



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin



CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL FACULTY QUALITY REPORT **2021/22**

1. Introduction

The Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQRs) were introduced in 2013/14 as part of the Framework for Quality at Trinity which brings together the elements that form the focus of quality assurance activity in Trinity in terms of ongoing self-evaluation and monitoring. The draft reports are discussed at a designated Annual Faculty Quality Executive meeting before being submitted to the Quality Committee (QC) for consideration. Individual AFQRs along with a Consolidated Report are submitted to Council for approval and published on the [Quality Office website](#).

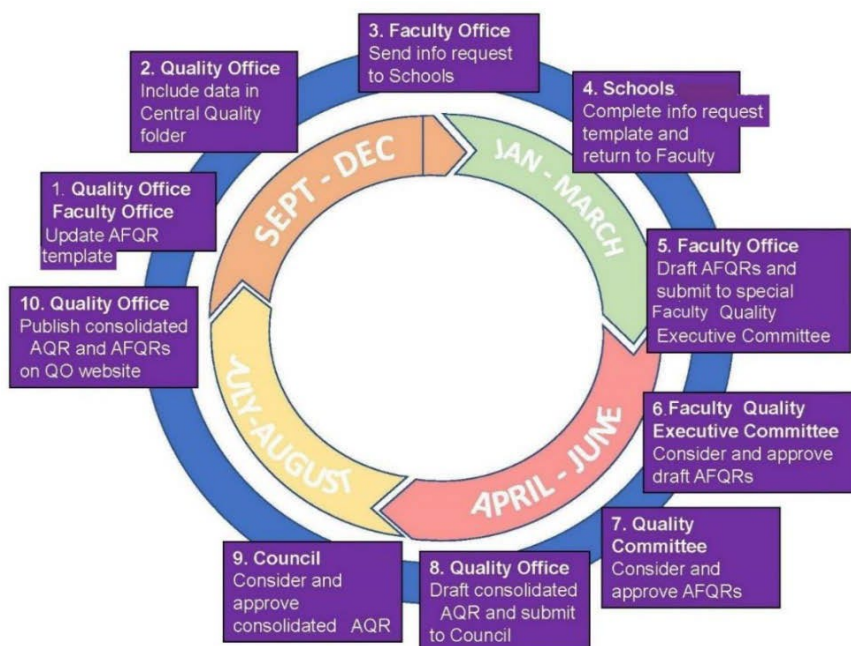


Figure 1: Process for the development of the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR)

Figure 1 above outlines the cyclical process that supports the development, reporting and approval of the AFQRs. The development process is led by the three Faculty Managers (AHSS, STEM and HS), in consultation with the Faculty Deans, Quality Office and the Schools.

In Michaelmas Term 2022, the annual review of the information request template to Schools (which informs the AFQR) resulted in (i) a significant reduction in the volume of data requested in response to the workload arising from the pandemic.

The [2021/22 AFQRs](#) were considered by the Quality Committee on the 20 April 2023 (QC/22-23/044). At a meeting on the 9 May 2023, the Faculty Deans and Faculty Managers, in consultation with the Quality Office, agreed on a number of key, high-level issues raised in the reports for escalation to Council, detailed in section 2 below.

2. Issues for escalation by the Faculty Deans to Council

The Faculty Deans identify the following key issues for consideration and discussion by Council:

2.1 IT Infrastructure and data systems

- 2.1.1 The poor standard of the IT Infrastructure /technical support provided to teaching spaces in AHSS and HS, including AV equipment and software upgrades, impacts on Trinity's ability to provide high-level teaching and learning experience for students. The current external contractor system does not provide timely and accessible IT technical support for academic teaching staff/venues.
- 2.1.2 The inflexibility of Trinity's IT systems to support key processes such as the External Examiner System and the Student Evaluation System is a critical issue. The Deans support a centralised External Examiner system and Student Evaluation System, managed by IT Services, that would facilitate storage and analysis of data arising from these processes.
- 2.1.3 Work is required to ensure that data fields in the student information system are configured to allow collection of more granular data required for application to the Athena Swan Awards, and going forward, will be required for the International Education Mark and by the HEA, e.g., on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, citizenship/domicile, gender, etc.
- 2.1.4 The new **Research Ethics Application Management System (REAMS)** the Faculty of STEM reported concern that feedback from users was not taken into consideration in its development and has added work rather than value.

