



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

18 March 2025, 11am, TBS Boardroom

Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), , Mr Hamza Bana (Equality and Welfare Officer, Students' Union), Mr Ciaran Doherty (Director, Careers Advisory Service), Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Mr Marcus Boggan (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), , Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD) Mr Luke Johnston (representative, Scholars' Committee), Ms Kay Williams (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy) Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer).

Apologies: Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Ms Jenny Maguire (President, Students' Union), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Ms Louise Staunton (nominee, Director of Internationalisation), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer), Ms Faith Olopade (President, Central Societies Committee)

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary)

The Dean of Students welcomed everyone to the fourth Student Life Committee meeting of 2024/25.

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/24-25/35

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 18th February 2025.

SLC/24-25/36

A.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes or from the previous SLC meeting.

SLC/24-25/37

A.3 Healthy Trinity update

The Healthy Trinity Operation Lead provided a comprehensive review of the initiative's activities during the 2023/24 academic year and outlined its strategic workplan for 2024/25. The initiative aims to promote sustainable and healthy habits relating to mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing among students, staff, alumni, and the wider community. Its ethos is grounded in collaboration, inclusivity, and engagement, with meaningful connections established at both local and national levels.

Healthy Trinity collaborates with approximately 100 partners across campus, organised into nine thematic working groups. The initiative is underpinned by a co-leadership structure that combines academic and operational expertise and is distinguished by its grassroots participation. Established in 2013, it holds FISU Global Platinum Accreditation and is aligned with the HEA Healthy Campus framework. It now operates within the broader Trinity Sustainability umbrella, contributing actively to institutional targets including Nature Positive 2030, Net Zero 2040, and Healthy Trinity 2030.

Over the past year, the working groups focused on a wide range of areas including breastfeeding, smart travel, alcohol and drug use, student ambassadors, sexual health, mental health, and tobacco. The initiative's sustainability priorities centred on mental health, tobacco, smart travel, and food. Several successful events and interventions were delivered, such as Student-2-Student initiatives, addiction awareness programmes, the Mind Body Boost programme, and Health & Sports Week.

In terms of funding, Healthy Trinity secured €50,000 in HEA funding for Healthy Campus activities in 2024/25, €15,000 for the Anxiety Action initiative, and €25,000 to support ongoing Healthy Campus work. Additional seed funding supported specific projects such as the Physic Garden (€2,500), Mental Health Bio-havens (€5,000), and Menopause awareness initiatives (€2,500). There is also an annual budget of €7,000 to support Tobacco Free Trinity, alongside dedicated funding for bike parking facilities in St James's Hospital. A further €20,000 HEA allocation, to be distributed over three years, will assist in resourcing the various working groups.

Governance for Healthy Trinity funding now falls under the remit of Trinity Sustainability. Communications and engagement efforts are largely student-led and include the use of social media, open forums, and collaboration with the wider Sustainability team. These are complemented by campus-wide events such as open days and audits.

The initiative is supported by a few key roles, including a Healthy Campus Manager and Administrator, both piloted through the Provost's Office and based in College Health, as well as a Health Promotion Officer. As part of Trinity Sustainability's next phase, additional posts will include a Sustainable Travel Officer and a Biodiversity Officer.

Progress continues across thematic areas. A university-wide wellbeing map is currently in development and the Anxiety and Action Handbook has now reached over 600 students. Terms of Reference have been completed and an accompanying action plan is underway. Work on the Sustainable Transport Plan also continues, with a new Sustainable Travel Officer soon to be appointed and a strong focus on active travel and logistics.

Efforts in tobacco and vaping include HSE-supported cessation programmes, vape recycling, integration of related topics into curricula, and engagement in public consultations and policy development. Meanwhile, a Sustainable and Healthy Campus Food Plan is being shaped, with emphasis on increased plant-based options, improved fibre intake, affordability, and the use of Living Lab data to support decision-making.

In the area of sexual health, activity has included HTOT modules on themes such as sex, bias, and pornography, a PrEP clinic, free contraception and period products, menopause support, and events promoting men's health.

Academic integration remains central to the initiative's approach. Students have contributed to Healthy Trinity through coursework in subjects including mechanical engineering and social marketing. Guest lectures and workshops have also been delivered across programmes such as the PGCert in Workplace Wellbeing and the Psychology of Climate Crisis. The initiative benefits from year-round support by ESD Fellows and uses data from Living Lab projects to inform both practical operations and advocacy.

