

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, Tuesday 14 January 2020  
Arts Building Conference Room 2026

MINUTES

**Attendees:**

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Chair)

Professor Andrew Bowie, Associate Dean of Research

*Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*

Professor Brian Lucey, Director of Research, School of Business

Professor Orla Flanagan, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts

Professor Ann Devitt, Director of Research, School of Education

Professor David O'Shaughnessy, Director of Research, School of English

Professor Ahuvia Kahane, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities

Professor Blanaid Clarke, Director of Research, School of Law

Professor Irene Walsh, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Studies

Professor Peter Stone, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Professor Trevor Spratt, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Professor Daniele Pevarello, Director of Research, School of Religion

*Faculty of Engineering, Maths and Science*

Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Cairtriona Lally, Director of Research, School of Engineering

Professor Adrian Bracken, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Stefan Sint, Director of Research, School of Mathematics

Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences

*Faculty of Health Sciences*

Professor Jeff O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science

Professor Joan Lalor, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor Lidia Tajber, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

*Trinity Research Institutes*

Professor Aideen Long, Director, Trinity Translational Medicine Institute

Professor Kingston Mills, Director, Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute

Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub

*In Attendance*

Dr Oliviero Gobbo, Trinity Research Staff Association

Shaz Oye, President, Graduate Students Union

Mr David O'Shea, Director of Operations, Trinity Development and Alumni

Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist

Mr Leonard Hobbs, Director of Trinity Research and Innovation

Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

**Apologies:**

Professor Lorraine Leeson, Associate Dean of Research

Professor Emma Creagh, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology

Professor Thorfinnur Gunnlaugsson, Director of Research, School of Chemistry

Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association

Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement

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<b>Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval</b>	
<b>A.1</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>Minutes of the previous meeting on December 10<sup>th</sup> were circulated in advance and were accepted as read.</p>
<b>A.2</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p><b>RS/19-20/3</b> Postdocs and Teaching: an update would be provided to committee during this meeting.</p> <p><b>RS/19-20/9</b> Dean of Research Awards: DOR noted that following discussion at December’s meeting, the research awards had been reconfigured and would be opened for nominations this week. Thanked the committee for their input and encouraged them to submit nominations.</p> <p>It was noted that all other matters arising would be addressed at future meetings as space allows.</p>
<b>A.3</b>	<p><b>Update from the Dean of Research</b></p> <p>The Dean of Research provided the committee with an update on recent activities. DOR attended the LERU research meeting in The Hague in December. Key topics discussed at that meeting included the Horizon Europe budget, recent changes in personnel at the European Commission, the European Innovation Council, and open scholarship. DOR noted that the Dutch are significantly advanced in relation to open scholarship and those learnings will be fed back to the Open Scholarship Taskforce here. DOR also noted that the final FET Open call of Horizon 2020 will have an increased budget and encouraged anyone whose work falls under its remit to consider applying. DOR also noted that being part of this LERU group is of huge benefit to Trinity.</p> <p>DOR noted that two SALI chairs (<b>RS/19-20/7</b>) were awarded to Trinity, one in Mathematics and one in Political Science and Economics. Noted again that these are additional posts. Feedback from the competition has not been received yet but will be used to develop submissions for the second round. DOR also noted that the SFI Professorship scheme has recently been updated.</p> <p>DOR noted congratulations to John Boland who secured an ERC Proof of Concept grant, and also to David Igoe and Eleanor Denny who both secured grants from the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).</p> <p><b>RS/19-20/6</b> It was noted that the application to host a European Researchers’ Night event at Trinity has been submitted. DOR noted that the ODRES has taken responsibility for the project and will be working to integrate it into communications plans for the year ahead.</p>
<b>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</b>	
<b>B.1</b>	<p><b>Postdocs and Teaching RS/19-20/3</b></p> <p>Dean of Research and Director of Human Resources</p> <p>Director of HR, Antoinette Quinn, joined the meeting to provide a progress update on the issues surrounding postdoc contracts and teaching. HR has taken external advice with a view to drawing up a new template. Committee was informed that this template</p>

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	<p>would be available soon and would move Trinity to a position where postdocs will be able to teach when it is appropriate for them to do so while also protecting the university's interests. Director of HR also noted that a development plan will be incorporated with a view to providing postdocs with a range of transferrable skills. It was also noted that line managers will have to manage staff and strictly adhere to contract end dates.</p> <p>The committee welcomed this development and thanked the Director of HR for her efforts in this regard. During discussion, a number of questions were raised including whether these new contracts would apply to people already in post. It was suggested that a supplementary letter could be issued to existing staff to bring them in alignment with the new conditions. Issues around records of training were also discussed with suggestions for training transcripts or an e-portfolio in order to give postdocs independent access to their own record. The committee also noted that any in-house development plan or training should be voluntary to avoid duplication of effort, as many researchers employed on external grants will be required to complete specific training as part of grant agreements. The committee also discussed the idea of who should decide whether teaching is appropriate. It was noted that many postdocs are employed as full-time researchers and as such extra teaching hours would impact on their research obligations or see them breach working time directives. DOR and Director of HR noted that the new contract is to provide clarity where it is needed but is not intended to make teaching a requirement for all postdocs, and any decisions relating to same have to be taken at school level. The committee noted that the definition of teaching varies across disciplines. It was also noted that the development plan should be heavily promoted in order to reinforce that a postdoc is not a career. The TRSA also asked if they could be consulted in relation to the career development plan.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> DOR noted that the committee would benefit from having a separate discussion about the nature of postdocs.</p>
<b>B.2</b>	<p><b>Application for Trinity Centre for Constitutional Governance (Tri.CON) RS/19-20/11</b> Aileen Kavanagh</p> <p>A proposal to establish the Trinity Centre for Constitutional Governance was circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting. Professor Aileen Kavanagh joined the meeting to discuss the proposal with the committee. Prof. Kavanagh noted that it was a requirement of her position to establish such a centre, and she provided an overview of its proposed activities. It was noted that the centre would be an interdisciplinary project that would touch on many different areas beyond law, and would study the broader forces that lead to constitutional change in Ireland and around the world. It was also noted that while law schools by their nature tend to be jurisdiction-specific, this centre would also be able to engage with issues of international law.</p> <p>The committee welcomed the proposal and discussed a number of topics with Prof. Kavanagh including how the centre would conduct outreach and its potential impact. The committee also suggested that in terms of collaborating in Trinity, natural connections would exist with Nursing and Midwifery, and other disciplines in health sciences for example, and encouraged the centre to look beyond AHSS schools. There was also some discussion as to whether the proposed name conveyed precisely what the centre's aims are, with 'Constitutional Governance' perhaps a discipline-specific term that might not translate well.</p>

