

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, Tuesday, 19 May 2026
Boardroom, Trinity Business School

MINUTES

Prof. Sinéad Ryan (Chair); Prof. Padraic Fallon; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Catherine Welch; Prof. Nicole Grimes; Prof. Joanne Banks; Prof. James Hanrahan; Prof. Mary Rogan; Prof. Carol Newman; Prof. Bidisha Ghosh; Prof. Susan Murphy; Prof. Ortwin Hess; Prof. Sarah Doyle; Prof. Eilish Burke; Prof. Ed Lavelle; Prof. Mark Little; Prof. Patrick Geoghegan; Prof. Eoin O'Sullivan; Dr Chris Keely; Prof. Martine Smith; Dr Laure de Tymowski.

In attendance: Dr Sally Smith; Dr Fiona Smyth; Emma Kelly; Dr Geoff Bradley; Helen Shenton; Michael Reilly; Dr Jennifer Daly

Apologies: Prof. Sonia Bishop; Elaine Sharkey; Doris Alexander; Prof. Anne Marie Healy; Prof. Andrei Parnachev; Prof. Mathias Senge; Prof. Benjamin Wold; Prof. Frank Wellmer; Prof. Valentina Colasanti; Tadhg Caffrey; Prof. Nicola Carr; Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Brian Broderick; Prof. Lindsey Earner-Byrne

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	Minutes Minutes accepted as circulated.
A.2	Matters Arising from the Minutes No matters arising.
A.3	Proposal to establish a Trinity Research Centre for Reproductive Sciences and Women's Health Dr. Lisa Owens, Prof. Cliona O'Farrelly <i>Dr Owens and Prof. O'Farrelly joined the meeting for this item.</i> The committee received a presentation on establishing a new Trinity Research Centre focused on reproductive sciences and women's health. During the presentation it was noted that reproductive health spanned conditions across the lifespan for both men and women. Conditions highlighted include infertility, PCOS, endometriosis, complex menopause, menstrual health, reproductive haematology, obesity-related reproductive health, rare endocrine conditions, and male reproductive health. It was noted that Trinity had a strategic opportunity to integrate evidence, clinical expertise, and policy translation in a coordinated, visible way. It was also noted that there was strong potential for Trinity to show national leadership in a critical and rapidly evolving field. Significant policy momentum was noted, including publicly funded hubs and opportunities linked to the development of the Academic Health Sciences Campus. The team has engaged with ~40 PIs and clinicians to shape the proposal. The centre would leverage access to St James's, Tallaght University Hospital, the Coombe, and CHI. It would unite multiple disciplines under one umbrella, including colleagues beyond Health Sciences and STEM. This would be the first dedicated centre of its kind in Trinity, housed within TTMI. In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members of the committee congratulated the lead PIs on the quality of the proposal.• Opportunities for collaboration with colleagues in the School of Nursing & Midwifery and AHSS were noted. Further opportunities for research around consent and the historical positioning of women in medicine and health research were noted.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to questions about policy engagement, the importance of training researchers to effectively contribute to policy development and lobbying was noted. • It was noted that RCSI had a research network in this space but not a comprehensive centre. Similarly, UCC had some activity in endometriosis research but no cross-disciplinary centre comparable to this proposal. <p>DOR thanked Dr Owens and Prof. O’Farrelly for the presentation and discussion.</p> <p><i>Dr Owens and Prof. O’Farrelly left the meeting.</i></p> <p>The committee unanimously agreed to approve the proposal to establish the centre.</p>
<p>A.4</p>	<p>Proposal to establish a Trinity Research Institute: LONGLIFE Prof. Rose Anne Kenny, Prof. Cathal McCrory</p> <p>DOR noted to the committee that a proposal to establish a Trinity Research Institute was significantly more complex than a centre proposal. DOR reminded the committee that the proposal was for decision at this meeting.</p> <p><i>Prof. Kenny and Prof. McCrory joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>DOR welcomed Prof. Kenny and Prof. McCrory to the meeting and thanked them for responding to the feedback. The committee received a presentation from Prof. McCrory outlining the response to the feedback received. During the presentation the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee’s feedback had prompted valuable reflection on the proposal. • LONGLIFE aims to create a strategic platform enabling new cohorts across the university, offering shared resources, infrastructure, and expertise. • The initiative positions Trinity to become the national leader in lifecourse research and potentially a first mover in the field. • Feedback requested more detail on research activities; three research pillars were outlined: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environment, Sustainability & Space 2. Demography, Social Change & Transition 3. Health & Wellbeing • Governance concerns were raised about concentration of authority. It was noted that the TRI policy requires an open competition for the TRI Director role. To further address governance concerns, a leadership group with representation across the university was proposed; currently includes members from six schools across all three faculties. • Agreement on overhead contributions has been reached with SOM, where TILDA is housed. It was noted that the TRI policy required overheads to be addressed at contract stage, and this model would be followed. • A five-year phased roadmap was presented, including ambitions to lead ERC synergy grants by year four. A year-five review would determine whether the TRI had met its goals; if not, it would disband. • Aim is for LONGLIFE to become the island’s central hub for lifecourse research. <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the committee acknowledged the potential in the proposal. • Members of the committee noted that a number of schools and some existing TRIs were still not included in the proposal and had not been engaged with.

