

# Trinity College Dublin



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## Provost's Report to Council on the Review of the School of Business at Trinity College Dublin

### 1. Introduction

This report presents the outcome of a review of the School of Business. An external peer review visitation was undertaken from the 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March 2011 by Professor Marianne Stenius, Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki; Professor Marie-Laure Djelic, ESSEC Business School, France and Professor James Fleck, Open University, UK. The Internal facilitator was Dr. Frank Bannister, School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin.

The report is based on (i) feedback from the External Reviewers received on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011, (ii) a submission from the School of Business received on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2011 and (iii) a submission from the Pro-Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences received on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011.

The main purpose of the School review is (a) to provide a structured opportunity for the School to reflect on its activities and plans for development, while benefiting from a constructive commentary by senior colleagues external to College; (b) to ensure that quality and standards in teaching, research and administration are being maintained and enhanced and that areas of concern in this regard are identified and addressed. Each School in College is reviewed systematically once every seven years.

### 2. Overview of the School

#### 2.1 Aims and Objectives of the School

Trinity College School of Business was formed in 1962. The School's mission is to educate the most able school leavers, postgraduates and experienced managers, providing each with the best disciplinary competence in management as well as critical and inquiring understanding of organisations. The School's vision is to be a leading, internationally ranked, centre of research, teaching and executive education located in Ireland.

## 2.2 Programmes to which the School provides teaching

### Undergraduate:

- BA (Mod) in Business, Economic & Social Sciences (BESS);
- Bachelor in Business Studies (BBS);
- Bachelor in Business Studies and a Language (BBS Lang.);
- BA (Mod) Law and Business (LL.B.);
- BA (Mod) Business and Computing.

### Postgraduate:

- M.B.A.
- M.Sc. (Finance)
- M.Sc. (International Management)
- M.Litt./Ph.D.

## 2.3 Research

The School's research prioritises two programmatic research themes involving teams of researchers, postgraduates and research fellows: (i) International Business and (ii) The Non-Profit Landscape and Social Entrepreneurship. International Business has three strands:

- i) International Financial Integration (INFINITI);
- ii) Global Business Systems and Foreign Direct Investment;
- iii) Development.

In addition to these programmatic areas of research, the School fosters and supports individual research and scholarship by all members of staff.

## 2.4 Summary Statistical Profile of the School for the Academic Year 2009/10<sup>1</sup>

Full-time Staff FTE	Undergraduate FTE	Postgraduate FTE	School Staff: Student Ratio	Faculty Staff: Student Ratio
<b>28</b>	<b>451</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21</b>

*Figures from Senior Lecturer's Annual Report approved by Council at its meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010*

## 2.5 Accommodation and Facilities (Physical Resources)

- Teaching space: The School is currently located in the third and fourth floors of Áras an Phiarsaigh. The School has a dedicated MBA classroom, and a dedicated classroom for its pre-experience M.Sc. degree programmes. There are also a small

<sup>1</sup> The staff FTEs include all Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers funded from the core HEA grant, or from self-financing courses, and all part-time and occasional staff and demonstrators, converted to an FTE, who are funded from core grant or from self-financing courses.

number of similar rooms available in Áras an Phiarsaigh for undergraduate seminar teaching but most undergraduate teaching is conducted in the Arts Building.

- Research space: The School has two dedicated rooms for postgraduate research students.
- Office space: Members of the academic staff, the MBA Director and the School Administrator are each allocated a single office space. Two reception offices house the core of the School's administrative and shared services.
- The School has a Common Room which is shared by staff and postgraduate research students. The School does not have dedicated 'reception' facilities.

### **3. Reviewers' Recommendations**

The Reviewers make the overall recommendation (RG) that the School of Business at Trinity College enter rapidly, may be as a new Leadership takes over, into the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) pre-accreditation process.

