



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

20 May 2025, 11am, TBS Boardroom

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), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy), Mr Ciaran Doherty (Director, Careers Advisory Service), Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Mr Marcus Boggan (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer).

Apologies: Ms Camilla Persello (representative, Scholars' Committee), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Ms Louise Staunton (Associate Director of Trinity Global), Ms Faith Olopade (President, Central Societies Committee), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Ms Kay Williams (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary), Mr Matthew Dosset (Deputy (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer), Ms Rachel Skelly (Dignity, Respect & Consent Response Manager), Mr Peter Dudley (Deputy Head of Readers' Service).

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

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/24-25/61

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 29th April 2025.

SLC/24-25/62

A.2 Matters Arising

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

SLC/24-25/63

A.3 Postgraduate Renewal update

The Committee received a presentation from the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Programme Director on the Postgraduate Renewal Programme.

The vision for postgraduate education at Trinity was outlined as "a stimulating, inclusive, and sustainable research and learning environment, where curious minds and creative thinkers thrive." The Programme is structured across three horizons: short-term

imperatives (clarify and simplify), medium-term enhancements, and long-term innovation/digital transformation.

Key achievements to date were highlighted, including:

- Launch of the Trinity Research Doctorate Awards.
- Implementation of guidelines and recognition frameworks for postgraduate researchers involved in teaching and learning.
- Introduction of a new framework for English language requirements.
- Development of streamlined processes for postgraduate taught (PGT) programme approval and amendments.
- New conflict resolution guidelines for the supervision relationship.

Ongoing deliverables (2024–25) include postgraduate research (PGR) student journey mapping, integration of assessment and progression into SITS, stipend payment processes, enhancements to the admissions portal, and the rollout of the Trinity Triple I framework (International, Intersectoral, Interdisciplinary).

The Committee also noted the development of the 6Rs Conflict Management Framework for supervisors and students, as well as revised resources including the Viva Voce guide, supervision best practice guide, and research student handbook.

ACTION: Student Life Committee welcomed the progress and commended the collaborative approach taken with students and staff across the College community. It was agreed that further updates will be brought to the Committee as the Programme progresses.

SLC/24-25/64

A.4 The Laidlaw Library

The Committee received a presentation from the Librarian and College Archivist on the plans for the new Laidlaw Research & Innovation Library at the Trinity East campus. The Library will form part of a phased development of the 5.5-acre site in the Dublin Innovation District. The “green phase” includes delivery of the Research & Innovation Library, the Portal (an innovation hub providing workspaces, café, and event spaces), as well as site preparation, sustainability infrastructure, and design guidelines. The Portal is due for completion in Q1 2025.

The presentation emphasised the opportunity for a digital-first library model, raising questions around what unique services such a library could deliver, how it might address current gaps and future needs, and which international examples could serve as inspiration.

ACTION: Student Life Committee welcomed the update and discussed the potential for the new Library to enhance innovation, research collaboration, and the overall student experience.

A.5 Careers Service Annual Report

The Committee received the annual report from the Careers Service, which outlined progress and developments over the 2023/24 academic year and set out priorities for 2025.

The Service's mission was highlighted as providing trusted expertise, building student confidence, and creating meaningful connections to support student employability. Members were informed of a number of positive developments during the year, including an expansion of staff capacity, a redesign of the Careers Award to increase its accessibility and relevance, and enhanced communications designed to make services more inclusive and visible to the student community.

Data from *MyCareer*, the Service's online career management platform, indicated strong and growing levels of engagement: 41% of the overall student body (undergraduate and postgraduate) were active in 2023/24, representing a 3% increase on the previous year. Furthermore, 49% of graduates from the Class of 2023 continued to use the system throughout the year, demonstrating sustained interest in and reliance on Careers Service supports beyond graduation.

Looking ahead, the Service will focus on a series of strategic initiatives in 2025, including: a full redesign of the Careers Service website to improve user experience; expansion of the mentorship programme; exploration of artificial intelligence to support career readiness; and embedding sustainability principles into careers education and employer engagement.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the progress achieved and emphasised the importance of continuing to strengthen partnerships with employers, broadening opportunities for students, and ensuring alignment with Trinity's institutional priorities. Members also encouraged further promotion of the Careers Service's resources to ensure high visibility and accessibility across the student body.

