



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

12 May 2026, 11am, TBS Boardroom

Present: Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Ms Grace McNally (President, Students' Union), Ms Deirdre Leahy (Equality and Welfare Officer, Students' Union), Ms Camilla Persello (representative, Scholars' Committee), Ms Jo Harney (pp Director of Student Counselling Services), Ms Orla Bannon (Director, Careers Advisory Service), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Mr Kieran Lewis (pp Director, College Disability Service), Mr Aidan Marsh (pp Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer), Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Ms Jane Prendergast (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Mr Conchúr Ó Cathasaigh (Chairperson, Central Societies Committee), Mr Maximillian Evans-Schmid (Chairperson, Trinity Publications),

Apologies: Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy), Ms Louise Staunton (Associate Director of Trinity Global), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Mr Aziel Zafar (Postgraduate Taught Officer, Students' Union), Ms Wendy Crampton (Director of Trinity Access Programmes).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary), Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, Student Learning Development) Ms Rachel Skelly (Dignity, Respect & Consent Response Manager) Mr Peter Dudley (Deputy Head of Readers' Service).

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

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/25-26/66

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 7 April 2026.

SLC/25-26/67

A.2 Matters Arising

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

SLC/25-26/68

A.3 The Time/Space Challenge – Timetabling Project

The Committee received a presentation from the College Bursar on the Time/Space Challenge and the ongoing work to explore how timetabling can better support the objectives of the College Strategic Plan.

Members heard that timetabling is increasingly recognised as a key enabling function underpinning a number of strategic priorities, including enhancing the student experience, improving utilisation of the College estate, supporting sustainability objectives, enabling

more effective use of teaching and learning spaces, and improving digital integration across the University.

The Committee noted that the project is currently in an exploratory phase and seeks to consider how timetabling arrangements could be reimaged to better support students, staff and researchers. A series of workshops has already been undertaken involving a broad range of academic, professional and student-facing stakeholders to identify opportunities, challenges and priorities.

From a student perspective, the presentation highlighted the importance of structure and predictability within timetables, minimising unnecessary gaps between classes, reducing travel time between teaching locations, facilitating participation in extracurricular activities, and ensuring access to appropriate social, study and collaborative spaces. Particular consideration is also being given to the differing needs of undergraduate, postgraduate and lifelong learning students.

Members noted that the project is seeking to gather evidence and stakeholder feedback before undertaking modelling exercises to assess a range of potential scenarios. These include the possibility of dedicated periods without scheduled teaching, approaches to reducing large timetable gaps, consideration of discipline-specific non-teaching days, improved accommodation of caring responsibilities and wellbeing considerations, greater flexibility in the use of teaching spaces, and future planning for student growth.

The Committee welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and noted the importance of ensuring that student experience, accessibility, belonging, and wellbeing remain central considerations as the project develops. Members were invited to provide feedback on additional priorities and scenarios that may merit consideration as part of the next phase of work.

ACTION: SLC members noted the Bursar's presentation.

SLC/25-26/69

A.4 Trinity Hall and JCR Overview

The Committee received presentations from the Warden of Trinity Hall and representatives of the Junior Common Room (JCR) providing an overview of residential life, student supports, and community engagement within Trinity Hall.

Members heard that Trinity Hall currently accommodates over 900 students and continues to play an important role as a supportive residential learning community, particularly for first-year students. The Warden outlined the range of facilities, services and supports available to residents, together with the contribution of the Senior Common Room team, Assistant Wardens, Counselling Services and wider College support services in promoting student wellbeing and community connection.

The Committee noted a number of recent initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience, including the introduction of the "Meet the Trinity Hall Team" welcome event,

the development of the Wellbeing101 programme in collaboration with College partners, and improvements to communal spaces within Trinity Hall.

Representatives of the JCR provided an overview of their activities and highlighted the role of the elected student committee in organising social, recreational, welfare and community-building events throughout the academic year. Members noted the continued development of welfare supports, strong student engagement across events and campaigns, and the introduction of new initiatives, including an Environmental Officer role.

ACTION: The Committee welcomed the presentations and thanked both the Trinity Hall and JCR teams for their ongoing contribution to student wellbeing, engagement and sense of belonging within the Trinity Hall community.

SLC/25-26/70

A.5 Senior Tutor's Office annual report

The Senior Tutor presented the Senior Tutor's Office Annual Report for 2025–26, providing an overview of activity across the Tutorial Service, academic support initiatives, and financial assistance provision.

Members noted the continued scale and significance of the Tutorial Service, with 308 tutors currently serving across the three faculties and providing one of the most distinctive student support structures within Irish higher education. The Committee heard that the Tutorial Service continues to play a central role in supporting students through academic, personal and welfare challenges, while working closely with College services to ensure students receive appropriate guidance and support.

The Senior Tutor highlighted ongoing work to support and develop the tutor community, including recruitment initiatives, induction and training programmes, enhanced resources, and efforts to address workload pressures identified through tutor feedback. Members noted that while tutor retention remains a challenge, the programme continues to be highly valued by participating staff and is regarded as a core element of the student experience.