In addition, they make the following general recommendations:

#### ***Research***

**R(1):** It seems important that Faculty members, and particularly younger members of staff – have the opportunity to attend some of the major international conferences in their field, if not every year at least every other year. Those conferences are key for network building and for the emergence of cross-national research opportunities. But they are also very valuable as platforms for publication. Participation is often dependent on a blind review selection process that comes together with quality feedback from reviewers on the paper to be presented. If the current level of quality in publication output is to remain, the School of Business should have (find) the resources to allow its more active research staff members (and particularly the younger faculty members) to attend at least one such conference on a yearly basis.

**R(2):** One may want to think about two complementary (or alternative in the worst case) paths:

- a. First, it might be necessary to move to a more institutional fundraising effort where the School, as a whole, structures a fund-raising drive or parts of its fundraising drive with a focus on research ;
- b. Second, there might be a need to turn to European sources. We know, though, that European grant competition is a complex and highly selective process. We also know that for Schools or Institutions to be involved in an efficient manner, it is necessary that there

exists some central administrative resource center to help with some of the more tedious and bureaucratic dimensions of the process.

**R(3):** Identify a) what are the resources the School and University can put into this overall; b) the “priority experiences” – those that are likely to generate more value for the amounts invested; and then to c) define a scheme that will apply to all students in the same way (for example: one conference per year and a one-week doctoral seminar over the PhD period).

**R(4):** With regard to the Postgraduate Research Program, move towards a degree of formalisation, centralisation and systematisation of the funding information and of the funding process. As soon as a research student arrives at the school or even possibly before, he or she should have access to a clear roadmap as to the different opportunities available and be presented in a clear form with the steps that need to be taken and when, in order to maximize his or her chances to benefit from those opportunities. This would allow all students, independent of who their supervisors might be, to have access in a parallel manner to the same information.

**R(5):** Revive a more collective/intellectual form of liaison between the Academic staff and the research students. It is important that the school manages to create and maintain, beyond disciplinary or project differences, a sense of intellectual community that could be achieved, for example, by the running of a school-level research seminar that would bring together the intellectual community as a whole around either the presentation of internal projects or seminars of external visitors. Naturally, the sense of community also goes through the logistical integration of research students, as far as this is possible, in the life of the Faculty – ie. sharing of a common room, organization of common social events or opportunities.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

**R(6):** For the MBA programme, a concerted and systematic marketing / branding campaign should be urgently entertained, especially in the absence of the Financial Times (FT) ranking.

**R(7):** Explore and exploit systematically the possibilities for synergies that could exist between the different pre-experience masters (with respect to the sharing of courses) but also possibly between those programmes and programmes in other schools within the University.

**R(8):** At this stage of its development, and in anticipation of its growth, it would make sense for the School of Business to propose and implement more formalized processes when it comes to the management of its Staff. More particularly formalized processes for the distribution and assessment of teaching obligations would be useful and they would be complementary with the process of formalization of research output that is right now

undertaken at the level of the school.

**R(9):** The School of Business should move to include a systematic capability for "customer care" in postgraduates programmes – particularly pre-experience Masters and the MBA. This is now an important part of the competitive context in higher education for these types of programmes in particular.

### ***Resources and Others***

**R(10):** The School of Business needs to establish a reasonable growth strategy that will include:

- a. Reaching the fundraising goals that will make it possible for the School to move into a building that would be more adapted to its needs and constraints in a highly competitive global market for business education
- b. Increasing the Faculty size to an extent sufficient to reduce the current strong dependence in some areas on one or two individuals and also in order to reach, in those research areas identified as priorities or core competencies of the school, a basic critical mass.

**R(11):** As the School of Business needs today to formalize its research outputs and teaching allocation processes (see above), it also should move towards a better and more formalized management of the allocation of academic administrative responsibilities. It should, in particular, pay attention to its younger staff and make sure that:

- a. They are not overburdened with administrative responsibilities and tasks
- b. When they take over such responsibilities or tasks, they receive adequate training or briefing as well as access to formalized procedures, knowing all along where to go to when issues arise.

**R(12):** In a period of transition, it is important to think about the ways of ensuring that the Advisory Board will continue to play the useful role it plays today for the School.