Deans' recommendations:

- Review the current external contractor system for IT technical support.
- Consider a feasibility/pilot study for a central system for evaluation and data collection in support of the External Examiner process and student module evaluation.
- Highlight the requirement for more granular data collection in support of key strategic initiatives.

2.2 Maintenance of Physical Learning Spaces

- 2.2.1 The negative impact of the poor quality of space and physical infrastructure on the student experience and on Trinity's reputation was raised once again in 2021/22 by Schools in all three Faculties.
- 2.2.2 Issues highlighted in previous years' reports remain largely unresolved. These include:
 - maintenance and upgrade of **Goldsmith Hall** and in the **Panoz Institute**;
 - responsibility for funding of maintenance and upgrade of shared student spaces.
- 2.2.3 The lack of appropriate social spaces in the **East End** of College, especially since the restaurants and food outlets closed early in the pandemic, has been highlighted by students in Health Sciences, and by accrediting bodies.

Deans' recommendations:

Address the recurrent funding, quality and maintenance issues with key teaching and learning spaces across all three Faculties (Goldsmith Hall, Panoz Institute)

2.3 Resources to support the Senior Sophister Capstone Project

- 2.3.1 There is no financial support from College to support Senior Sophister capstone projects. At present, these projects are funded via PI research grants. An increase in undergraduate student numbers as a result of Government request during the pandemic has exacerbated the situation. There is concern that this may lead to a reduction in the standard of projects if left unresolved.

Deans' recommendations:

College should provide finance to support Senior Sophister capstone research projects, a key selling point of Trinity UG degree programmes.

2.4 Ongoing issues of concern to the Faculty Deans

The Faculty Deans would like to highlight the following additional issues as requiring ongoing monitoring at College level.

- 2.4.1 **Academic Year Structure** – the impact of semesterisation has led to increased pressure on External Examiners and on Schools to meet the tight turnaround time for marking and conduct of Courts of Examiners.
- 2.4.2 **A decline in the numbers of PhD students** – The STEM Ph.D. student cohort provides a pipeline for research students, in addition to essential teaching support, in laboratory and computer settings. The decline in STEM PhD numbers has the potential to impact on both of these endeavours. The larger cohort of non-EU Ph.D. students in STEM is a bigger draw on School and College-level supports. It is hoped that the PG renewal programme will identify opportunities to provide more connected processes for this student cohort.

3. Faculty-specific enhancements and challenges

Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Key enhancements

A review and revision of the *Teaching Assistant (TA) Policy* in the **School of Psychology** was undertaken in 2021/22 with a view to homogenisation of and increase in rates of pay for TAs. The **School of Social Sciences and Philosophy** developed new ToR and role description documents for TAs and has improved the induction process by adding presentations on managing workload, EDI and on the disability service.

Course teams on the Bachelor in Social Studies and the Master in Social Work (**School of Social Work and Social Policy**) in response to changed work practices in the aftermath of the pandemic developed a *Hybrid Placement Model* integrating on-site, off-site and online practice-based learning. The model has been widely utilized across professional practice sectors and by all HEIs involved in social work education in Ireland.

The **Trinity Business School** reviewed and updated the '*Framework for Quality in Trinity Business School*', which provides a comprehensive framework of QA processes at University, Faculty, School, Programme and Module levels.

The **School of Creative Arts** undertook a review of the Music undergraduate curriculum in response to its quality review.

The **School of Law** began a 'step marking' initiative to reform grading and feedback practices and make the process clearer and more transparent for both staff and students.

Specific challenges

- All Schools highlighted the poor quality of teaching and learning spaces and the inadequate IT infrastructure in teaching rooms as impacting on the quality of student learning and the ability of staff to deliver high quality, flexible teaching.
- The **School of Histories and Humanities** highlighted the inadequate library funding for all the disciplines in the School as impeding the quality of student learning at both UG and PGT levels. The School has raised this directly with the Provost and the Librarian, who are aware of these concerns.
- The risks associated with reliance on staff on precarious contracts for language teaching was raised by the **School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies**. College-level limits on rates of pay for casual teaching/teaching assistants was highlighted by the **School of Psychology**.
- The **School of Social Sciences and Philosophy** highlighted the tight timeframe for assessment at term end caused by the early publication of results under TEP reforms. This gives staff less time to mark, which impacts the quality and consistency of marking, especially where large modules are timetabled late in the exam session. The School asks that the Exams Office include the size of module in their timetabling of exams to ensure large modules are scheduled at the start of the exam session.
- The extremely high student:staff ratio, in **Social Sciences and Philosophy** is not only one of the largest in the University, but is out of line with international competitors.