The Committee also received an update on a number of service improvements implemented during the academic year. These included the introduction of a College-wide extensions policy, the continued digitisation of student case workflows through ask.tcd.ie, reforms to undergraduate transfer processes, and progress towards replacing the term "exclusion" with more compassionate and student-centred terminology within academic regulations and guidance.

Members further noted the significant level of activity associated with the Student Assistance Fund and bursary schemes administered through the Senior Tutor's Office. During 2025–26, over €650,000 was distributed through a combination of HEA funding, donor-supported funds and endowed bursaries, supporting both undergraduate and postgraduate students experiencing financial hardship. The Committee heard that financial pressures relating to cost of living, accommodation and day-to-day expenses continue to represent key drivers of applications for support.

The report also highlighted the positive impact of financial assistance on student wellbeing, retention and academic progression. Survey feedback indicated high levels of satisfaction

with the administration of the fund and demonstrated the importance of timely financial support in enabling students to continue and successfully complete their studies.

ACTION: The Committee welcomed the report and thanked the Senior Tutor, Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Support teams, tutors and colleagues across College for their continued commitment to supporting students and enhancing the student experience.

SLC/25-26/71

Student Parent and Carer Working Group

The Undergraduate Student Support Officer presented a proposal for the establishment of a Student Parent and Carer Working Group, together with draft Terms of Reference.

The Committee heard that the proposal arises from increasing recognition of the diverse profile of the student population and the growing number of students with parenting and caring responsibilities across both undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts. Members noted that while a range of supports currently exist across College, these are distributed across multiple services, presenting an opportunity for a more coordinated and strategic approach.

It was noted that the proposal aligns with the objectives of the College Strategic Plan *Thrive*, particularly in relation to belonging, student wellbeing, equitable participation and student success. The Committee further heard that the Student Parent/Carer and Experiencing Pregnancy Policy is due for review, providing a timely opportunity to consider policy, practice and support provision in a more integrated manner.

The proposed Working Group would bring together representatives from relevant College services, Students' Union representatives, student parents and carers, and other stakeholders to support policy development, identify gaps and opportunities within existing provision, and develop recommendations to enhance coordination and visibility of supports.

Members welcomed the proposal and recognised the value of establishing a dedicated forum to consider the experiences and needs of student parents and carers. The importance of adopting an evidence-informed approach and engaging directly with students with lived experience was also noted.

ACTION: The Committee approved the establishment of the Student Parent and Carer Working Group and the draft Terms of Reference, subject to any minor amendments arising from discussion.

Health Centre annual report

The Director of College Health and representatives of Healthy Trinity presented an overview of service activity and health promotion initiatives undertaken during 2025/26.

The Committee received an update on student usage of the College Health Service and noted a continued increase in demand, reflecting both growth in the overall student population and changing student demographics. Members heard that the number of appointments provided by the service has increased significantly over recent years, with particularly notable growth in utilisation among non-EU students. It was further noted that an increasing proportion of students are engaging with the service multiple times throughout the academic year, highlighting the importance of ensuring that future resourcing reflects evolving patterns of demand.

The Committee also received an update on the work of Healthy Trinity and its continued alignment with both the *Thrive* Strategic Plan and the Trinity Sustainability Strategy. Members noted a wide range of initiatives delivered during the reporting period, including activity under the Tobacco Free Trinity programme, the development of the Trinity Wellbeing Framework, sexual and reproductive health awareness campaigns, and participation in national Healthy Campus initiatives.

The report highlighted a number of collaborative projects involving academic Schools, students, and external partners. These included the delivery of an interprofessional health promotion clinic during Health and Sport Week, curriculum-based research partnerships with undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the continued development of the Healthy Trinity Ambassador programme. Members noted the value of embedding health promotion principles across both the curriculum and wider student experience.

The Committee further noted ongoing work to promote healthy behaviours across campus, including smoking and vaping cessation initiatives, mental health promotion, physical activity, sexual health awareness, and broader wellbeing programmes. The overarching aim of Healthy Trinity was noted as making the healthy choice the easy choice for students and staff across the University community.

ACTIONS: The Committee welcomed the report and commended College Health and Healthy Trinity for their continued contribution to student wellbeing and health promotion across the University.

Elite Student Athlete Dual Career Policy

The Student Sport Pathway Manager and Deputy Director of Sport and Physical Activity presented a discussion paper on the development of a Dual Career Policy for elite student athletes at Trinity.

The Committee heard that the proposed policy forms part of the University's commitment to supporting students who pursue high-performance sport alongside full-time academic study and aligns with both the *Thrive* Strategic Plan and the Strategy for Sport and Physical Activity. Members noted that Trinity currently provides a range of supports for student athletes through the Sports Scholarship Programme, the Tutorial Service and case-by-case

academic accommodations. However, in the absence of a formal institutional policy, supports are not always applied consistently across the University.

The presentation outlined the national context for dual career provision, including the Accreditation for Student Athlete Support (ASAS) framework operated by Sport Ireland. Members noted that while Trinity currently holds affiliate accreditation, progression to higher accreditation levels would require the adoption of a formal Dual Career Policy and associated support structures. Benchmarking undertaken with Irish and UK institutions highlighted the increasing prevalence of structured dual career frameworks, clear eligibility criteria, and transparent academic flexibility arrangements.