**R(13):** The reviewers recommend that the growth plan be supported by an increase in the financial autonomy of the School thereby enabling incentive schemes for the faculty to be developed at School level.

**R(14):** The reviewers recommend that the College explore possibilities to foster synergies through closer cooperation between the different schools within the College that teach business or management but also between the School of Business and other Schools of complementary competencies (eg. Economics, Engineering, Law and Social Sciences). This would require an "internal cost transfer model" that would support and foster rather than create obstacles to such synergies and collaborations – whether in teaching or in research.

#### **4. Provost's Recommendations to Council**

In light of the Review Report and the responses from the School of Business, it is recommended that:

- (i) The School working closely with the Dean of the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and other relevant Academic Officers, should consider the detailed recommendations of the Review Report and draw up an implementation plan for Council approval.
  
- (ii) Given the highly competitive environment in which Business Schools operate world-wide, the School should enter into the AACSB pre-accreditation process which should serve to increase its reputation and standing in relevant league tables.

## **5. Review Report on the School of Business**

It is important to say from the outset that we are impressed by what the School of Business at Trinity College has been able to do and achieve over the past decade. We find a number of dimensions to be particularly remarkable and would like to underscore this from the outset:

1. The collegial atmosphere that reigns in the school is certainly something of high value that needs to be preserved and fostered.
2. The strong research-driven orientation characteristic of the School is also something that should be nurtured and envisioned as a distinctive trait of the School and of Trinity College as a whole.
3. We found that there is an unmistakable spirit of excellence that is broadly shared within the School of Business. This spirit of excellence leads each individual and group to give all they can, within existing constraints, to achieve excellence in their different activities (research, teaching, service and outreach).
4. The sense of initiative that has led the School of Business to launch a major Fundraising campaign around the well-structured project of a future building.

When the last external review took place, in 2000, the School of Business was facing a number of challenges. In the years that followed it has made significant progress in addressing many of those challenges. Today, the School of Business is again at a turning point and this is for at least five reasons:

1. Ireland itself, as a country, is at a turning point with an economic future to reinvent
2. Universities in Ireland but in fact also across the world are at a turning point, where they have to envision a world in which the share of budgets coming from public funds is decreasing drastically.
3. The international business school market is at a turning point. There are still many opportunities out there but the landscape has become fiercely competitive and complex, demanding resources and the capacity to react fast.
4. The School of Business at Trinity College, if it is to remain in a league of international players, will have to take in the coming years structuring steps that go along with a necessary but controlled growth strategy.

5. The School of Business and Trinity College are about to go through, in the coming months, important changes in leadership.

## **Existing Provisions**

### **A. RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY**

#### ***Distribution of Research Interests and Plans across School Members***

The Faculty of the School of Business, Trinity College, covers a broad spectrum when it comes to research topics and research interests, a spectrum that includes many if not all the areas and topics that a Business School should explore. At the same time, there is an interesting degree of clustering around what appears to be a few key themes.

- a. There is a clear cluster around Finance issues, particularly with a focus on International Finance;
- b. In partial interconnection with this first broad theme, we see also a clustering around issues of International Business and Management (including political economy, strategy, marketing, supply chain) – with a slightly detached but highly active node on cross-cultural management and international HRM

Those first two clusters, together with elements from the individually-based research discussed below, are brought under the Broad Label of ***International Business – defined by the School as one of its two priority programmatic research themes.***

- c. A small but highly visible cluster working on Social Entrepreneurship with the connection in one case to the broader issue of Entrepreneurship and the connection in another case with issues connected to the third sector. ***This is also identified as a priority Theme for the School.***

- d. A small but visible cluster around Action-learning, ICT and change management.

- e. Finally, there are also other important issues that deserve to be mentioned here but are being conducted at a more individual level – healthcare and public management, higher education, organizational justice and ethics, and corporate governance.

