



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

**Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee
18 November 2025, 11am, TBS Boardroom**

Present: Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Mr Buster Whales (pp President, Students' Union), Ms Deirdre Leahy (Equality and Welfare Officer, Students' Union), Ms Camilla Persello (representative, Scholars' Committee), Ms Orla Bannon (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), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Ms Jane Prendergast (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Mr Conchúr Ó Cathasaigh (Chairperson, Central Societies Committee), Mr Maximillian Evans-Schmit (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Dr Dónal MacDónaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer) Mr Aziel Zafar (Postgraduate Taught Officer, Students' Union).

Apologies: Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Ms Louise Staunton (Associate Director of Trinity Global), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Mr Peter Dudley (Deputy Head of Readers' Service).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary), Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer), Ms Rachel Skelly (Dignity, Respect & Consent Response Manager), Ms Wendy Crampton (Director of Trinity Access Programmes).

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

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/25-26/12 A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 30 September 2025.

SLC/25-26/13 A.2 Matters Arising

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

SLC/25-26/14 A.3 Tobacco and E-Cigarette Policy Update

The Committee received a presentation from the Medical Director of College Health and the Healthy Campus Manager (Trinity Sustainability and College Health) outlining proposed amendments to Trinity's Tobacco and E-Cigarette Policy. The proposal, developed under the Healthy Trinity: Tobacco initiative and aligned with the Sustainability Strategy 2025–2030 (Action 3.5.6 "Healthy Planet, Healthy People"), seeks to extend the existing Tobacco Free Campus policy to include e-cigarettes.

Members heard that Trinity is currently a tobacco-free campus with three designated smoking areas, while outdoor vaping remains permitted. Under the proposed policy, e-cigarettes would be treated in the same way as cigarettes: their use would continue to be prohibited indoors and requested not to occur outdoors, except in the three designated smoking/vaping areas. The proposed change is intended to reflect national trends and evidence showing increased e-cigarette use among students, while maintaining Trinity's leadership in health-promoting and sustainable campus practice.

The Committee noted the evidence presented from Trinity's Living Lab data, which demonstrated a 79% reduction in smoking on campus since 2016 and a recent increase in vaping prevalence (from 0.9 vapers per observation in 2022/23 to 2.1 in 2024/25). A 2023 survey of 2,613 students and staff found a 32% prevalence of vaping and strong community support for restricting outdoor vaping, with 66% of undergraduates, 75% of postgraduates, and 82% of staff favouring additional restrictions.

It was further noted that the proposed revision would carry no additional funding requirement, as implementation costs will be met jointly by College Health and Trinity Sustainability (€14,000 total). Communication plans include updated signage, Healthy Trinity Ambassador campaigns, and integration into orientation, social media, and digital channels, under the Healthy People, Healthy Planet theme.

During discussion, members welcomed the proactive and evidence-based approach taken by the Healthy Trinity team and noted the strong alignment with Trinity's Sustainability Strategy and Healthy Campus Charter. It was also recognised that the proposed policy advances equality, wellbeing, and environmental goals by reducing exposure to harmful substances, discouraging addiction, and addressing the environmental impact of vaping-related waste.

ACTION: Student Life Committee endorsed the proposed policy revision to extend Trinity's Tobacco Free Campus policy to include e-cigarettes and recommended that it proceed to the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Environment and Sustainability Committee for consideration and onward recommendation to Board for approval in early 2026.

SLC/25-26/15

A.4 SLC Policies Update

The Committee received an update from the Postgraduate Support Officer on the status of a number of Student Life Committee policies currently under review or revision. The update covered the Fitness to Study Policy, the Alcohol Policy, and the Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy Policy.

In relation to the Fitness to Study Policy, it was noted that the current version was last approved for the 2023–24 academic year, with the next full revision scheduled for 2028–29. However, recent amendments to the 2010 Consolidated Statutes necessitate interim revisions to this policy. In particular, the Mental Health and Fitness to Study schedules are to be merged into a single Student Capacity schedule, and the Student Conduct and Capacity Committee is to be dissolved, with responsibility for capacity cases transferred to

the Academic Appeals Committee. Updates to terminology and statutory references will also be required to align with these structural changes. Drafting of the revised text is underway, with submission to decision makers and advisory groups planned for November and December 2025, and final approval anticipated by the end of the calendar year. The Committee also noted progress on the revision of the Alcohol Policy. The policy, first approved in 2002 and last revised in 2014, has been substantially redrafted under the academic and clinical leadership of the Dean of Students and a relevant School of Medicine lead. The new text reaffirms Trinity's position as a health-promoting university, recognising alcohol as a culturally embedded but regulated substance within the College community. The policy provides for education and information on alcohol, support for students who choose not to drink, and clear conditions governing the sale, sponsorship, and promotion of alcohol on campus or at student events. The revised draft was approved by the Dean of Students in October 2025 and is currently with the Provost's Office and Secretary's Office for comment, before wider consultation with stakeholders including student services, disciplinary officers, Healthy Trinity, and student representative bodies. Finally, the Committee was informed that the Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy Policy, last revised in 2024, is scheduled for review again in 2026. The next revision will aim to refine sections related to exam accommodations for pregnant students and to clarify maternity leave arrangements for postgraduate research students. It will also offer an opportunity to align the structure of the document with the newer SLC policy format for consistency across the suite of student support policies.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the ongoing policy review work and endorsed the outlined timelines and consultation plans for each policy. The Committee commended the coordinated approach being taken to ensure alignment with Trinity's strategic priorities in student wellbeing, inclusion, and health promotion.

