskill staff to engage with and maintain on-line content, Professor Savage reported that basic courses would be provided by E-Learning around uploading core content. He advised that the policy aims to engage academics at a basic level initially and that more advanced engagement in relation to technology enhanced teaching and learning would follow once the Policy was embedded. In terms of potential barriers to uptake of the Policy, a Committee member reported difficulties experienced by Erasmus students registering and getting online. Professor Savage advised that registration issues would be dealt with through the Service-level agreement in place between the academic registry and e-learning.

In relation to section 7.1.3 of the Policy which recommends the use of in-built learning tools rather than externally available third party tools, it was suggested that the use of third party software may raise data protection and record management issues and that this needs to be addressed in the policy. A member queried whether reliance on in-built tools would pose problems in the future in terms of transferring to a new VLE and provision of training on new systems, as currently CAPSL training is mostly focussed on Blackboard. Professor Savage reported that this had been included in the VLE tender where a key package was migration of content and learning activities from one VLE to another. He suggested that with increased adoption of VLE standards, content should be more easily transferable between systems. He emphasised that HEA guidelines must be followed in this regard and that the tender process was transparent. He suggested that a central locus is important

from a student perspective and helps increase adoption by academics. Giving students one place to go to will help to drive adoption and improve the baseline experience for students.

The Academic Secretary reiterated the need to have flexibility in the technological space as this is real engagement is achieved. She queried whether the policy addresses the issue of assisting staff to change and become familiar with systems. Citing section 7.1.2 of the policy, Professor Savage highlighted that the use of additional environments (where pedagogically required) is not precluded by the policy. The Academic Secretary stressed the need to address the use of alternative systems, as the likelihood is that academics who already use third party tools will continue to do so and will remain under the radar if this is not acknowledged in the policy. Professor Savage suggested that this is an implementation issue and the Senior Lecturer agreed, but recommended that the issue be foregrounded in contextualising the policy. She stressed that while it is important to have a policy it is equally important to maximise interaction with the VLE. Professor Savage acknowledged the work of the VLE Policy working group and the Chair reported that the policy, incorporating the suggested changes arising from this discussion, would now proceed to Undergraduate Studies Committee and Postgraduate Studies Committee for consideration.

QC/16-17/039 Estates Strategy and Space Audit

This item was deferred to the next meeting

QC/16-17/040 For information

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the Annual institutional Quality Report and the Response to the QQI White Paper on Quality Assurance of Research Degrees, both circulated for information.

QC/16-17/041 Any other business

The Quality Officer reported that the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) was live until 26 March and encouraged members to publicise it amongst their students.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.