The University of Dublin
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, Tuesday, 7 October 2025
Boardroom, Trinity Business School

MINUTES

Prof. Sinéad Ryan (Chair); Prof. Brian Broderick; Prof. Padraic Fallon; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Nicole Grimes; Prof. Joanne Banks; Prof. Lindsey Earner-Byrne; Prof. James Hanrahan; Prof. Sonia Bishop; Prof. Carol Newman; Prof. Nicola Carr; Prof. Benjamin Wold; Prof. Mohammed Hankir; Prof. Mathias Senge; Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Brooke Tornifoglio; Prof. Frank Wellmer; Prof. Andrei Parnachev; Prof. Susan Murphy; Prof. Ortwin Hess; Prof. Hal Duncan; Prof. Sarah Doyle; Prof. Eilish Burke; Prof. Anne Marie Healy; Prof. Patrick Geoghegan; Prof. Rhodri Cusack; Prof. Eoin O'Sullivan.

In attendance: Audrey Crosbie; Dr Sally Smith; Dr Fiona Smyth; Doris Alexander; Elaine Sharkey; Dr Geoff Bradley; Helen Shenton; Michael Reilly; Dr Jennifer Daly.

Apologies: Prof. Mary Rogan; Prof. Ed Lavelle; Prof. Clare Clarke; Prof. Stefano Sanvito; Prof. Mark Little; Prof. Tomás Ryan; Emma Treacy Matunga; Prof. Valentina Colasanti; Tadhg Caffrey; Prof. Martine Smith.

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	**Minutes** Minutes of the meeting of September approved as circulated.
A.2	**Matters Arising from the Minutes** No matters arising.
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	**Update on Trinity East** Prof. Brian Broderick The committee received an update on recent developments at Trinity East. It was noted that the approach is focused on refurbishment and renewal as opposed to new construction, promoting multidisciplinarity, and flexible spaces that can be repurposed rather than focusing on individual groups owning space indefinitely. In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted: • The guiding principle for the allocation of space at Trinity East was that it would essentially be on a temporary basis for a number of years or months, but that groups would not "own" space permanently. It was noted that spaces requiring significant investment of time and finance would probably be better suited to the main campus. • The financing for the retrofitting of existing structures must be used by the end of 2027. It was noted that the Laidlaw Library was due to be completed by December 2027 and part of that development included different sized flexible spaces which would complement other activity at the site. • The space allocation process in Trinity was quite complex. The Trinity East campus was not an option for schools looking to consolidate space. • There is discussion of dedicated space for public engagement activities but nothing was confirmed yet. It was noted that there would be public space in the Laidlaw Library. It was also noted that the Research Ireland centre proposals included a commitment for EPE space.

B.2	**Update from the Dean of Research** Prof. Sinéad Ryan DOR reminded the committee that suggestions or volunteers for spotlight presentations were welcome. Congratulations were noted to a team from Trinity's School of Engineering led by Dr Séamus O'Shaughnessy and Dr Daniel Trimble that won one of two prizes awarded in the National Challenge Fund competition. Team DRIVE's prize of around €1.25 million will now be used to improve the thermal management of electric vehicle (EV) batteries. DOR was at the announcement of the prize and noted the presentation from the researchers was fascinating. DOR advised the committee that the new CEO of Research Ireland was due to visit Trinity on October 9th and would meet with the DOR and Provost as well as a range of other stakeholders. DOR noted that the intention was to raise a number of operational issues during the visit as well as how Research Ireland intends to develop its portfolio across the sector. The committee noted that Budget 2026 was due to be announced later that afternoon. DOR noted that there had not been any further updates on potential funding for the sector beyond what had previously been communicated. The recent announcement of the reduction in student fees was noted. It was also noted that it was unclear whether this would be accommodated through an additional allocation to DFHERIS or would have to be absorbed in the existing allocation. The committee received a brief verbal update on the ongoing recruitment drive in Trinity Research. It was noted that a number of positions had already been filled, with further appointments to be made specifically in the areas of research culture and quality, and a Head of Research Governance, Ethics and Integrity. The high quality of candidates for all roles was noted. Once all roles were filled the committee would receive a formal presentation on structures and teams. DOR noted that discussion of the next item was taking place on the anniversary of the October 7th Hamas attacks and noted condemnation of that attack as well as the taking and ongoing captivity of hostages. DOR also noted the horror of the war in Gaza and the need for an immediate and permanent ceasefire. DOR advised the committee that following on from the Board's decision of June 2025, approval had been granted by EOG to set up a Working Group on Research-related Matters as a number of queries had been raised with the Dean of Research and Senior Dean. The group would be chaired by the Senior Dean with the three Associate Deans of Research to represent each faculty. The group would consider queries as raised with them, and then make a recommendation to the Dean of Research.
B.3	**Report of Taskforce on Academic & Institutional International Links** *The Secretary to the College joined the meeting for this item* DOR noted the memo from Senior Dean and Secretary setting out the request to the committee to consider the Taskforce's report and provide feedback. It was noted that the committee was not being asked to consider the findings of the report or the Board's decision, but was instead being asked to provide feedback on governance-related issues arising from same.