SLC/25-26/16

A.5 Dean's Report

The Committee received a report from the Dean of Students on current activities and strategic priorities. Work continues on the implementation plan for the College Strategic Plan *Thrive*. The Dean of Students and the Head of Student Services are leading on Commitment 3, *Enhancing Student Belonging and Connection in an Engaged and Healthy University*, reporting to the Strategic Plan Management Group chaired by the Provost. The plan is a living document that will continue to be refined through consultation with students, heads of services, and other stakeholders. Four main areas of work are covered under this commitment: (3.1) a fully supported student journey; (3.2) a student centre and network of student spaces; (3.3) transformed sport and healthy living; and (3.4) a socially connected university.

The Committee was informed that the new *Taught National Student Survey* was launched on 10 November 2025 and will be implemented in February 2026. This new survey, developed by the HEA in consultation with students from across the higher education sector, covers both undergraduate and taught postgraduate cohorts. The initiative has been strongly endorsed by Aontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn (USI) and reflects extensive input

from student representatives across participating institutions. The Dean confirmed that Trinity, in partnership with the Students' Union, will actively promote participation in the survey in the new year.

Members also noted the success of the inaugural *Posters in Parliament* event, held in Leinster House on 12 November 2025, at which Trinity students were among the national award winners. The Dean reported that the event showcased the research excellence of undergraduate students and received positive attention from national policymakers and the Minister for Further and Higher Education.

The Dean further reported on the introduction of a new *Dean of Students Award* for good citizenship, to recognise acts of bravery, kindness and civic engagement by Trinity students. The first recipients, two recent Zoology graduates, will receive their award at a ceremony in the Atrium on 5 December 2025.

The Committee also noted the recent *Trinity Student Sports Scholarship Awards* held in the Dining Hall on 10 November, celebrating the achievements of outstanding Trinity athletes. In addition, Trinity Sport has been recognised internationally, receiving a FISU global gender equality award for its *Women in Sport* campaign. The Committee further noted that Trinity's Director of Sport and Physical Activity has been named among the fifty most influential women in sport by *Sport for Business*.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Dean's report with thanks and welcomed the continued progress on the implementation of the *Thrive Strategic Plan*, the upcoming Taught National Student Survey, and the recognition of student and staff achievements across the College community.

SLC/25-26/17

A.6 Any Urgent Business

The Director of the Disability Service raised an urgent matter concerning the accessibility of House VI, which accommodates the Students' Union and the Central Societies Committee. The Committee was informed that the estimated cost of making the building fully accessible has risen significantly from the original projection of approximately €400,000. Both the Students' Union and the Central Societies Committee expressed concern that the ongoing inaccessibility of the premises places staff and students with disabilities at a clear disadvantage.

It was suggested that the lift access available at Regent's House might offer a partial solution through potential connection to House VI; however, this would not address accessibility to the higher floors of House VI. While the possibility of including this issue on the agenda of the Student Centre Planning Group had been raised, members agreed that, given the urgency, importance, and potential financial implications, a dedicated working group should be established to consider the matter in detail.

It was further agreed that, in the event that the necessary works are approved and proceed, the Students' Union and the Central Societies Committee should approach the Space Allocation Group to identify alternative temporary accommodation while the accessibility adaptations are being carried out.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the urgency of the matter and agreed that a dedicated working group be established to explore options for achieving full accessibility in House VI, including cost implications and interim arrangements.

Section B: Report from SLC Working Groups

SLC/25-26/18

B.1 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students updated the Committee on progress with the Student Centre Project. The Dean of Students reported that the project remains on track, with the next progress report from the Project Manager scheduled for 24 November 2025. It was noted that the refurbishment of the Science Gallery space continues to advance in line with the approved project plan, with tenders expected shortly. The project is being delivered under the oversight of the Student Centre Working Group and is expected to reach completion by the end of 2027, with the new facility opening in early 2028.

SLC/25-26/19

B.2 Orientation Steering Group

The Transition to Trinity Officer update the Committee to say that a full 2025 orientation report will be presented at earliest opportunity, while the Skills for Success programme continues to be well received. Orientation for incoming visiting students is scheduled for the week of 12th January 2026.

The Dean of Students also informed that the Postgraduate Researcher who won Trinity's Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition and the Coimbra University Award, "*Triggering Healing: Materials that outsmart Brain Cancer*", would represent Trinity at the national 3MT final taking place on 19 November 2025 at the Royal Irish Academy.

Section C: Items to note and/or approve

SLC/25-26/20

C.1 Student Life Committee Membership 2024-25

Student Life Committee noted updates to its membership for the 2025–26 academic year, including ex officio and invited members, as outlined in the agenda. The Committee also noted one resignation.

SLC/25-26/21

C.3 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2025-26

Student Life Committee noted upcoming dates for this academic year as follows:

Document Submission Deadline	Circulation	SLC meeting date
8 December 2025	9 December 2025	16 December 2025
26 January 2026	27 January 2026	3 February 2026
2 March 2026	3 March 2026	10 March 2026
30 March 2026	31 March 2026	7 April 2026
4 May 2026	5 May 2026	12 May 2026