

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2010

Present: Dr David Lloyd (*Dean of Research and Chair*)  
Professor Frank Barry (*Director of Research, School of Business*)  
Professor Kevin Rockett (*Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music*)  
Dr Aidan Seery (*Director of Research, School of Education*)  
Prof Darryl Jones (*Head, School of English*)  
Professor Jane Ohlmeyer (*Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities*)  
Dr Clemens Ruthner (*Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies*)  
Dr Caoimhin MacMaolain (*Director of Research, School of Law*)  
Professor Ailbhe Ni Chasaide (*Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences*)  
Professor Malcolm MacLachlan (*Director of Research, School of Psychology*)  
Dr Suzanne Cahill (*Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy*)  
Dr Norbert Hintersteiner (*Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics*)  
Dr Ed Lavelle (*Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology*)  
Professor Yurii G'oungo (*Director of Research, School of Chemistry*)  
Dr Carl Vogel (*Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics*)  
Professor Anil Kokaram (*Director of Research, School of Engineering*)  
Professor Seamus Martin (*Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology*)  
Dr Conor Houghton (*Director of Research, School of Mathematics*)  
Professor Celia Holland (*Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences*)  
Professor Igor Shvets (*Director of Research, School of Physics*)  
Professor Derek Sullivan (*Director of Research, School of Dental Science*)  
Professor Padraic Fallon (*Director of Research, School of Medicine*)  
Dr Carsten Ehrhardt (*Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*)  
Professor Poul Holm (*Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub*)  
Ms Dearbhail Lawless (*President of the Graduate Students' Union*)

In attendance: Ms Doris Alexander (*Research Development Officer*)  
Ms Deirdre Savage (*Nominee of Treasurer*)  
Dr Camilla Kelly (*Research Development Office & Minute Secretary to the Committee*)  
Ms Colette Keleher (*Nominee, Director of Research, IIS*)

Apologies: Dr James Callaghan (*Associate Director of Trinity Research & Innovation, ADTRI, and Secretary*)  
Professor Veronica Campbell (*Dean of Graduate Studies*)  
Professor Catherine Comiskey (*Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery*)  
Dr Andrew Finlay (*Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy*)  
Professor John Boland (*Director of Research, CRANN*)  
Professor Louis Brennan (*Director of Research, IIS*)  
Prof. Shane O'Mara (*Director of Research, TCIN*)  
Dr Patrick Geoghegan (*Associate Dean of Research, ADoR*)  
Dr John Walsh (*Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association*)

### Section A

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the reconstituted Research Committee. The Committee agreed the agenda.

#### RS/10-11/17 Minutes of 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010

The minutes of the meeting were approved.

#### RS/10-11/18 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Item RS/10-11/01: Research Centres. Since no-one present at this meeting was party to the last Research Committee meeting, this action will be put onto a future meeting. The ADoR will present the findings of his information gathering exercise to the next meeting, which will take place on the 18/1/2011

*Action: The ADoR to present his report on Research Centres to the next Research Committee meeting on the 18/1/2011.*

Item RS/10-11/02: Research Funding Projections. This item is on the agenda for today's meeting.

Item RS/10-11/04: Web-based Contracts Assessment Form. Delivery of this has been made a priority and is expected sometime in 2011.

Item RS/10-11/06: Open Access Policy for Publications. This item will be raised at another meeting.

Item RS/10-11/07: Research Strategy Implementation. This item is on the agenda for today's meeting.

Item RS/10-11/08: Update on Research Proposal & Award Management System (RPAMS). Delivery of RPAMS is back in progress.

Item RS/10-11/09: PRTL Cycle 5 Update. The Dean of Graduate Studies held a meeting between Heads of PhD programmes and Pls. All feedback has been passed to the HEA.

### RS/10-11/19 Research Funding Projections

The Committee noted a memorandum and document from the Chair, dated 24<sup>th</sup> November 2010, outlining 5 year projections on research income, overhead and related fee income, which were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. A synopsis paper detailing the financial implications arising from changes to funding agency policy on provision of EU postgraduate fees was also circulated. The documents are intended to bring the scale of challenge facing College to the committee's attention & to highlight key future pressure points in the system, so as to best inform policy decisions enacted by this group.

The DoR spoke to the documents. The documents were prepared as an information exercise to give an idea of the current situation as compared last year. Page five of the document 'Research Funding Projections and Trends' has the most important information. The College experienced a significant reduction in the value of research contracts signed in 2010 (€53.5M) compared with 2009 (€103.3m) - a reduction of 47%. The change is not related to one large award, but rather to available funding. This could be viewed externally as a negative reflection of College's research intensiveness. Income from the EU Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) showed an increase, but has not compensated for the drop in Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funding. As available exchequer funding contracts, there will be a push to prioritize research areas. College needs to be careful that it sets its own priorities rather than being forced into areas that are not relevant.