Health Sciences

Key enhancements

The Academic Registry Faculty Liaison Officer (AR FLO) for Health Sciences was appointed in February 2022.

In September 2021, the first meeting of the Faculty of Health Sciences EDI Group took place. The scope of this group is to create more visibility around EDI in Health Sciences and in 2021/22, this included a Faculty-led [Visiting Professor EDI Event Series](#). The Student Co-Chair of the Group was awarded funding from the Equality Fund for a racial justice project, [Stand Up, Speak Out! Racial Justice in Healthcare Education](#). The findings of the [project report](#) were showcased through a Faculty Forum event (November 2022), and the report is being used to inform and drive change.

After a Covid-19 related hiatus, Health Sciences reinstated the Dean's Awards for Innovation in Teaching in 2021/22.

The **School of Medicine** received its bronze Athena SWAN award in March 2022, the first School in the Faculty to do so. A new approach to the Human Nutrition & Dietetics capstone project - '*Paper, Poster, and Public Science*' - was initiated in 2021/22 to more closely align the students' research thesis experience with real-world research.

In 2021/22, the **School of Nursing and Midwifery** continued to support its students who were frontline workers during the pandemic by engaging with the supports provided by the College, working collaboratively with its regulator, its clinical partners, and with external examiners.

Specific challenges

- External Examiners in the **School of Nursing & Midwifery** reported significant issues with IT systems, and access to Blackboard was a persistent complaint throughout the year.
- The impact of very tight assessment and progression deadlines, which are set at College-level without consultation with the Schools, was highlighted by the **School of Nursing and Midwifery**. The constant compression of these deadlines poses particular problems for complex externally accredited programmes in **Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences** and the **School of Medicine**.
- Poor Wi-Fi coverage on satellite sites was identified as a risk to the students' learning experience. Wi-Fi coverage is particularly poor in the **Dental School**, impacting on undergraduate and postgraduate students alike. The provision of Trinity Wi-Fi in the Coombe Women's & Children's Hospital is now underway after more than four years lead time to resolve this critical quality issue.
- The **Dental School** reported that accommodation for Erasmus students has been very difficult to source through Trinity and due to the accommodation crisis in Dublin, it has been virtually impossible to secure for incoming students.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Key enhancements

Two externally funded UG scholarship schemes were initiated in STEM in 2022 to support/promote diversity (*TCD/Three Ireland Connect to STEM Scholarship; Johnson & Johnson WiSTEM²D Programme*). The Faculty also led-out on the *E3 Kinsella challenge-based Ph.D. Awards* (supporting approximately 17 co-supervised Ph.D. projects).

Three STEM staff were awarded *Provost Teaching Awards* in 2021 and five were winners of European Research Council (ERC) proof-of-concept awards.

In response to student evaluation of the online Open Module '*Biochemistry for Biosciences*', the School of Biochemistry and Immunology is examining the possibility of incorporating an online practical so that it goes to 50% in course and 50% exam as well as having face-to-face summary sessions for each of the four sections of the module.

The School of **Computer Science and Statistics** formally established an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee which is working through the School's Athena Swan Bronze Award action plan with the aim of securing a Silver Award in 2024.

In 2021/22, the **School of Engineering** established a new five-year programme, *Environmental Science and Engineering*, in collaboration with Natural Sciences under E3, with the first intake having entered college in September 2021.

The **School of Genetics and Microbiology** established an early career researchers' forum for PGR students and postdoctoral scientists which has proven to be an extremely successful initiative.

As part of the roll-out of the E3 initiative, **Natural Sciences** has been involved in discussions on new course offerings. This has included a review of existing courses to ensure that adequate module sharing occurs across programmes to facilitate inter-disciplinary learning. At PG level, the School organized a survey and workshop to explore the future direction of PGT in the School.

