



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

5 November 2024, 11am, Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Ms Jenny Maguire (President, Students' Union), 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 Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Ms Louise Staunton (nominee, Director of Internationalisation), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Ms Faith Olopade (President, Central Societies Committee), Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD).

Apologies: Mr Marcus Boggan (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Mr Luke Johnston (representative, Scholars' Committee), Ms Kay Williams (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy) Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary)

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

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/24-25/11

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 1st October 2024.

SLC/24-25/12

A.2 Matters Arising

The SU President noted that the circulation of SLC paperwork occasionally extends beyond the agreed deadline. The Dean of Students acknowledged this and stated that every effort will be made to ensure timely distribution whenever possible.

Regarding the revised Mental Health Policy, it was confirmed that the next step is approval by Council.

SLC/24-25/13

A.3 Off-Books – new guide for students

Ms. Jennifer Pepper presented the newly revised *Off-Books* guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students, now available on the Academic Registry website. The guide provides comprehensive information for students considering taking a year *off-books* during their studies at Trinity. It outlines key steps to take before making this decision, as well as procedures

for returning to College, fee implications, exceptions, and a detailed checklist. The guide includes dedicated sections for undergraduate and postgraduate students. A second phase of this update will introduce a guide specifically for postgraduate research students.

The Committee welcomed the guide and provided several suggestions for further enhancement, including:

- Making the guide available in Irish through translation;
- Including a recommendation that students intending to go *off-books* should refrain from registering and paying fees, as these would later require a refund;
- Clarifying that the *free fees* scheme for a medical repeat year applies only to EU fee-paying students;
- Incorporating a list of available support services for *off-books* students;
- Highlighting activities students may wish to engage in during their *off-books* year, potentially including testimonial videos from students who have taken this route;
- Stating explicitly that *off-books* students must vacate their on-campus accommodation;
- Expanding the *Fitness to Return* requirements, specifying that students must submit a letter from their treating doctor to Student Cases for review.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Off-Books revised guidelines memo and presentation by Ms Pepper.

SLC/24-25/14

A.4 PG Research – Directory, Point of Contact (AR) and Employment event

Ms. Jennifer Pepper provided an update on the *Postgraduate Research* project, which was proposed by the postgraduate student representatives at the SLC in the previous academic year.

As part of this initiative, the Academic Registry has appointed a dedicated *Postgraduate Research* point of contact who liaises with all faculties, supports postgraduate research students, and addresses their specific queries.

Additionally, a *Postgraduate Research* networking and employment event has been established as part of the project. This event will be held regularly to support new entrants in building professional connections.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the presentation on Postgraduate Research students by Ms Pepper.

SLC/24-25/15

A.5 ASD Strategic Plan – memo and presentation

Ms. Fedelma McNamara from the Academic Services Division provided an update on the development of the next *Strategic Plan*. While the consultation phase has already concluded, the purpose of this update was to seek input from the newly elected SU representatives and to inform the Committee of the progress made. Feedback can still be submitted via the dedicated email address or by contacting Ms. McNamara directly.

The *Strategic Plan* is structured around five key pillars: students, staff, education, research, and sustainability. A central enabler across all these areas is digital transformation, ensuring that the Plan's high-level deliverables are both impactful and measurable.

In response, the Committee proposed several recommendations:

- Translating the *Strategic Plan* into Irish, in line with legal requirements for public sector documents;
- Ensuring that Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations are fully integrated throughout the Plan;
- Expanding the concept of *health* within the Plan to encompass students, staff, and the broader community, addressing not only mental and physical well-being but also spiritual health.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Strategic Plan update from Ms McNamara.

SLC/24-25/16

A.6 Orientation 2024 Review

The *Transition to Trinity Officer* provided the Committee with an update on *Orientation 2024/25*. The Postgraduate orientation programme, retained in 2024, was delivered in a hybrid format, leading to an overall increase in participation rates compared to 2023. Similarly, Erasmus and Visiting Students' orientation was also hybrid, with a notably high in-person attendance, despite most module enrolment meetings being conducted online. Undergraduate orientation was fully in-person, with excellent attendance (nearly full capacity), including *Student 2 Student (S2S)* talks, which had to take place in the evening due to teaching occupying most venues during the day.

Communication with incoming students began over the summer through the "*What Would You Like to Know on Wednesday?*" Instagram Q&A series, which was based on actual student queries and saw high engagement levels. Service information talks and the Officers' Welcome were also well attended, covering key topics such as admissions, accommodation, clubs and societies, and sports.