The Treasurer's Nominee added that the figures were prepared with a conservative mindset. They show a worst-case scenario; however the current economic climate would suggest that they are probably close to the truth. Over the last year, SFI has made less awards and smaller awards compared to previous years. On a positive note, College is as competitive as it was in terms of % take nationally. In 2009, the SSTI budget was cut by 15%-20% cut - this has had a knock on affect on SFI. Trends in funding etc will be easier and quicker to track once RPAMS comes online.

In light of this report and the current climate, College needs to put a structure in place that will focus on funding outside of Exchequer funding. There is already talk of a 'super' Government agency being formed that will be more focused on research that yields near term results.

Exchequer funding showed a large decrease, down 50%. Non-exchequer funding did increase, but only by 30%, not enough to compensate for the drop in Exchequer funding. College also needs to be aware of the funding situation in Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences (AHSS) - in 2009, the ratio of funding for Sciences versus AHSS was 80:20; in 2010, it was 90:10.

Doris Alexander noted that FP7 funding is back-loaded so more will become available in coming years. The budget is larger now than originally envisaged. In order to maintain the national target of

1.25% of available funds, Ireland now needs to double its participation rates in FP7.

The Chair also commented that College needs to be aware of indirect costs. College is not getting less contracts, but the amount of money associated with each contract is falling. The administrative costs remain the same.

The Chair then turned to the subject of academic fees. National agencies (e.g. SFI, Health Research Boards) are now making contributions to fees rather paying fees in full. The funds for the shortfall will have to come from somewhere. It was also noted that the current fee structure is agreed with HEA based on quality of degree.

The Chair informed the Committee that the estimated shortfall over next 4 years (313 students) will be in the region of €1 million. The only option open to College at the moment is to ask students to make up the shortfall in fees themselves, possibly from their stipends. However, this may not be feasible given that stipends may also fall - the tax net on stipends may drop in the budget to €15.2K.

The President of the Graduate Students' Union and the Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub, both objected to the idea that students be asked to make up any shortfall in fees. The Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub, also noted that the cost structure of PhD fees needs to be examined.

The Chair noted that the Graduate Studies Committee is currently examining this situation and will request an update.

The Director of Research, School of Chemistry, asked for clarification in relation to fees and FP7 grants. In reply, the Treasurer's Nominee stated that a clarification would be issued.

The Chair also noted that many agencies are also looking at allowing running costs relating to infrastructural elements to be costed as direct elements in grants; however this will mean there is less funding available for other items.

The Director of Research, School of Engineering, commented that Ireland is going through a situation now that other EU countries have already gone through i.e. when national funding is easily available, researchers do not pursue international agencies. Once the national agency funds start to dry up, priorities shift towards non-exchequer agencies.

*Action: Nominee of Treasurer to clarify situation on whether fees are an eligible cost in FP7.*

*Action: Chair to request an update from the Graduate Studies Committee on student fees.*

The Committee noted a briefing paper for the establishment of a consultative forum of research funders, which was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The paper outlines the external actions currently underway to establish priority areas of focus for Irish Research. Also circulated was a memorandum issued by College to Forfás in response to a request for information, and a request from the Chair for members to indicate their Schools' mapping to the thematic areas suggested in item RS/10-11/21.

The DoR spoke to the documents. The Committee was informed that there is now a national steering group in place that has been asked to identify national trends and needs, and to subsequently come up with research priorities that will yield economic returns. Hence College could be put in a situation where it will be asked to conform to priorities that are not wholly aligned to its own interests. The School mapping exercise is a consequence of this i.e. we should be clear what our priorities are before we are forced to fit in with priorities that are not in line with our own strategic plans.

The Chair noted that some of the Schools have not been ambitious enough in their mapping. People need to think more broadly in relation to mapping to the thematic areas suggested. The intention is to then use the RSS to map staff papers and grants to the thematic areas. The ultimate goal of the mapping exercise is for College to identify its own areas that it thinks are socially and economically important. The final report will go to Forfás.

The Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities, noted that some of the thematic areas are a not very clear in their meaning, for example the 'human condition'.

The Director of Research, School of Physics commented that the word 'nanoscience' is a little vague for mapping purposes, advanced materials might be a better phrase to use.

Some of the Committee asked where energy-related research should go - should it go under 'sustainable society and cities?' The Chair responded that we need to be careful about the phrases that are used for mapping - there have to be outputs to match the areas that are identified.

Committee members also noted that molecular medicine covers more than just cancer, and that environmental-related research wasn't covered.

It was asked how these 14 themes related to those identified in the College's Strategic Plan? In reply, the Chair noted that the 14 priority areas did indeed map to the 8 identified in the Strategic Plan, they just give more breadth

The Chair reiterated that the priority themes were chosen to be as broad as possible so that all topics could be included. The themes are not set in stone and can be modified. The Chair also noted that

College needs to be aware of the makeup of the panel that will make the final decisions on national priorities.

Members of the Committee also commented that we need to be wary of being 'pigeon-holed' into themes, and that it is important that we have measurable outputs to back up research priorities.

