

**The University of Dublin
Trinity College**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, Tuesday, 15 September 2026
Boardroom, Trinity Business School**

MINUTES

Prof. Sinéad Ryan (Chair); Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Hal Duncan; Prof. Triona Lally; Prof. Catherine Welch; Prof. Stefanie Van de Peer; Prof. Susan Flavin; Prof. James Hanrahan; Prof. Mary Rogan; Prof. Valentina Colasanti; Prof. Claire Gillan; Prof. Gaia Narciso; Prof. Virpi Timonen; Prof. Benjamin Wold; Prof. Tomás Ryan; Prof. Declan O'Sullivan; Prof. Bidisha Ghosh; Prof. Nicky O'Boyle; Prof. Manuela Kulaxizi; Prof. Susan Murphy; Prof. Ortwin Hess; Prof. Sarah Doyle; Prof. Catherine McCabe; Prof. Lorraine O'Driscoll; Prof. Ed Lavelle; Prof. Mark Little; Prof. Patrick Geoghegan; Prof. Rhodri Cusack; Prof. Eoin O'Sullivan; Dr Chris Keely; Dr Laetitia Chauve.

In attendance: Tadhg Caffrey; Dr Fiona Smyth; Elaine Sharkey; Dr Geoff Bradley; Helen Shenton; Michael Reilly; Dr Jennifer Daly.

Apologies: Laure de Tymowski; Doris Alexander; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Joanne Banks; Dr Sally Smith; Prof. Clare Clarke; Prof. Valeria Nicolosi.

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	Tour de table – introductions
A.2	Minutes Minutes approved as circulated.
A.3	Matters Arising from the Minutes Dean of Research advised the committee that matters arising would be addressed as part of the update later in the meeting.
A.4	Terms of Reference and Membership Terms of Reference and membership approved.
A.5	Memo re proposal to establish Trinity Research Institute: LONGLIFE DOR noted that the committee's approval in principle had been given at the last meeting in June pending the memo's submission. It was noted in the memo that one school had not yet had a meeting with the LONGLIFE team. DOR proposed to the committee that in the interest of fairness that the item be held for final approval until the October meeting. Committee agreed. DOR also confirmed that all other schools were satisfied that substantive discussions had taken place.
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	Overview of Research Committee Dean of Research An overview of the functions of the Research Committee was presented, including the remit of the committee, the roles of members in communicating committee business to their schools and institutes, and a summary of major items discussed in 2025/26. During the discussion, the following points were noted: • A new division, Trinity Research and Innovation, was established on July 1st. • Arising from the new division, a new role of Associate Dean for Innovation has also been created. The full range of the role was still being scoped out but it would act as a connection between the academic community and the innovation activity in Trinity. Prof. Triona Lally has been appointed to the position. • It was confirmed that the new division would not significantly impact on the functions of the committee.

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B.2

Update from the Dean of Research

Dean of Research

It was announced in June that Trinity will host two of the seven newly announced, Research Ireland-funded Rinn centres – Rinn Quantum and Rinn Advanced Therapies – while acting as one of five coordinating institutions in a third (Rinn Artificial Intelligence). DOR noted congratulations to centre leads on what was a very long and drawn out process which first began in 2023. DOR suggested that the new centre directors come to committee at some point to present an overview of their activity.

The QS World University Rankings announced in June saw Trinity maintain its position of 75th in the world. DOR noted that this was a noteworthy achievement given the many competing dynamics that go into the rankings, with the caveat that rankings do not capture all of the activity that happens in the university.

Congratulations were noted to Rhodri Cusack and Richard Layte who received ERC Advanced Grants awards. Prof. Layte's project FLOURISH: Foundations of Life Course Outcomes in Relationships and Social Connection, will combine large-scale data on individuals from four countries followed from infancy to early adulthood with observation of and interviews with young people in schools to develop a rich understanding of the role of social connection in development and well-being. Prof. Cusack's project InfantNeuroAI: Development of Visual Cognition in Infants and Machines, will combine pioneering brain imaging methods with computational modelling to address one of science's most fundamental questions: how do human infants learn to recognise people, objects, relationships and actions from the rich sensory information that surrounds them?

Congratulations were also noted to Dr Casey Platnich (School of Chemistry) and Dr Gabriela Kronemberger (School of Engineering) who were recently announced as recipients of ERC Starting Grants.

It was noted that a number of EU Presidency events have been hosted at Trinity. DOR noted that events were ongoing, with the Trinity Long Room Hub in particular hosting many of these events.

The Dean of Research presented an update to the committee in relation to the development of Trinity's institutional application to the INSPIRE programme. DOR noted that this, and the new EMPOWER scheme, seem to be part of a move towards institutional allocations rather than competitive individual grants.

