

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**11:00, 18 April 2023**

**Boardroom, Trinity Business School**

**MINUTES**

**In attendance**

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)  
Professor Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research  
Professor Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research  
Professor Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research  
Professor Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education  
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English  
Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Mary Cosgrove, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
Professor Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
Professor Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology  
Professor Sharyn O'Halloran, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Eburne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies  
Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Frank Wellmer, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Sergey Mozgovoy, Director of Research, School of Mathematics  
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Anne-Marie Healy, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Kingston Mills, Director, Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute  
Professor Aideen Long, Director, Trinity Translational Medicine Institute  
Professor Rhodri Cusack, Director, Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience  
Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, Senior Dean  
Gordon Elliott, Senior Patents and Licensing Manager on behalf of Trinity Innovation  
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association  
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office  
Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division  
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services  
Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist  
Doris Alexander, Associate Director of European Engagement, Trinity Research  
Kevin Ryan, Portfolio Manager (Procurement), Financial Services Division  
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

**Apologies**

Professor Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Deirdre Ahern, Director of Research, School of Law  
Professor Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry  
Professor Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering  
Professor Yvonne Buckley, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, School of Physics and Director of CRANN  
Professor Hal Duncan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science  
Professor Eve Patten, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub  
Siobhán O'Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Human Resources  
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development, Office of the Dean of Research

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Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval

<b>A.1</b>	<b>Minutes</b>  Minutes from the meeting of March 14 <sup>th</sup> were circulated in advance and were approved with the following amendment.  Under item C.1 – Memo from HR re researcher recruitment a minor clarification to the wording was incorporated to note that:  “The Committee was asked to endorse the proposed approach from HR so that consultation could proceed. DOR and committee agreed with a two-stage process proposed by SO’S that would begin with consultation on Open, Transparent, Merit Based recruitment, with a second stage that would involve more detailed proposals to the committee <i>in relation to the requirements for applying for the HRS4R Award (HR Strategy in Research Excellence).</i> ”
<b>A.2</b>	<b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b>  <b>RS/22-23/9 Procurement issues:</b> The committee was advised that the Dean of Research met with Ben Hartnett and Kevin Ryan from Procurement to discuss issues affecting research and discuss ways these can be addressed. While the meeting had initially been to discuss software licensing issues, it became apparent that there are many other issues that need to be examined. The Office of the Dean of Research and Procurement would now work to identify solutions and establish smoother processes.  In response to a question from the committee regarding the issues with Qualtrics licences, the following was noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Procurement would never stop researchers from using their preferred research tools. The main problem here was that Qualtrics was refusing to sell licences to Trinity under the current payment model. It was noted that the price quoted by Qualtrics for a site-wide licence was prohibitive when compared with other similar suppliers.</li><li>• Ethical considerations in terms of how research is conducted was not the remit of Procurement. It was noted that the Trinity licence for SurveyMonkey was fully compliant in terms of GDPR, data protection etc.</li><li>• Qualtrics service would only be withdrawn if Qualtrics refused to renew a licence to an individual.</li></ul> <b>RS/22-23/3</b> DOR noted to the committee that Trinity had now signed up to COARA.  <b>RS/22-23/10 New national funding agency:</b> DOR noted thanks to those colleagues who responded to a request for input on the topic of the new funding agency after last month’s meeting. These responses were now incorporated in a paper from the ODRES, a draft of which had been shared with the committee and would form the basis of a response due to be submitted to the IUA later this week. It was agreed that a shared folder would be set up where the committee could access all the relevant documents including Heads of Bill, Impact 2030, and Trinity responses.  <b>ACTION: shared folder to be circulated after the meeting</b>

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**Section B - Items for Discussion Only**

**B.1**

**Data Analytics and Strategic Initiatives Unit**

Geraldine Anderson, Head of DAASI Unit

*Geraldine Anderson joined the meeting for this item*

A brief overview of the work of the DAASI unit was presented to the committee. It was noted that its core functions are to

- Identify and monitor strategic data
- Report on strategic data to College Management and others
- Build relationships with and between data users

The committee was advised that a Data Working Group had been established with membership drawn from the main data users across the College. Its aim was to identify the main datasets and their timings, main data outputs and their timings and use, and to create a coordinated approach to data across the College. The ultimate aim of DAASI was to create “Data Dictionary” for Trinity that would make it easier to identify who held what data. DAASI would also be looking to align with IT services in relation to data and systems.

In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:

- It had not yet been decided how information about the data sets would be documented. Members of the committee asked if a standardised format or catalogue would be used in order to allow for ease of search. The committee was advised that work was currently being done to identify how best to catalogue data sets.
- Schools have to generate significant amounts of data in preparation of their own strategies. This was an acknowledged concern and the committee was advised that the DAASI unit was ultimately aiming to provide standardised datasets and templates that would significantly ease this burden.
- Members of the committee asked if part of the unit’s remit would be to digitise paper forms such as the RAS. The committee was advised that this was not part of DAASI’s current activities. DOR confirmed that the Office of the Dean of Research was examining this. Elaine Sharkey also advised that FSD was examining new online systems to reduce paperwork and streamline systems in this regard.
- It was confirmed that a member of the Athena Swan team was part of the Data Working Group. It was acknowledged that there is a serious paucity of data for Athena Swan applications – it was intended to address this have central databases available for everyone.
- It was confirmed that DAASI linked in with the Data Protection Office and had responsibility for GDPR in ASD.
- It was suggested that the Library should also be part of the Data Working Group.
- Members of the committee noted that it would be worthwhile to observe trends in data governance. It was noted that Trinity has a research centre that does work in that area and could assist with future proofing.
- It was noted that the goal to integrate data sets and have greater oversight of where data was held would make it easier to respond to last minute external requests.