Specific challenges

- The quality and availability of lecture and laboratory space is an ongoing issue of concern to all Schools in the Faculty. Growing UG student numbers has resulted in some Schools 'approaching or hitting capacity'. Crowded laboratories and poorly serviced lecture theatres are detrimental to a positive student experience, and space constraints result in reduced opportunities to connect e.g., for small group tutorials.
- Cost of living and accommodation shortages continue to impact the recruitment and retention of staff and students, particularly those at early career stage and at Ph.D. level.
- The **School of Mathematics** raised the recruitment and retention of External Examiners as being problematic. The role of EE has been increasing in difficulty, not least due to increased numbers of exam sessions and deferrals for which their input is needed. In addition, the administrative overhead they face applying for a PPS number is a disincentive given the small fee they receive. These issues resulted in the school not having an external examiner in mathematics in 2021/22.
- The **School of Engineering** requested guidance from the University on an overarching approach to ensuring integrity of assessment processes with the emergence of ChatGPT and OpenAI resources.
- The structure of the National Student Survey does not support STEM schools in identifying key actions to implement at a school level.
- The availability and format of the LENS reports was raised by the **School of Natural Sciences**.

Analysis of quantitative data (Refer Table 1 & 2)

Module evaluations

Undergraduate module evaluation rates in 2021/22 varied across the Faculties, but all reported an increase compared to rates in 2020/21 (100% vs 95% in AHSS; 98% vs 90% in HS and 89% vs 79% in STEM). At postgraduate level, the rate of evaluations was above 90% for all three Faculties: 88% of AHSS and STEM programmes were evaluated, while 72% of HS programmes were evaluated.

Response rates varied across the Schools and in many cases were dependent on the evaluation method used. Schools continue to report response levels that were too low to allow meaningful discussion of the findings. In response to this, a number of Schools re-introduced in-class evaluations and one School reported that the survey responses were discussed with students in class. Schools in HS engaged in in-person feedback sessions including via Staff-Student Liaison Committees, student forums, and focus groups. The School of Natural Sciences is implementing a centralized process to increase quality of feedback and average response rates.

The Schools outlined a wide range of actions taken in response to feedback from students and external examiners, at both UG and PGT level.

As observed in previous years, the number of students 'not retained' decreased as students progressed through their programme. Student attrition was greatest in first year (5%), declining to 3% in 2nd year, 2% in 3rd year, and less than 1% in 4th and 5th year. (Table 1 and Table 2).

External Examiner reports

The percentage return of UG EE reports was higher in HS and STEM in 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 (81% vs 64% and 100% vs 94% respectively) but was the same in AHSS (95%).

An External Examiner review, approved by Council in October 2022, will look at system and process enhancements which it is hoped will improve the receipt, storage and analysis of External Examiner reports. The review will also consider the recruitment and retention of External Examiners, an issue that was highlighted as being problematic by a number of Schools in the 2021/22 AFQRs.

The percentage of Schools reporting that they responded in writing to EE recommendations varied from 33% in HS to 95% in AHSS. Variation also existed across the Faculties in terms of the percentage of EEs that requested access to Blackboard (75% in AHSS & STEM; 45% in HS). Difficulties accessing Blackboard by some Examiners was reported.

Progression & Retention

In 2021/22, there was a retention rate across the whole UG student body of 97.3%, which was consistent with the rate for 2020/21 (97.9%). Retention is defined as students who progressed within the same course, repeated a year or who transferred to another course within Trinity. A slightly higher proportion of students were retained in HS (98.3%) in 2021/22 compared to AHSS and STEM (97.6% and 97% respectively). Of the students that were retained, a slightly higher percentage progressed in the same course in AHSS and HS (96%) compared to STEM (94%).

Accreditation

Many accreditation visits by professional or statutory bodies that were deferred due to the pandemic, took place in 2021/22. In AHSS, accreditation of the MSc in Applied Behavioural Analysis was undertaken in September 2021 and the B.Sc. Clinical Speech & Language Studies in December 2021. The Engineering programmes were reaccredited by Engineers Ireland in March 2022 for a five-year period, without conditions. The Bachelor of Dental Science accreditation visit took place in person in 2021/22 and the School is awaiting the final report.