The Chair concluded by requesting more feedback on the documents and mapping exercise by e-mail.

*Action: Committee members to e-mail further comments to the Chair.*

#### **RS/10-11/21 Implementation of Research Elements of College Strategic Plan**

The Committee noted a document from the Chair, dated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010, which was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. The document outlines a proposal for the implementation of those elements of College's current strategic plan that relate to knowledge generation and transfer. The document focuses on 3 elements: targeted research programmes; internal processes and research-related activities. Comments received to date on this proposal were also circulated. The Chair informed the Committee that the version of this document that was circulated prior to the meeting differs very slightly to the original, and outlined these areas.

The Chair gave a short presentation summarizing the main points of the document. The document was originally conceived against a backdrop of catastrophic national research funding decline, ameliorated by a possible resurgence in commitment to funding, and complicated by emergence of a national research funding exercise. It must be assessed in this context and informed by a desire to execute research of quality and consequence. Any implementation cannot be to the detriment of the individual scholar. Thematic domains are there for discussion - if there is no community support they will not fly. College needs to feed into the national prioritisation exercise, however, this is not an exercise in constructing an internal prioritisation list.

The Committee was then invited to consider the proposal, also taking into consideration items RS/10-11/19 and RS/10-11/20.

The Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities commented that the document was a useful starting point, but that the research areas needed more definition. The Director also suggested that the Provost's initiative on creative arts and technology might be more explicitly highlighted. The Chair confirmed that the intent was to include this initiative - manifest in both digital humanities, digital media & arts, and the cultural heritage headings. There was also a comment that the Innovation Alliance and its relationship with Arts and Humanities needed clarification, the expectation of what colleagues are expected to deliver should be clear. College must be careful with its

international reputation - we must always be aligned with excellence, and not focus just on alliances for strategic reasons. The Chair recognised the validity of this position and pointed out that the Innovation Alliance was not a factor in the paper under consideration.

The Director of Research, School of Chemistry noted that the structure envisaged for each programme was similar to that already in place at CRANN.

Members of the Committee were largely supportive of the document, but raised concerns that thematic champions would be more likely to champion their own ideas. Others commented that the champions suggested in the document may not necessarily be the right ones.

In response to these concerns, the Chair noted that it was not intended that these thematic programmes would sit in isolation and that champions' interactions with the community would be mediated.

The floor commented that mediating champions might be problematic and also that individuals that do not want to participate in these programmes should not be forced. The Chair fully agreed, noting that any coercion would be destructive.

Another Committee member suggested the idea of co-champions. In response, the Chair commented that the process for implementation was not prescribed and that all suggestions were welcome.

The Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music, raised issue of research leave.

The Director of Research, School of Physics, asked what the ultimate purpose of the exercise was. The Chair responded that it was necessary so that College would have a concise structure that it could market. The Director of Research, School of Physics, in reply noted that outputs only come from research groups, not from formulated programmes. The same applies to large companies. This should be kept in mind.

On the points of the document relating to research supports, Doris Alexander noted her objections to devolution of proposal signoff, commenting that it would create more problems than it would solve, that RPAMS needed to be in place in the first instance.

The floor commented that devolution of proposal signoff to the directors of research was not a good idea, largely because it would just create more work for them. One Committee member did state the idea was a good one, that if a researcher cannot complete a grant application properly, and that it needed to be checked, the researcher did not deserve the grant.

The floor suggested that for routine, simple, applications, signoff could be local.

The Chair commented that if support was there to move towards the large thematic structures, the support of the Research Development Office (RDO) would be required in terms of locating suitable funding etc.

The Director of Research, School of Engineering, noted that the key issue was to free up time in the RDO. The Chair agreed and suggested that this issue be pursued by a subgroup of the Committee - perhaps 5 Committee members, the ADoR, and the Research Development Manager.

Regarding the move to targeted research programmes, the committee accepted and supported the document and its intent & sanctioned progression to the next phase of implementation - champions / framework & townhall meetings.

In relation to points on intellectual property management contained in the document, the Chair invited feedback by e-mail.

*Action: Committee to report further feedback to the Chair by e-mail.*

*Action: DoR to convene champions and appraise them of their role & views of RC members*

*Action : Subgroup of the Committee to look at methods to free-up time in RDO to best support implementation of the programme - 5 Committee members, the ADoR (chairing), and the Research Development Manager.*

## Section B

### RS/10-11/22 Science Gallery Activities and Opportunities

Michael-John Gorman gave a short presentation to the Committee outlining the past, current, and future activities of the Science Gallery.

## Section C

### RS/10-11/23 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

- (i) implementation of open access publication policy
- (ii) review of Research Centres
- (iii) review of Good Research Practice policy (as per BD/09-10/51) Oct 2010
- (iv) annual review of Research Committee and its terms of reference



(v) commitments against the Research Committee Budget

Signed: .....

Date: .....