DOR and committee welcomed the establishment of the unit and thanked GA for the presentation.

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<b>B.2</b>	<p><b>RS/20-21/4 Research Ethics Application Management System update</b> Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research</p> <p>An update on the progress of REAMS from the Research Ethics Policy Committee was circulated in advance of the meeting. Prof. Fallon gave the committee a brief overview of the system is progressing. It was noted that he inherited the project in February and the first task was to complete an audit of the applications that had gone through the system. It was noted that many issues on the application side of the system could be addressed through training, but the back end of the system for RECs and reviewers is very cumbersome. The committee was advised that negotiations are ongoing with the provider to upgrade the system with a view to having a new version ready for September. It was noted that some RECs had reverted to using an old system developed as a pilot by IT which would not be supported after August. The committee was advised that not all requests for changes from RECs could be incorporated into REAMS but major work was being done to improve the system as quickly as possible.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It was acknowledged that there was a lag between custom/practice and the update of procedures and policies.</li><li>• School of Computer Science and Statistics had taken a dual approach, trialling REAMS with PhDs and academic staff while maintaining the existing IT system for undergraduates. Thanks were noted to IT Services for facilitating this. It was noted that improved communications regarding REAMS was welcomed, and the importance of communicating as quickly as possible exactly which issues would be resolved in the upgrade would assist schools so that they could adapt their own procedures accordingly.</li><li>• Some members of the committee noted they had found REAMS to be very useful and had not had any major issues with it.</li><li>• It was noted that some workflow issues on REAMS had resulted in an increase in workload for REC chairs. School of Nursing and Midwifery noted that their old system had been much more efficient and the chair approval process had effectively doubled in REAMS.</li></ul> <p>It was noted that regular updates on the progress would continue to be provided, and that communications with RECs would be prioritised.</p>
<b>B.3</b>	<p><b>Update from Dean of Research</b> Dean of Research</p> <p>It was noted that Procurement had sent an email to college on April 5<sup>th</sup> noting changes to thresholds for tenders.</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to the following researchers for recent funding successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jane Ohlmeyer, School of Histories and Humanities – ERC Advanced Grant for VOICES project and gold medal from RIA</li><li>• Susan Murphy, School of Natural Sciences – ERC Starting Grant for GEOFORMATIONS project</li><li>• Mary Rogan, School of Law – ERC Proof of Concept grant to continue work on prison oversight project</li></ul> <p><b>RS/22-23/10</b> With regard to the establishment of a new national funding agency it was noted that the General Scheme for Research and Innovation Bill 2023 was finally published on April 6<sup>th</sup>. An event to discuss this had been hosted by the CAVE research</p>

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	<p>centre at Trinity on April 17<sup>th</sup>. It was also noted that the ODRES was drafting a response paper based on feedback received from Research Committee.</p> <p>DOR noted that the publication of the Heads of Bill was significantly delayed but the overall timetable does not appear to have changed with the stated ambition being to have the new agency in place from January 2024.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large attendance at the event on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Many of the same concerns were raised by researchers across different areas and career stages. Importance of parity of esteem, career lifecycle, and basic research were emphasised.</li> <li>• It was noted that the Irish Humanities Alliance would publish a response soon, and that the Royal Irish Academy also intended to do the same. It was noted that there is not a similar alliance for researchers in STEM.</li> <li>• There is great concern that merging the two agencies would result in the loss of the better parts of both.</li> <li>• Although both are mentioned in the Heads of Bill, there was no indication as to the balance between funding for basic and applied research.</li> <li>• Significant concerns remain about the lack of an international review, analysis of best practice, norms around funding for how the agency might operate.</li> <li>• DOR noted that perhaps the most fundamental problem is a lack of ambition, and noted that the stated budget for the agency in Impact 2030 is the combined existing budgets for SFI and IRC. This would not bring Ireland anywhere close to the government’s own stated targets.</li> <li>• There is no mention of provision for research infrastructures, digital infrastructures, and other supports that enable research. It was noted that calls for expensive pieces of equipment were not good enough when the basic equipment needed to do research was crumbling and no funding had been made available to address since PRTL. It was also noted that the cost of doing research needed to be fully funded.</li> <li>• Concerns about governance and board composition were noted. It was noted that too large a board would be ineffective, but if the board was appropriately constructed 11 members would be sufficient. The lack of detail on governance in the Heads, while of concern, perhaps offered an opportunity to make an intervention. It was also noted that the independence of the board and appropriate academic representation were essential.</li> <li>• It was noted that the criteria in Head 9 were very broad, whereas Head 35 focused on industry and partnerships. It was suggested that the difference is no longer between basic or applied research, but the focus now seemed to be shifting to translational research which was effectively industrial policy.</li> <li>• It was noted that the Minister of DFHERIS had significant discretion regarding the agency, board composition etc according to the Heads of Bill, but there was no mention of Public Accounts Committee or similar. The committee noted that there needed to be checks and balances on ministerial power.</li> </ul> <p>DOR noted that there is a responsibility to ensure the new agency works for researchers.</p>
<b>Section C – Items for Noting</b>	
<b>C.1</b>	<p><b>Items for Noting</b></p> <p>No items for noting.</p>

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<b>C.2</b>	<b>Items for future discussion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The committee was advised the Policy on Trinity Research Centres would be brought to the next meeting for review.</li><li>• DOR noted that the final scheduled meeting for the committee was May. However, given current events regarding the new agency and the absence of summer provision for the committee June 6<sup>th</sup> should be tentatively held for another meeting.</li></ul>
<b>C.3</b>	<b>AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The committee was reminded that the Research Development Office would be hosting a town hall event on inter and transdisciplinary research on May 9<sup>th</sup> in the Trinity Long Room Hub. Researchers from all disciplines were encouraged to attend.</li></ul>