



**Trinity College Dublin  
The University of Dublin**

**Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee**

**30 September 2025, 11am, TBS Boardroom**

Present: Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Mx Sean T O'Leary (President, Students' Union), Ms Deirdre Leahy (Equality and Welfare Officer, Students' Union), Ms Camilla Persello (representative, Scholars' Committee), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy), Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Ms Louise Staunton (Associate Director of Trinity Global), Ms Jane Prendergast (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Mr Conchur O' Cathasaigh (President, Central Societies Committee), Mr Maximillian Evans-Schmit (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer).

Apologies: Mr Ciaran Doherty (Director, Careers Advisory Service).

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

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The Dean of Students welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year 2025/26.

**SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters**

**SLC/25-26/01**

**A.1 Minutes**

The Committee approved the minutes dated 20 May 2025.

**SLC/25-26/02**

**A.2 Matters Arising**

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

**SLC/25-26/03**

**A.3 Student Services Expenditure Reporting 2023/24**

The Committee received a presentation from the Financial Services Division (FSD) on Student Services Expenditure Reporting for the academic year 2023/24. It was recalled that the original sector-wide reporting requirement, introduced by the HEA in 2012, had since been discontinued; however, FSD has continued to produce the report annually for the purposes of internal management oversight and in anticipation of Freedom of Information requests. Members were advised that, in November 2024, the HEA reissued a revised reporting template for the sector, which places greater emphasis on student-related expenditure and on the use of the student levy. In light of this development, it was agreed

that the Student Services Expenditure Report will be added to the Student Life Committee's annual business schedule as a standing item for noting.

The Committee was informed that the report encompasses both income and expenditure, across pay and non-pay headings, for a broad range of student-facing services. These include the Student Services Division (comprising Counselling, Student Health, Disability Service, the Sports Centre, and the College Crèche), relevant areas of the Academic Services Division (specifically the Careers Service, the Senior Tutor's Office, including Financial Assistance and Tutorial Expenses, and the Access Office), supports available through Trinity Global for international students, and funding channelled through the Capitation Committee to the Students' Union, sports clubs, societies and student publications.

In terms of headline figures, the Committee noted that overall income in 2023/24 had risen by 2% in comparison with the previous year, while the budget set for 2024/25 stands at €7.7 million, a slight decrease on the 2023/24 outturn. Pay expenditure increased by 11% year-on-year, a rise attributed primarily to national pay awards and incremental progression. Non-pay expenditure also grew, rising by 8% over the same period, driven largely by inflationary pressures. As a consequence of these combined factors, net expenditure increased by 18% in 2023/24. The Committee further noted that the approved budget for 2024/25 represents a 14% increase on the 2023/24 actual net expenditure.

During discussion, members observed the widening gap between expenditure and income and the cumulative effects of both pay and non-pay inflation on service delivery. The importance of striking an appropriate balance between areas that generate income and those that rely predominantly on core grant or philanthropic funding was acknowledged. It was confirmed that individual budget meetings with each service area will continue to play an essential role in ensuring that financial allocations remain realistic, sustainable, and aligned with institutional priorities.

**ACTION: Student Life Committee welcomed the presentation and noted the report and it was agreed that Student Services Expenditure Reporting will remain a standing item for annual review by the Committee.**

SLC/25-26/04

#### **A.4 International Student Consultation (ISC) – Lived Experience of International Students 2024–2025**

The Committee received a presentation from Trinity Global giving an overview of the International Student Consultation (ISC) undertaken in 2024–2025, which sought to capture the lived experience of Trinity's international student cohort. Members were reminded that the exercise was developed in response to the limitations of previous externally sourced datasets, and with the intention of creating an institutionally owned evidence base that can be expanded on an annual basis. The resulting dataset will support the identification of emerging trends, as well as areas of strength and those requiring enhancement in respect of international student experience.

The Committee noted that 16.1% of the international student population (1,256 students) completed the consultation in full, while a wider group of 1,784 students — representing

23% of those invited — engaged meaningfully with the exercise. It was further noted that international students now account for 36% of the overall student body (8,270 students), making this dataset particularly important for institutional planning.

In reviewing the headline findings, members observed that levels of overall satisfaction among international students were very high, with visiting students reporting the most positive experience and postgraduate research students registering the lowest satisfaction levels. Students expressed a desire for greater visibility and promotion of student health, visa, and employment supports, and a number of respondents highlighted the absence of tailored orientation opportunities for students who arrive outside of the usual September entry point. Postgraduate students also commonly perceived student societies as being more geared towards the undergraduate experience.

With regard to housing and cost of living, the Committee noted that students living in Trinity-owned accommodation generally reported positive experiences. However, concerns relating to the high cost and limited availability of suitable accommodation, together with perceptions of safety in parts of the wider city, were cited as recurring issues. Rising living costs, including groceries and rent, were reported as significant factors negatively affecting student experience.

The Committee further noted that while feedback on the campus environment was overwhelmingly positive, some postgraduate research students remarked on challenges relating to belonging and integration. A number of respondents called for the provision of a centrally located prayer room for Muslim students, and there was clear demand for an expanded range of vegetarian, vegan, and halal food options on campus.

Finally, the data relating to racism and discrimination indicated that between 80% and 87% of respondents had never experienced racism within Trinity, and fewer than 3% reported experiencing it often. However, several students referenced racist incidents occurring in Dublin more generally, prompting discussion on the extent to which the University can or should provide support in relation to matters arising off-campus.

**ACTION: Student Life Committee welcomed the update and noted that while international students are generally highly positive about their Trinity experience, significant challenges remain, particularly in areas of cost of living, housing, and PGR integration. It was agreed that Trinity Global will continue to refine the dataset and provide fuller reporting to relevant stakeholders. The Committee endorsed further exploration of tailored supports for PGRs, expanded orientation opportunities, and student service promotion.**

#### **A.5 Dean's Report – 2025/26 workplan and priorities**

SLC/25-26/05

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.**

SLC/25-26/06

A.6 Any Urgent Business

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**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.**

## 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.