ACTION: Student Life Committee acknowledged the comprehensive nature of Healthy Trinity's work, and emphasised the importance of sustained coordination, visibility, and resources as the initiative continues to develop.

SLC/24-25/38

A.4 Student Counselling Service and Student Learning Development annual report

A Senior Student Counsellor from the Student Counselling Service presented the service's annual report for 2023/24 to the Committee. The service operates with a clear mission of providing support through collaboration, connection, and compassion, and its vision is to become an internationally accredited service that delivers accessible support in areas such as social, academic, mental health, and emotional wellbeing across the entire Trinity community. Students remain firmly at the centre of this work.

Among the strategic aims outlined were the commitment to delivering timely needs assessments, providing tiered supports matched to individual needs, maintaining flexibility as those needs evolve, and promoting a whole-campus approach through strong community partnerships.

The past year saw significant levels of engagement across the service's various strands. Student Learning Development (SLD) recorded 5,011 attendances, while 3,765 first-year students were supported through the Student2Student (S2S) programme, and 2,640 students accessed the Student Counselling Service (SCS). A major highlight for the year was Trinity becoming the first university in Europe to receive IACS accreditation, marking an important milestone for the service's standing and quality assurance.

The Student2Student programme maintained a strong and visible presence throughout the academic year, with in-person orientation tours and meet-ups reaching approximately 3,800 students. Student-led training was redesigned with support from the Trinity Development and Alumni office, and the development of House 47 as a dedicated student space added to the sense of community. Further developments included the launch of the S2S Student Advisory Board, a formalised partnership agreement, and the inclusion of mentors from the Trinity Centre for People with Intellectual Disabilities. The annual S2S Awards in April celebrated the contributions of student volunteers and highlighted the ongoing impact of peer-led engagement.

Volunteer activity within S2S remained strong, with 3,765 first-year students mentored by a total of 567 volunteer mentors, supported by 23 peer supporters who facilitated 123 individual meetings. In total, 582 students volunteered through the programme, reflecting a vibrant and committed community of peer support.

Student Learning Development continued to provide both individual and group support throughout the year, although it faced ongoing challenges related to staffing constraints and a heavy reliance on volunteer input. Workshops drew 3,786 student attendances, and the Academic Writing Centre supported 381 individual users. One-to-one appointments and drop-ins through SLD reached 420 students, while facilitated writing and study groups ran on 79 occasions, offering additional support for academic development.

The Student Counselling Service itself delivered critical emotional and mental health support to the student body, operating a tiered access model that included rapid access appointments through the SNAP system as well as follow-up counselling services. In terms of service efficiency, the average wait time for an initial assessment was 8.6 working days—an improvement from 10.3 days in 2021/22—while the average wait time after assessment rose slightly to 28.8 working days from 24 days in 2022/23.

Feedback from students highlighted a deep appreciation for the counselling service, with many describing it as a vital “lifeline” during periods of academic and personal difficulty. However, there were also concerns around the limited number of available sessions and a sense of pressure to conclude support prematurely. Despite these challenges, the quality and impact of the counselling experience were widely recognised, underscoring the essential role the service plays in student wellbeing at Trinity.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the annual report from Student Counselling Service and congratulated the Service on the excellent achievements, enhancements and service levels.

SLC/24-25/39

A.5 The Development of the Mental Health Social Work Role within Trinity

In March 2023, a Thematic Review of Trinity’s Mental Health Services recommended the recruitment of case management roles across the disAbility Service, College Health, and Student Counselling. One year later, this recommendation has taken tangible shape in the form of Trinity’s first dedicated Mental Health Social Worker, a role established jointly between the disAbility Service and the College Health Service in March 2024.

This appointment reflects a progressive and collaborative step forward in how Trinity supports students facing complex mental health and psychosocial challenges. The shared nature of the role – unique within the College – also aligns directly with the values and vision of the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework (HEA, 2020), which calls for a whole-campus, connected approach to student mental health.

At its core, social work is a profession rooted in social justice. It seeks to empower individuals, families and communities to take agency over their own lives, by drawing on sociological, psychological, and other interdisciplinary knowledge to address adversity and enable change. According to the Irish Association of Social Workers, it is a profession grounded in both theory and action, with a strong focus on problem-solving, advocacy, and collaboration with allied professionals.