The Committee considered two potential policy models. The first proposed a structured institutional framework focused on consistency, transparency and clearly defined processes for academic flexibility. The second proposed a more integrated model incorporating enhanced academic supports, coordinated oversight and broader student support mechanisms, aligned with international best practice. Members noted that both options would represent a significant enhancement of current arrangements for eligible student athletes.

Discussion focused on balancing the needs of elite student athletes with the maintenance of academic standards, ensuring equitable application of any future policy across Schools and disciplines, and establishing clear eligibility criteria and governance arrangements. The importance of consultation with academic staff, student athletes and relevant support services during the policy development process was also noted.

ACTION: The Committee welcomed the discussion paper and invited the proposers to continue stakeholder consultation and policy development, with a draft policy to be brought forward for formal consideration at a future meeting.

SLC/25-26/74

Sustainable and Healthy Food Plan

The Healthy Campus Manager presented the Sustainable and Healthy Food Plan, developed under Trinity's Sustainability Strategy and Healthy Trinity 2030 framework.

The Committee heard that the Plan has been developed through collaboration between academic and professional staff, Trinity Catering, Trinity Sustainability, Procurement, and Students' Union representatives. Members noted that the Plan responds to the Sustainability Strategy targets of reducing food-related greenhouse gas emissions, increasing plant-based menu options, and promoting a more sustainable and healthy food culture across the University.

The presentation outlined the Plan's alignment with the *Thrive* Strategic Plan through a series of commitments relating to research, teaching, community engagement, catering provision, campus experience, and waste reduction. Members noted that the Plan adopts a whole-system approach to food, recognising the links between sustainability, health, wellbeing, affordability and community.

The Committee further noted that the Plan was informed by extensive consultation with students and staff, including an all-College survey and student workshops. Feedback

highlighted particular interest in catering provision on campus and opportunities to strengthen community-building through food-related initiatives. Members welcomed the development of the Plan and noted that implementation would be overseen through existing governance structures, with progress reported through Trinity Sustainability and Healthy Trinity mechanisms.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Sustainable and Healthy Food Plan.

SLC/25-26/75

Dean's Report

The Dean of Students reflected on the conclusion of the academic year and noted the significant progress made across a wide range of student-facing initiatives during 2025/26. Members heard that many of the developments discussed throughout the year had contributed positively to the student experience, student welfare, and fostering a sense of belonging within the University community, aligning closely with the objectives of the *Thrive* Strategic Plan.

The Dean further noted that this would be his final meeting of the Student Life Committee in the role of Dean of Students. Reflecting on his term of office, he expressed his appreciation to Committee members and colleagues across the University for their support, collaboration and commitment to enhancing student life. The Dean remarked that the relationships and partnerships developed throughout his time in office had been among the most rewarding aspects of the role.

ACTION: All Committee members noted the report thanked the Dean for his leadership, contribution and commitment to student wellbeing and student experience during his tenure as Dean of Students, and wished him every success in his future endeavours.

SLC/25-26/76

Any other urgent business

There was no other business raised.

Section B: Report from SLC Working Groups

SLC/25-26/77

B.1 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students presented a proposal for the establishment of a Student Spaces Advisory Group (SSAG), together with draft Terms of Reference.

The Committee heard that the proposed Group would provide a forum for collaboration between students and relevant College stakeholders on matters relating to student social spaces. Members noted that the Group would support the identification, coordination and enhancement of student spaces across the University, with a particular focus on promoting

student belonging and ensuring that the needs of underrepresented student cohorts are considered in future planning.

It was noted that the Group would operate as a working group of the Student Life Committee and would maintain a direct reporting relationship with the Space Allocation Group. The Committee further noted that the establishment of the Group aligns with the objectives of the *Thrive* Strategic Plan, particularly the commitment to enhancing student belonging and connection through the development of a Student Centre and a wider network of student spaces.

Members welcomed the proposal and recognised the value of a coordinated approach to the development, improvement and effective use of student spaces across the University.

The Committee approved the establishment of the Student Spaces Advisory Group and the associated Terms of Reference.

Section C: Items to note and/or approve

SLC/25-26/78

C.1 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2025-26

As this was the final meeting of the academic year and the last Student Life Committee meeting chaired by the Dean of Students in his current role, members took the opportunity to acknowledge his contribution during his three-year term as Dean.

Members reflected on the Dean's commitment to enhancing the student experience and noted in particular his genuine care for students, his support for student wellbeing and belonging, and his strong interest in promoting student engagement through sport and extracurricular activity. The Committee recognised the significant leadership he had provided across a wide range of student-focused initiatives and his stewardship of Student Life Committee during a period of considerable development and change.

Members thanked the Dean for his dedication, collegiality and collaborative approach, noting that the role of Dean of Students is both complex and demanding, while also providing opportunities to make a meaningful difference to students' lives. They wished him every success and happiness in the next chapter of his career.

The Dean thanked members for their kind words and for their support and collaboration throughout his tenure.

The meeting ended at 13:20