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	<p>The committee unanimously agreed to approve the establishment of the centre.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> The Policy on Trinity Research Centres would be circulated to the Research Committee.</p>
<p><b>B.3</b></p>	<p><b>Spotlight: School of English</b> David O'Shaughnessy</p> <p>David O'Shaughnessy presented an overview of the research activity of the School of English. The School has three Chairs, including the oldest Chair in English literature in the world. It currently has around 40 PhD students. Until recently the school offered six M.Phil programmes but following a review, this was reduced to three: Irish Writing; Creative Writing; and Children's Literature. DOS noted that the School is actively working to make more use of its location in Dublin city given its designation as a UNESCO City of Literature. The school consistently performs well in the QS subject rankings.</p> <p>It was noted that the school is 100% research active with a strong publication record with a good mix between Irish and international publishers. DOS gave some background as to the types of publication that are the gold standard in the discipline, and noted that staff in the school have produced several critical editions of texts that form the foundation of specific fields of study, such as Prof. Sam Slote's annotated edition of <i>Ulysses</i>. The amount of research and work that goes into producing these critical editions is often not fully understood by people outside of the discipline. It was also noted that while research in English does not require large grants, staff in the school nonetheless recognise their obligation to apply for funding and do so where appropriate.</p> <p>DOS noted a number of threats to the school's research culture, including lack of recognition for creative arts practice. It was noted that these activities are important to Trinity but are not always recognised in terms of advancement and promotions. Postdoc integration is an ongoing problem, with many new arrivals to Trinity noting frustration with slow administrative processes and unnecessary delays. Similar delays also affect PhD students. Delays accessing materials in Early Printed Books and manuscripts is also an issue, especially for visiting scholars who may have limited time on campus.</p> <p>The committee discussed a number of the points raised during the presentation including collaborations across schools, better integration and support structures for postdocs, and how research is funded and conducted in a discipline such as English.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> Helen Shenton to present to the committee about the Library's plans for a new research study centre</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> DOR to report in more detail on efforts to establish better supports for postdocs</p>
<p><b>B.4</b></p>	<p><b>TTEC Early Activation Update RS/19-20/12</b> Leonard Hobbs</p> <p>Leonard Hobbs provided the committee with an update on the TTEC Early Activation project including the plans to establish an Innovation Hub. The various different spaces that will be made available were presented, as were the commitments that Trinity has</p>

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	<p>to various stakeholders involved in the project. LH focused on plans for the next 12-18 months which will see a number of units refurbished with a view to establishing a stronger presence on the site. It was noted that significant activity does already take place with the Advanced Microscopy Lab, Learnovate, and the Lir located there. LH noted that a programme of activities would be a focus this year, with Dogpatch Labs running some events. Other partnerships with the Long Room Hub, Science Gallery, and Tangent are also being explored.</p> <p>The committee discussed in detail a number of issues that were raised during the presentation. These included the issue of access to space and rates particularly in relation to Trinity researchers. The committee was concerned that there would be no incentive for Trinity researchers to utilise the space if they could not avail of preferential rates, and noted that similar initiatives at DCU and NUI Galway had preferential rates for staff. The committee asked how the space would be managed and accessed. LH confirmed that a director would be hired. The committee asked how the project as a whole aids research as opposed to commercialisation. It was also noted that similar projects in other cities have failed because ‘access to knowledge’ was not included in the early stages. It was noted that unless there is space on site where the Library’s electronic resources can be accessed then the project may not succeed in meeting its goals. The committee also asked how the overall project impacts on the Research Office and whether further strain would be placed on an already stretched unit.</p> <p><b>ACTION</b> Research-specific presentation to be brought to committee</p>
<b>Section C – Items for Noting</b>	
<b>C.1</b>	<b>Items for Noting</b>
<b>C.2</b>	<b>Items for future discussion</b>
<b>C.3</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>RS/18-19/11</b> Professor Brian Lucey raised a concern relating to the impact the latest iteration of the research ethics forms will have on the approvals process for research projects, and noted that the School of Business is not in the position to work with the system as it is proposed. The School of Nursing and Midwifery and School of Engineering noted similar issues. DOR agreed that this was an urgent item that will be addressed as soon as possible.</p>