One of the ongoing challenges remains the staggered start of the academic year, with *Freshers' Week* overlapping with the beginning of teaching for continuing students. This scheduling adds pressure on S2S, as peer-led talks had to take place in the evening due to space constraints. Securing room bookings for orientation events remains difficult due to competition with teaching allocations.

Students were informed about the orientation timetable via the website. A total of 80 campus tours were organised and coordinated, and the Postgraduate social event was particularly successful.

Looking ahead to *Undergraduate Orientation 2025*, efforts will focus on enhancing freshers' engagement and interaction over the summer through social media initiatives.

The *Transition to Trinity Officer* expressed gratitude to all those involved in the orientation programme, with particular thanks to Ms. Alice Payne, who works alongside her in the *Transition to Trinity Office*.

The *Senior Tutor* added that all freshers were allocated a tutor in a timely manner this year. However, it was noted that CAO Round 3, 4, and 5 offers occur after *Orientation Week*, making it difficult to disseminate relevant information to late entrants. A potential solution could be to provide recordings of key orientation sessions and for S2S to organise a Q&A session specifically for these students.

From a *postgraduate perspective*, having dedicated orientation events for researchers was seen as a significant improvement, reinforcing Trinity's identity as a research-led institution and reflecting a good use of former *GSU* funds.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the Transition to Trinity Officer's report and thanked and congratulated her for the high standard and resulting success achieved.

SLC/24-25/17

A.7 Period Dignity on Campus

The *SU Equality and Welfare Officer* provided an update on the trial of the *Period Products Initiative*, which has received €22,000 in funding from the Government, matched by an additional €22,000 from the College. While Government funding is expected to continue in the coming years, College funding is currently allocated on a one-year basis.

Period products will be made available to students and staff at seven locations, now including *TBSI*, as well as selected sites off the main campus. *Estates and Facilities* staff have kindly agreed to manage the distribution and restocking of products while supplies last.

The *SU* noted that the €44,000 budget is expected to be depleted quickly. While securing funding remains essential, the success of the initiative also heavily relies on the goodwill of *Estates and Facilities* staff, who have taken on the additional responsibility of maintaining the dispensers.

A potential next step is to collect comprehensive data on the trial's usage and impact to build a *business case* for securing core TCDF funding. This approach would highlight the service's contribution to students' academic success and overall experience at Trinity. To support this effort, it was suggested to gather user data and potentially involve *Martina Mullins, Healthy Trinity Officer*, in the campaign.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received and approved the SU Period Dignity update.

SLC/24-25/18

A.8 Dean's Report

The *Dean* provided an update on the forthcoming Postvention Policy, which has been developed as an addendum to the existing *Student Death Policy* to address the needs and expectations of the College community in the event of a student suicide. A working group has been established and will soon commence training volunteers from the staff community to support the implementation of the policy.

Additionally, the *Higher Education Authority (HEA)* is conducting a survey on student accommodation, with *Neil Murphy* collaborating with the *SU* on this initiative. It was also noted that Christian Church activists have been present on campus at night once again. Actions are being taken to prevent their presence within College grounds.

SLC/24-25/19

A.9 Any other business

A Committee member noted that all Semester I exams have been successfully held on campus this academic year, and it is anticipated that the same arrangement will be feasible for Semester II. This was acknowledged as a significant achievement. The exam timetable for the upcoming assessment period will be made available to students via *my.tcd.ie* on November 7th.

The *Director of Disability Services (DS)* informed the Committee that the first week of December will mark Disability Week, during which a variety of events will take place across campus. All members of the College community are encouraged to participate and support the initiative.

SECTION B: Reports from SLC Working Groups

SLC/24/25/20

B1. Student Centre Working Group

The SU President updated that an agreement has been reached for the Student Centre to be a space in the Science Gallery. This is a great achievement and it is envisaged that the space will be officialised at December College Board meeting. This is a huge step forward for all students.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the update from the SU President.

SLC/24-25/21

B.1 Orientation Steering Group

The Transition to Trinity Officer said that the Skills for Success for Postgrads lunchtime session is now half-way through, with very good attendance online versus in person. The PhD-specific orientation has also worked well.

The advertising of the 3-Minutes Thesis Competition will be go live before Christmas.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the update from the Transition to Trinity Officer.

SECTION C: Items for noting and/or approval

SLC/24-25/22

C.1 Postgraduate Financial Assistance Advisory Group minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 8th October 2024

SLC/24-25/23

C.2 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
10 December	17 December
11 February	18 Feb
11 March	18 March
22 April	29 April
13 May	20 May

Venue: Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Meeting times: 11am – 1pm