In practice, this means social workers are often called upon in moments of crisis, but also in quieter, sustained ways—offering guidance, helping people navigate complex systems, or simply being a steady support through periods of change, loss or uncertainty.

At Trinity, the Mental Health Social Worker supports students who live with ongoing or historical complex mental health challenges, particularly where those challenges affect their ability to manage academic, relational, financial, or personal matters. In many cases, students may lack the informal supports—such as family or community—that others might rely on, making this role a vital link in the chain of care.

The social worker collaborates closely with colleagues in Student Counselling, College Health, and the disAbility Service, helping to facilitate joined-up working across the College and beyond. This ensures that students are not left to navigate disconnected systems or fall through service gaps—especially critical for those experiencing vulnerability.

Between March and December 2024 alone, the Mental Health Social Work role received 177 student referrals, each presenting with a wide range of needs. Students sought support for issues such as domestic abuse, financial hardship, housing insecurity, substance misuse, and difficulties navigating community mental health services. Others needed help related to care-experienced backgrounds, international protection, gender identity, or family and relational conflict. In many cases, students were also grappling with undiagnosed neurodivergence or complex immigration challenges. These examples represent just some of the diverse circumstances where the social worker has offered support, advocacy, and guidance—ensuring students feel seen, supported, and connected to the right resources at the right time.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received and noted the presentation from DisAbility Service and recognised the importance of the coordinating role of the Social Worker within the student supporting structures of Trinity College.

SLC/24-25/40

A.6 Academic Registry Student Survey

The Academic Registry conducts an annual student survey to gather feedback on its service provision, to ensure continuous improvement and to foster a positive feedback loop with students. The 2024/25 survey, which was open for three weeks from 8 to 22 November 2024, received 4,754 responses, representing 21% of the total student body. This marks a slight decrease from 2024 (4,981 responses), though the response rate remains strong. The survey was available in both Irish and English, with 29 students opting to complete it in Irish. A Trinity Ball ticket draw served as an incentive for participation.

Of the responses, 3,699 were from undergraduate students, 1,055 from postgraduates, and 283 from visiting students. Email was reported as the preferred method of contact with the Academic Registry, followed by in-person visits and the askAR function on the student portal. The services students reported engaging with most frequently included Applications and Admissions, Student Finance, Examinations and Assessment, and Online Module Enrolment. The majority of students rated the services as either good or excellent, reflecting generally positive sentiment.

In response to the open-ended question, “Do you have any suggestions as to how Academic Registry could improve its service to students?”, 1,134 students submitted suggestions. The most common themes among the responses included waiting times, issues with the website and portal, and general confusion about procedures. A number of improvement initiatives are underway or planned for the coming year. These include the development of a new enquiry management system incorporating AI and chatbot functionality, ongoing work on the redevelopment of the student portal (pending investment), and focused projects in high-traffic areas such as student finance and admissions. In addition, a user experience analysis of the AR website is scheduled, with the aim of enhancing clarity and usability. Visibility and signage on campus are also being reviewed, with a view to improving access and awareness at both local and institutional levels. Finally, there is a commitment to sharing information about AR services more regularly with students, to ensure greater transparency and awareness of what the office does and how it can support students throughout their time in Trinity.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received Academic Registry survey data and improvement plan and complimented the level of service offered to students.

SLC/24-25/41

A.7 Social Spaces Report

Reddy A+U Architects, a firm of 220 staff operating across seven regions and five sectors, has won 22 awards in 24 months. They are known for their commitment to ethical, data-driven design.

They were tasked with reviewing all existing informal student spaces across Trinity’s campuses. The goal was to assess the condition and functionality of these spaces and to recommend investment priorities for a new Student Hub Building, as well as Satellite Social Spaces that would complement and support the main hub.

The Reddy A+U approach was rooted in data-driven ethical design. Key tools included a student survey with over 1,200 responses, movement mapping across campus zones, a space scoring matrix, and design typologies linked to real behavioural needs.

Based on survey data, the six most frequently used zones by students were identified as: Zone 03 (Arts Building, Long Room, Reading Room), Zone 08 (East End – Smurfit, Panoz, Watts, Hamilton, O’Reilly), Zone 09 (Goldsmith Hall, TSBI, Trinity Central), Zone 05 (Civil Engineering, Pearse St., TBS), Zone 11 (The Atrium, The Buttery, The GMB), and Zone 13 (Trinity Centre, Old Stone Building, St James’s Hospital).