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- Clarification was sought as to how the proposed leadership group was identified and how it would interact with the broader governance model. It was noted that the leadership group had been put together on an ad hoc basis and was primarily focused on PIs in areas that they had not previously collaborated with. It was noted that the group would help to socialise the work of LONGLIFE around Trinity and would address some of the concerns expressed about duplication of activity.
- In relation to a query about the ownership and governance of datasets it was noted that some datasets have established governance and access structures in place already. The aim of LONGLIFE in this regard would be to train people in the use of the datasets rather than to own them outright.
- UCD's One Health initiative was noted. It was noted that Trinity had much broader scope and expertise in this area but risked losing the opportunity to be the first university to formally establish itself in this space.
- Members of the committee asked about potential links with national biobanking initiatives and opportunities for civic engagement. It was noted that clinical colleagues were seeking support for longitudinal biobanking studies which a TRI structure would facilitate.
- In response to queries about the proposed distribution of overheads, the internal inconsistencies in the current policy on Trinity Research Institutes were acknowledged by the Dean of Research.
- DOR closed the discussion by thanking Prof. Kenny and Prof. McCrory for their thorough engagement with the process.

Prof. Kenny and Prof. McCrory left the meeting.

DOR opened the discussion to the committee. DOR noted that no TRI comes into existence fully-formed and that they were expected to evolve and grow rather than be fixed at inception. During discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:

- TILDA was praised as a major asset. Members of the committee acknowledged that a TRI could succeed but raised concerns about imbalance across existing TRIs, with two-thirds being health-focused, and possible overlap with current TRIs. Members of the committee noted that overlap could be acceptable where it was complementary to existing activities, but the need to differentiate from current TRIs was clear.
- Concerns about overlap with the School of Nursing & Midwifery's established lifecourse research centre, IDS-TILDA, and TRiSS were noted by members of the committee. The committee's ongoing concerns about insufficient engagement across college were not felt to have been adequately addressed at this stage.
- Members of the committee noted that they strongly supported cross-faculty initiatives, and acknowledged the outstanding quality of existing research, but failing to address the school-level relationships at this stage would undermine the TRI's potential to succeed.
- The committee noted tensions between internal concerns and external strategic opportunities. UCD's advances in this space were noted despite Trinity's clear strengths in the area.

DOR summarised the discussion by noting that the committee broadly supported the proposal but still had significant concerns about engagement, leadership roles, and consultation with colleagues, particularly in the School of Nursing & Midwifery, School of Natural Sciences, TRiSS, the School of Engineering, and existing TRIs which meant that approval could not be granted at this time.