DOR noted that both programmes represent a change in the funding allocation to universities. A move towards institutional allocations rather than competitive individual grants. During the presentation and discussion on INSPIRE, the following points were noted:

- The rationale for the programme was to address the infrastructure deficit that has accumulated in the sector since the last PRTL call.
- The HEA, Research Ireland, and DFHERIS were collaborating on the delivery of INSPIRE over three phases.
- Trinity was advised that an application to the value of between €19.9million and €27million could be submitted.
- DOR noted that eligible costs were extremely restricted: no staff costs, no overheads, no maintenance beyond the lifetime of Phase One (end of 2028).

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- It was also noted that the development of the proposal was a significant piece of work with just 11 weeks between receiving the call documents and the final submission deadline.
- DOR emphasised that the development of the prioritised list of packages was a “bottom up” approach with each Faculty Dean responsible for coordinating the packages from their Schools.
- A portion of the total amount requested was reserved for cross-cutting institutional packages such as IT, the Library, and Sustainability.
- Trinity’s final proposal was for a total amount of €26,992,526.48 and consisted of 79 individual packages. The HEA was now reviewing all applications with updates expected in late October.
- DOR noted that the administrative burden flowing from the funding would be significant. Conservative estimates predicted at least 100 additional tender processes on top of normal Procurement activity. It was also noted that institutions would have just 24 months to make all packages fully operational.
- It was noted that Expressions of Interest for Phase Two had to be submitted at the same time as the Phase One application. It was also noted that there was still no call document available for Phase Two at this stage. The committee was advised that Research Ireland had recently shared all 168 EOIs it had received but had not provided any guidance as to next steps for institutions.
- It also noted that Trinity’s Phase One application stressed that cost estimates particularly for compute equipment would have significantly increased by the time the funding was actually made available.

The Dean of Research provided the committee with an update on the EMPOWER programme which is replacing the GOIPG/D funding schemes for 2026/27. DOR noted that some limited discussion of the proposed programme had already happened at Research Committee. It was also noted that “consultation” and communication from Research Ireland in relation to the programme had been inconsistent and opaque at best. During the presentation and in the subsequent discussion, the following points were noted:

- Research Ireland has communicated that the GOI schemes will not run this year so EMPOWER will be the only mechanism to ensure that funding is available for PGs and PDs in this academic year in spite of objections and concerns raised across the sector.
- As of now, there was still no call document available nor any indication of the funding envelope for Trinity. Acute time pressure dictates that decisions for internal processes will need to be made quickly. The lack of call document or firm timelines means that it is not possible to advise potential applicants at this stage.
- DOR advised the committee that a working group had been convened to consider and make recommendations for how Trinity would manage the internal awards process. DOR stressed that the remit of the working group did not include the broader issues with the scheme. The working group’s recommendations would be shared with the committee and Council. Updates as they were available would be shared with the committee. Members of the committee noted that the priority in any internal model should be to preserve excellence and the best parts of the GOI schemes insofar as possible.
- Members of the committee restated serious concerns with the nature of the EMPOWER programme and how Research Ireland had conducted its consultation to date. It was noted that moving from externally peer-reviewed individual awards to an institutional allocation model would make Irish institutions less competitive internationally. Concerns were also noted that awards would no longer be held in individual researchers’ own names.

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	• It was noted that there was no clarity on the status of the enterprise partnership schemes. • It was noted that as of now it is believed that although Research Ireland will be allocating funding to institutions, they would still be holding to current stipend and fee contributions. • It was suggested that the working group or similar examine measures to monitor the additional workload that will follow for academic and professional staff as part of any feedback or review of the scheme. • Members of the committee noted that the first year would have to be treated as an interim or pilot phase in order to identify the best model in terms of peer review et. • It was noted that Trinity averages 29 PhD and 12 Postdoctoral awards per year in the existing GOI schemes.
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	Items for Noting DOR noted that the updated Sectoral FEC Indirect Cost Rate had been revised to 84.3% for all new fully funded collaborative research projects from 1st October 2026. DOR welcomed any feedback the committee might have. It was noted that the rate was calculated on the basis of an agreed formula to ensure compliance with State Aid rules. DOR noted that it had already been communicated to the IUA that there were concerns about the impact this would have for competitiveness in relation to industry collaboration. It was noted that all other Irish HEIs should be applying the same rate but it would be more of an issue for any international collaborations. It was agreed that a breakdown of what the 84.3% is used for would be circulated to the committee.
C.2	Research-related policy updates
C.3	Items for future discussion • Knowledge Security Manager, Joey Gaynor, will attend October meeting to give an update on defence-related research
C.4	AOB • Research Week 21st – 25th September