#### ***Published Output***

The School of Business at Trinity College has been, as a whole, a very active producer of



research in Business and Management. For a Faculty of such a small size, the overall output is impressive. If one were to count in average numbers of “pieces of research” (includes everything from peer reviewed articles to newspaper articles to conference papers) produced per year and per Faculty member, there would be altogether around or slightly over four – which is a high level in absolute but also in relative terms. With respect to research intensity, this certainly places the school at a level that is well above that of its “size league”. An interesting comparison could be the School of Business at Alberta, Canada. The School of Business, Alberta is a School that is only slightly bigger in size to the School at Trinity College and has many more resources at its disposal. Still, the average intensity of production, per Faculty member and per year, is lower there than it is at the School of Business, Trinity College.

One should note also that the proportion of Faculty members active in the production of research output is high. In fact, most Academic staff members in the School retain through the years, and with a regular rhythm, an active involvement in research and research production. Naturally, there are differences within the Faculty. As is the case in most institutions of higher education, a few individuals are clearly producing much more than the average of four pieces per year indicated above.

#### **Publications in refereed journals in the last five years**

The overall number of peer reviewed articles produced and published over the last five years by the Faculty of the School of Business is very high. The standard expected of research active staff members in most business schools, across Europe and beyond, tends to be defined as “four peer-reviewed publications per Faculty member in a four year period”. The average in the School of Business, Trinity College is above that standard. This naturally confirms what we have said above – that this a highly research active Faculty as a whole.

Within the list of targeted peer-reviewed journals, we find a mix of national, European and international outlets, many of which are of very good scholarly quality. We even find a number of publications in some journals that are identified, throughout various Rankings and Journal Lists as being the best generalist journals in their fields internationally – such as *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of Banking and Finance*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Business History*. The School of Business also has many publications in some of the top journals of more specialized sub-fields.

Considering the list of recent conference presentations, we can be confident that this active level of publication in high level peer reviewed journals will continue in the foreseeable future. We note, though, that a significant number of international conferences in which staff members have been involved over the past few years have taken place in Ireland (R1).

#### **Publications in other forms in the last five years**

Over and beyond the active production of peer reviewed articles, it is important to note that the Faculty of the School of Business has also produced published research in a number of

different other forms. We note the participation in or production of some top range Academic textbooks or Handbooks (Pearson, McGraw Hill, Sage, Cengage). We also note a number of high quality monographs or chapter participation in edited books produced by some of the most prestigious academic publishers (Princeton University Press, Oxford University Press, Edward Elgar, Wiley, Sage, Routledge, Palgrave...). In addition, there is a regular flow of chapters, book reviews, professional, specialist reports or press and media contributions (both national and international) that are all very important with regard to the broad dissemination of Academic work and results. There is no sign that this type of production will fade in the coming years. If this regular flow is to continue, it is important to keep in mind that the School needs to be able to invest upstream (in research time and resources) and reward downstream.

On the whole and in summary, the School of Business, Trinity College is to be highly commended for its research output on the three following grounds:

- a. Quantity (average productivity well above that of Schools equivalent in terms of size or resources);
- b. Quality (significant proportion of research published in high quality and even top caliber peer reviewed journals and academic presses);
- c. Balance (healthy complementarity between high caliber Academic production, specialist and issue-based contributions, professionally targeted or public-policy pieces, contributions to the broad public and civil society debates in a more accessible form).

### ***Raising External Funding for Research***

If we look at the information available for the last five years, it appears the School of Business, Trinity College, has performed very well when it comes to raising external funds for purposes of research. It might be more accurate, though, to say that a fair number of individual Academic staff members have performed very well in that respect. They have been in that respect clearly and efficiently entrepreneurial. The characteristics of the funding obtained over that period are the following:

- a. It has generally been dependent on a particular individual, his or her profile, past realizations and networks
- b. It has mostly come from Irish sources – whether from public, semi-public or private sources. Note should be made of an exception: a large grant from a European source received in 2009.
- c. Funds have been obtained in a variety of different fields and discipline, from Finance to International Business, from Social Entrepreneurship to Economics and Political Economy, from International Development to national issues of Housing, Healthcare, Trade Union Management or Public Management.