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	<p>The committee agreed that a request for consultation with schools and TRIs within a specific timeframe would be communicated to the lead PIs by the DOR. It was also noted that the request would acknowledge the inconsistencies in the current TRI policy. The committee agreed that should the request be adequately addressed then the proposal would be approved.</p>
<p>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</p>	
<p>B.1</p>	<p>Spotlight: Trinity Business School Impact Report Prof. Catherine Welch</p> <p>The committee received a spotlight presentation from Prof. Catherine Welch on the Trinity Business School’s Impact Report. During the presentation and subsequent discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school recognised it had been slow to engage with research impact. TBS was adapting to changing expectations, including those from global accreditation agencies that now emphasise impact metrics alongside journal rankings. • It was noted that impact was a priority in the school strategy, but leadership wanted to avoid it feeling like an additional burden therefore a cultural shift was needed to value and reward contributions beyond traditional academic outputs. • The diversity of research within the school made it difficult to reach consensus on what “impact” meant. It was noted that any initial resistance and objections helped to strengthen the final outcome. • The school also faced an image problem, with many colleagues across Trinity perhaps unaware that it conducts research. It was also noted that the school’s official communication channels were mostly used for student-focused messaging with some reluctance to include communications that were more research-focused. • Advice and guidance was sought from colleagues around Trinity who had experience in this space, with particular thanks noted to Bridget Gavin (School of Medicine) and Luciana Lolich (School of Nursing & Midwifery) for their support. • Existing research awards were retained with the impact awards being added rather than replacing. It was noted that participation was voluntary, and most applicants received awards. • It was noted that the structure of the application form allowed the school to develop the narratives for the impact report without any further writing required of the applicants. The impact report was written in plain English with external stakeholders noted as the primary audience rather than other academics. <p>DOR and committee congratulated Prof. Welch for guiding the school through the extensive discussions and processes that ultimately led to the final report.</p>
<p>B.2</p>	<p>Update from the Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to the School of Nursing & Midwifery on its 30th anniversary celebration last week.</p>

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Dr Dylan Ryan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology, has secured a Wellcome Career Development Award valued at around €2.5 million for an 8-year project that seeks to better understand why people with inherited mitochondrial disorders are often more vulnerable to severe infections.

An early 9th century manuscript containing a text of the first known poem in the English language has been discovered in Rome by researchers from Trinity College Dublin. The manuscript was discovered by Dr Elisabetta Magnanti and Dr Mark Faulkner, School of English, both experts in medieval manuscripts. Details of their discovery have been [published](#) by Cambridge University Press in the open-access journal [Early Medieval England and its Neighbours](#).

Researchers from Trinity are among those to have won National Challenge funding to scale public engagement in transport planning. The CONUNDRUM team is led by Prof. Niamh Moore-Cherry, University College Dublin, and Prof. Brian Caulfield from Trinity's School of Engineering.

DOR noted that a reminder had been circulated to all academic staff about the requirement to register all interventional studies with the Sponsor team. This requirement applies to all researchers in Trinity working on projects that meet the definitions of a clinical/interventional trial and is not just restricted to obviously health-related studies. Directors of Research were asked to remind colleagues of this requirement.

The committee was advised that the Trinity Research Excellence Awards were now open for nominations. Deadline for nominations is June 15th. DOR noted that nominations had already been received and encouraged colleagues to consider nominating someone.

DOR noted that a request for research highlights for inclusion in the Dean of Research's report would be circulated to the committee.

DOR advised the committee that INSPIRE had finally opened noting that the call documents had only been received in the previous week. The main points to note at this stage were:

- Trinity has been advised that it can apply for €19,900,000 - €27,000,000
 - €265 million in multi-annual funding is allocated for Phase One and Two over 2026–2027. This will be distributed as follows,
 - €150 million allocated in Phase One for Local Institutional Infrastructure over 2026–2027.
 - €115 million allocated in Phase Two for Shared Advanced Infrastructures in 2027
- Final date for receipt of applications is 29th July. Award to start 1st Jan 2027. DFHERIS to review early 2028 to inform next stages.
- Cap on individual “packages” of €500k. Packages must be listed in order of priority in the application template. It was noted that extensive detail was required at application stage.
- EOIs for Phase Two Shared Advanced Infrastructures must also be submitted with the Phase One application.
- The committee was advised that work at Faculty level led by the Associate Deans of Research meant that significant amounts of data had already been collected. The committee was advised that any further/other proposals should be coordinated with the AdoR for their faculty.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• DOR advised that a further update would be given to the committee at the June meeting.
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	Items for Noting No items for noting.
C.2	Items for future discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The committee was advised that a draft of the new Living Research Excellence Strategy would come to the committee for approval in June. DOR noted that it had been developed based on feedback from consultations as well as obligations under the HEA Performance Agreement and the objectives in Thrive.
C.3	AOB <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It was noted that there was no formal update on GTIs yet but DOR confirmed that Trinity had six candidates for interview of which five were made offers by Research Ireland. Candidates would now have to agree to move forward with the process at which point the discussion would be with the institution around the support package. It was noted that 20 offers were made nationally so Trinity had performed very well.