A.6 Senior Tutor's Office Annual Report

The Committee received the Senior Tutor's Annual Report for 2024/25, which provided a comprehensive overview of the activities, services, and supports delivered by the Senior Tutor's Office (STO): Undergraduate Office and the Postgraduate Advisory Service (PAS).

The report highlighted that there are currently 291 tutors supporting 14,039 students in chambers, with five professional staff working within the STO and PAS. Tutor recruitment and retention remain a priority: in 2023/24, there were 47 resignations and 52 new appointments, although a small number of new tutors stood down shortly after appointment. Training continues to be delivered through a structured programme, including two full days for new tutors, supported by recorded sessions and a Blackboard module covering areas such as student cases, academic integrity, fees, health and wellbeing, and diversity. Ongoing training is provided both in person and online, and tutors are kept informed through a limited number of comprehensive emails each year, alongside targeted communications such as the Project Fresh Start series for Junior Fresh students. Average chamber sizes remain above the aspiration of

40 students, with the current figure closer to 48, and work continues to improve data collection and chamber balance.

The Undergraduate Support Service managed over 10,500 student interactions in 2023/24, covering academic progression, financial assistance, emotional wellbeing, and complex case coordination. The reinstated Student Parent and Carer Network has had a strong impact, with regular coffee mornings, social events, and the continuation of the Provost's House lunch. Funding streams dedicated to childcare and parenting were highlighted, including HEA allocations secured by the Students' Union.

The Senior Tutor's Office and tutors also handled over 3,000 individual student cases during the year, including appeals, withdrawals, exam accommodations, deferrals, and progression issues. It was noted that a new policy on coursework extensions has been introduced to address the high volume of requests, which can reach up to 560 per week at peak times.

The Student Assistance Fund remains one of the biggest undertakings of the office and distributed overall €545,000 to 317 students this year, with processes significantly streamlined compared to previous years. Applications are processed more efficiently, ensuring quicker access to funds, and additional attention has been given to the needs of student parents.

The Postgraduate Advisory Service reported 15,505 contacts in 2023/24, reflecting a continuing rise in demand. The service, staffed by two full-time staff members, provides confidential and independent support that is solution-focused and constructivist in approach. Its activities include one-to-one consultations, case management, training workshops, newsletters, and financial supports. In 2023/24, 149 postgraduate students received financial support through the Postgraduate Student Assistance Fund, with a total of €228,644 distributed. This compares to €44,000 in 2016/17, highlighting the scale of increasing need. Survey feedback showed that over 90% of students reported that PAS support helped them to stay in College, improved their overall wellbeing, and enhanced their academic experience. In addition, students strongly affirmed that PAS workshops and guidance improved their academic performance and confidence.

ACTION: The Committee welcomed the report and commended the breadth and depth of support provided by both the Senior Tutor's Office and the Postgraduate Advisory Service. Members noted the increasing complexity of student needs and highlighted the importance of sustainable resourcing, continued emphasis on tutor recruitment and training.

SLC/24-25/67

A.7 Student Partnership Agreement

The Student Union Education Officer presented to the Student Life Committee the Trinity College Dublin × Student Union/AMLCT Student Partnership Policy for 2024–2025. The Policy sets out the framework for collaboration between the University, students, and the Students' Union, emphasising reciprocal engagement, quality enhancement, and inclusivity across academic, personal, and co-/extra-curricular aspects of student life.

The agreement outlines the scope of partnership activities and typical areas of interaction, including teaching and learning, assessment, student services, orientation of new entrants, alumni engagement, and the operation of student and sports unions. It highlights responsibilities and assurances for both Trinity and students, focusing on transparency, accessibility, dignity and respect, and the promotion of diversity and inclusion.