Each space was assessed and scored out of 100 using ten criteria: proximity to student population, universal access, environmental efficiency, power and data availability, acoustic quality, daylight and views, natural ventilation, physical condition, adjacency to amenities, and architectural and historical value.

Four key priority development areas were identified. These include the Hamilton Building and East End Mezzanine, Goldsmith Hall (specifically the Lecture Room, Café, JCR 022, and

Gallery), The Atrium and Society Spaces, and Trinity St James's Hospital (focusing on the Old Stone Building and Montgomery).

Student feedback shaped the creation of seven space typologies, each designed to reflect different modes of social behaviour and engagement. To make these more relatable, they were named after animals:

- The Meerkat represents flexible spaces that shift between solitude and casual interaction.
- The Percher refers to high-stool, quick-use areas for study, coffee, or short conversations.
- The Cave offers acoustically private spots for calls or online interaction.
- The Lounge Lion describes relaxed lounges for small groups.
- The Hive is designed for collaborative project work or society meetings.
- The Watering Hole refers to large, active spaces with food and drink.
- The Tortoise is meant for sleep or meditation, particularly for long-distance commuters.

Interestingly, most students showed a strong preference for smaller, quieter, and more agile spaces like the Meerkat, Percher, and Lounge Lion, rather than large communal areas.

The design response will integrate all seven typologies across campus, with particular emphasis on hooded Meerkat-style seating, quiet focus rooms, lounge areas, and high stool seating.

Beyond function, the entire refurbishment strategy is grounded in ethical design principles focused on inclusivity, sustainability, and wellbeing.

Inclusive design features will include gender-neutral signage and self-care spaces, accommodations for ambulant disabled and sensory-impaired users, tranquil areas to support neurodiversity, modesty and multi-faith rooms, affordable food and self-preparation areas, and facilities for parents such as feeding rooms and childcare support.

Sustainability will be embedded through the use of ethically sourced, non-toxic, and durable materials, incorporation of recycled and repurposed items, emphasis on local suppliers and craftsmanship, enhancements to energy and water efficiency, and early consideration of Digital Product Passports.

In terms of health and wellbeing, the design will incorporate biophilic elements such as greenery and natural textures, access to healthy food and filtered water, acoustic comfort, improved air quality through natural or well-calibrated ventilation, and lighting solutions that maximise natural light and support circadian rhythms.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the presentation on redevelopment proposal of student spaces, in the hope that, funding permitted, some of these works will be carried out.

SLC/24-25/42

A.8 Dean's report

The Dean of Students updated the Committee about the intention to bring more students surveys into SLC agenda. Academic Registry's surveys should be available in the coming weeks, as well as the recently closed Student Survey (for postgrads). The National Survey and the European Students Survey could also offer statistical data of significance to the Committee.

SLC/24-25/43

A.9 Any other urgent business

There was no other urgent business for discussion.

SECTION B: Reports from SLC working groups

SLC/24-25/44

B.1 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students updated the Committee that the students space project is gaining momentum, currently are seeking potential contractors' interest, screening and shortlist will follow, with a plan for the coming phases. A steering group will be formed at the appropriate time to monitor progress. It is a medium-term project with great potential to enhance students' life.

SLC/24-25/45

B.2 Orientation Steering Group

The Transition to Trinity Officer updated the Committee on the just closed Postgraduate Survey, to which 30% of postgrads participated, in line with previous years' statistics. The 3-minutes Thesis Competition's final would take place the following Thursday, it is usually a very good occurrence, and the quality of the candidates' presentation was very good this year. The Skills for Success programme would be starting in April for March entrant students, and the series of events would be delivered online.

SECTION C: Items for noting and/or approval

SLC/24-25/46

C.1 Death response plan

The Committee noted the revised text of the Death response plan; one Committee member asked about circulation of the document, which it was confirmed will be circulated.

SLC/24-25/47

C.2 Capitation Committee draft minutes

The Committee approved the draft minutes dated 26-11-24.

SLC/24-25/48

C.4 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2024-25

To note the remaining Student Life Committee dates for this academic year as follows:

Circulation date	Meeting Date
22April	29April
13 May	20 May

Venue: Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Meeting times: 11am – 1pm