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

- Members of the committee noted that in accepting the recommendations of the Taskforce but not approving the proposed working group this had created a difficult situation where there was no mechanism to revisit the decision should the geopolitical situation change or to consider other future issues. It was also noted that in not having a clear process or mechanism in place, there was a risk that Trinity could look reactive or to be singling out one particular country.
- Some members of the committee noted that a process similar to the legacy review group could work well.
- The original remit of the taskforce was clarified for members of the committee, with the DOR noting that it had been established in direct response to the student encampments protesting the situation in Gaza. The taskforce worked to define a set of principles that could apply in any case as well as considering the issues raised by the specific actions of Israel.
- It was noted that the proposed working group would not have had any authority or decision-making power in its own right, and had been proposed solely as a mechanism to make recommendations to Board.
- It was noted that Board had some concerns with a suggestion that rationale should be provided were it to reject a recommendation from the working group. Members of the Research Committee noted that in the interests of transparency and openness in decision-making that it would be expected and welcomed that Board should explain its reasoning in such a situation. It was noted by some members of the committee that minor amendments to some of the language in the original proposal, particularly in relation to point 11 in the report, could address Board's concerns.
- Members of the committee noted that there was essentially no choice but to set up the proposed working group as the current situation was untenable. It was noted by the committee that in the absence of such a group there was no formal process for revisiting decisions or considering emerging issues which was unacceptable to the committee.
- Members of the committee queried how the working group would decide on issues for consideration. It was noted that the intention in proposing the group was for it to respond to requests for guidance from the College community but also to consider specific issues on its own initiative.
- It was noted by many members of the committee that it would be unreasonable to expect Board to be able to consider similar issues in the future as the level of detail and complexity required would be far beyond what Board could reasonably be expected to have. It was noted that the working group would ideally be a small group of experts with specialist knowledge in international law, human rights etc.

DOR noted on behalf of the committee that the consensus from the discussion was that the committee agreed with the proposal to establish the human rights working group as proposed by the Taskforce. It was noted that this would allow the College community to have a formal mechanism to raise important questions, be assured that they would be considered with the appropriate level of expertise, and would provide a mechanism to unwind any decision should circumstances change.

DOR also thanked the committee for its patience in waiting for the report to be brought to them and for the time and consideration they had given to the discussion.

The Secretary to the College left the meeting.

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Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	**Items for Noting** • The committee noted and approved the memo requesting to change the name of the *Centre for Psychological Health* to the *Trinity Centre for the Developing Person*. Committee noted and approved. • The committee was advised of a possible pattern of engagement from consultancy offering grant writing services that had raised some concerns. PIs were being offered contracts with unfavourable conditions concealed in the terms and conditions. These consultants were also looking for signatures from individual PIs as opposed to an institutional signature. It was also noted that there was additional concerns related to knowledge security and intellectual property. It was also noted that areas with strong commercialisation potential were being specifically targeted. The committee was advised that an audit or survey would be conducted over the coming weeks and months to identify the scale of the issue, and a formal update would be presented to the committee once this was complete.
C.2	**Items for future discussion** No items were noted.
C.3	**AOB** DOR noted that Trinity Research was developing a map of Trinity's evidence for policy engagement and that Sally Smith would be in touch with Directors of Research and TRIs as a first step. DOR noted it was an area of increasing importance, and was also coming to be understood as such by government departments, ministers etc. It was noted that new Evidence for Policy units were being established in government departments and that peer institutions were organising in this area. It was noted that this activity was of significant strategic importance for Trinity. It was noted that there was no further update on the Research Ireland Global Talent scheme. DOR noted that Research Ireland was being pushed to clarify timelines in this regard.