The document also details mechanisms for issue resolution, code of conduct procedures, and support structures, ensuring that students have access to guidance, representation, and recourse through personal tutors, the Postgraduate Advisory Service, and the Students' Union.

Committees and working groups referenced in the agreement include those overseeing curriculum inclusivity, joint honours governance, electives, research and innovation, and postgraduate renewal programmes, all of which facilitate structured engagement between students and College staff.

The Policy is intended to guide practical collaboration while respecting University regulations, providing a shared roadmap to enhance the student experience across all levels of study.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the Student Partnership agreement and commended the effort made to make it such an impactful document.

SLC/24-25/68

A.8 Dual Career Policy Development – High Performance Sport

Student Life Committee received an update from the Deputy Director of Sport and Physical Activity on the ongoing feasibility and consultation process for a proposed Dual Career Policy for student athletes at Trinity College Dublin. The policy forms part of the Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity, Realising Potential, and aims to support student wellbeing and academic excellence for athletes pursuing elite-level sport alongside full-time study.

Background:

- Dual career student athletes face challenges balancing training, competition, travel, and academic requirements.
- Trinity currently offers supports such as scholarships and tailored academic arrangements, but no formal university-wide policy exists.
- Achieving full Sport Ireland Institute Affiliate Accreditation for Student Athlete Support requires a comprehensive policy framework.

Guiding Principles (draft):

- Eligibility: Recognition for carded athletes, international representatives, professional athletes under NGB-affiliated organisations, and Trinity Sport Scholarship recipients.

- Recognition & Registration: Potential creation of a Dual Career Student Register; NGB support letters required for recognition.
- Academic Flexibility: Guidelines for attendance exceptions, extensions, rescheduled exams, alternative assessments; consideration of a personal tutor for dual career students.
- Communication: Early identification of students and standardised procedures for notifying academic departments of sporting commitments.
- Support Structures: Access to mentoring, mental health supports, career guidance, and potentially tailored accommodation.
- Monitoring & Review: Annual review of policy effectiveness with feedback from students and staff; consideration of past case studies.

Stakeholder Engagement:

Consultation has included current and former student athletes, academic staff, Trinity Sport, Senior Tutor's Office, NGBs, and Sport Ireland. Feedback highlights the need for clarity, consistency, and balance between academic standards and athlete flexibility. Further academic-level engagement is planned.

Next Steps / Timeline:

- Initial Consultation: Jan – June 2025
- Feedback Collection: May – June 2025
- Policy Drafting: July – September 2025
- Draft Submission & Feedback from SLC: October 2025

ACTION: SLC received the update and is looking forward to receiving the Dual Career policy draft in October 2025.

SLC/24-25/69

A.9 Dean's Report

The Dean of Students updated the Committee that the students space project is making good progress with the establishment of a steering group in April, chaired by the Dean.

SLC/24-25/70

A.10 Any Urgent Business

There was no urgent business brought to the attention of the Committee.

Section B: Report from SLC Working Groups

SLC/24-25/71

B.1 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students updated the Committee that the students space project is making good progress, the plan to refurbish the Science Gallery space is well under way, with expected tenders very soon. The HEA approved the project which is expected to be completed by end-of 2027 with opening in early 2028.

SLC/24-25/72

B.2 Orientation Steering Group

Orientation programme is almost finalised, with Postgraduate and Visiting students' orientation scheduled for week of 08/09/25, while Undergraduate orientation will take place on the week of 15/09/25.

The 3-minutes thesis competition was concluded.

Section C: Items to note and/or approve

SLC/24-25/73

C.1 New Financial Assistance Committee structure

Student Life Committee approved a memorandum from the Senior Tutor dated 17/05/25 about the new Financial Assistance Committee structure.

SLC/24-25/74

C.2 Undergraduate Financial Assistance Committee meeting minutes

Student Life Committee approved the Undergraduate Financial Assistance Committee minutes dated 10/02/25.

SLC/24-25/75

C.3 Capitation Committee meeting minutes

Student Life Committee approved the Capitation Committee minutes dated 27/02/25.

SLC/24-25/76

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

There are no more SLC meeting dates for the academic year 24/25.