Table 1 – Overview of key metrics

Faculty	Health Sciences	Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
Feedback from students			
Percentage (and number) of UG Modules evaluated	95% (295 of 311)	100% ¹ (1213 of 1336)	77% (407 of 526) ²
Percentage (and number) of PG courses/ programmes evaluated	96% (46 of 48)	100% (70 of 70)	92% (24 of 26)
External Examiner process			
Percentage (and number) of External Examiner reports received	UG 81% (58 of 72) PGT 72% (36 of 50)	UG 95% (57 of 60) PGT 88% (66 of 75)	UG 100% (32 of 32) PGT 88% (24 of 27)
Did Schools respond in writing to the External Examiner recommendations?	33% (3 of 9)	92% (11 of 12)	75% (6 of 8)
Did the External Examiners have or request access to Blackboard	45% (1 of 9)	75% (9 of 12)	75% (6 of 8)
Accreditation Programmes			
No. of programmes accredited in 2021/22 and the accrediting body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) (2) • Irish Medical Council (1) • CORU (1) • Dental Council (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists (IASLT) (1) • PSI (3) • AACSB (whole-school accreditation) • Mediator's Institute of Ireland (MII) 	Engineers Ireland (EI) – all Engineering programmes accredited.
Retention data			
Progression & retention 2021/22 across all years ³ (Data from Senior Lecturer's Annual Report 2021/22)	52 students (1.7%) were not retained 2,976 students (98.3%) were retained <i>Of these:</i> 2,913 (96.2%) students progressed same course 44 students (1.5%) repeated 19 students (0.6%) transferred	100 students (2.4%) were not retained 4,072 students (97.6%) were retained <i>Of these:</i> 4,013 students (96.2%) progressed same course 38 students (0.9%) repeated 21 students (0.5%) transferred	110 students (3%) not retained 3,535 students (97%) retained <i>Of these:</i> 3,414 students (94%) progressed same course 79 students (2%) repeated 42 students (1%) transferred

¹ There are 1,336 UG modules offered across the Faculty and, within the eleven schools for which the information was available (no information available for Creative Arts), 100% of modules were evaluated.

² The School of Genetics and Microbiology did not undertake module evaluations in 2021/22 due to a vacant senior administrative post.

³ Multi-Faculty had non-retention of 80 students across all years, a non-retention rate of 4.8% and a retention rate of 95.2% across all years.

Table 2 Retention and progression exit award update by Fee Status and Faculty 2021/22 - Total (from SL Annual Report 2021/22)

	AHSS		AHSS total	STEM		STEM total	HS		HS total	MF		MF total	Grand total
Standing & retention	EU	NEU		EU	NEU		EU	NEU		EU	NEU		
1	930	202	1,132	889	123	1012	647	127	774	515	83	598	3,516
Progressed same course	871	191	1,062	787	107	894	599	113	712	449	72	521	3,189
Repeat same course	8	1	9	18	7	25	11	7	18	9	2	11	63
Transferred to another course	13	4	17	35	3	38	14	1	15	17	4	21	91
Not retained	38	6	44	49	6	55	23	6	29	40	5	45	173
2	983	116	1,099	774	76	850	623	91	714	361	36	397	3,060
Progressed same course	946	110	1,056	729	70	799	600	84	684	328	35	363	2,902
Repeat same course	6	3	9	16	4	20	8	4	12	12	1	13	54
Transferred to another course	4		4	2		2	4		4	2		2	12
Not retained	27	3	30	27	2	29	11	3	14	19		19	92
3	895	117	1,012	732	101	833	625	97	722	308	26	334	2,901
Course completed	20	2	22				1		1				23
Progressed same course	845	109	954	691	98	789	614	91	705	286	25	311	2,759
Repeat same course	14	2	16	25	2	27	5	4	9	10		10	62
Transferred to another course				1		1							1
Not retained	16	4	20	15	1	16	5	2	7	12	1	13	56
4	864	65	929	740	40	780	591	90	681	316	15	331	2,721
Course completed	854	65	919	451	11	462	429	10	439	312	15	327	2,147
Course completed – exit				82	18	100							100
Progressed same course				194	7	201	159	79	238				439
Repeat same course	4		4	5	2	7	2		2	1		1	14
Transferred to another course				1		1							1
Not retained	6		6	7	2	9	1	1	2	3		3	20
5				154	16	170	78	59	137				307
Course completed				154	15	169	77	57	134				303
Repeat same course							1	2	3				3
Not retained					1	1							1
Grand total	3,672	500	4,172	3,289	356	3,645	2,564	464	3,028	1,500	160	1,660	12,505

Source: Provided by AR on 03 March 2023