Naturally, one should also mention the TCD-UCD Innovation Academy, which as an important part of the Innovation Alliance, has been and will be funded in part by external

public and private contributions.

The question of whether this high level of external funding for research is sustainable in the coming years is really an open one and quite difficult to answer. Considering that Ireland as a whole and the Irish State in particular are going through very difficult economic times, securing external funding for research might become much more challenging **(R2)**.

### ***Research Students***

Currently, the School of Business, Trinity College has around 50 students registered as M. Litt or PhD. Most of those are registered as PhD, 22 full time and 24 part time. On the whole, this appears reasonable. The number of postgraduate research degrees completed and awarded over the last five years is quite good. Completion rates have also improved in recent years, which means that now completion rates are about at par with the level of admissions to the program. This is a healthy balance.

The research output has been, over that period, of very good quality. The themes on which PhD students work are very relevant and they are nicely connected to the research interests of Faculty members, whether as individuals or as a collective. PhD students have rapidly found, over the last five years, good positions, either in Academia, in consulting, or in public administration.

PhD students are "spread" across the Faculty in a relatively balanced manner. Full-time Professors tend to supervise a greater number, which is natural and a good sign of quality of the overall process. But younger Faculty members are also rapidly given the opportunity to work with PhD students, and this is a highly useful training.

Throughout their period in the program, students are eligible for a degree of financial support coming from the School and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies, support to help them go to conferences, doctoral seminars (such as those organized by the EIASM) or even to spend a period of time at another school or university. This seems to be, however, a very ad hoc provision – when a need arises and is legitimate, the School and/or the University try to find the means to satisfy it **(R3)**.

Research students can compete for a number of schemes, whether internal to Trinity College or external (private or government funds). From the information available, it would seem that the amount of funding available through those sources can indeed help research students as they progress through the postgraduate research program. But again, this appears to be at this stage a relatively ad hoc process and research students do not all seem to have the same experiences in that respect **(R4)**.

### ***Adequacy of student-staff liaison (formal and informal)***

The level of student-staff liaison appears satisfactory. Naturally, the key mechanisms here is the supervisory role. The supervision relationship is not easily amenable to standardization and there is likely to be variation not only between different Faculty members acting as

supervisors but even for the same supervisor with regard to different students (who might have different kinds of need in that respect). On the whole, though, on the basis of available information, the quality of the supervisory relation seems to be adequate in the School of Business.

This direct supervisory connection is not the only mechanism of student-staff liaison. Apparently, on the basis of available information, the counselling and administrative support that students can receive from the staff of the Postgraduate Research Program, is adequate and indeed highly useful and complementary to the supervisory connection. Research students have a representative that sits on the School's Postgraduate Committee (the latter meeting at least once a term). The research students' representative can also refer directly to the staff members of the program and the Academic Director if an issue arises between meetings (R5).

***Balance of published research, research supervision, and other research-related activities in the School***

The balance between research, research supervision and other research-related activities seems to be on average quite right. As we indicated above, the Faculty is research active as a whole, and high levels of research output do not prevent those Faculty members from playing their role as active supervisors, from being involved at a satisfactory level in international workshops and conferences, or from applying to research grants (always a very time consuming process).

***Comment on other activities of the School that arise from the research standing of its members***

Most research active Faculty members are also playing a role within their broad intellectual community, whether in Ireland, Europe or even beyond. Individuals are convening or teaching in doctoral consortia in different settings (connected to international conferences, institutions like EIASM or even foreign-aid financed programs in Africa). Individual Faculty members are also

- a. members of editorial boards for some of the journals in their field;
- b. regularly reviewing for those journals or others;
- c. reviewing for International Academic Conferences
- d. writing book reviews;
- e. sitting on PhD committees in other institutions;
- f. playing the role of external examiners for programs in other Academic institutions;
- g. taking on the often highly time-consuming task of local organizer and Conference Chair for international conferences (Academy of International Business UK, INFINITI Conference on International Finance).

Finally, the research achievements of some Faculty members have been the source of highly prestigious nominations and rewards

- a. appointment on the working groups of transnational organizations,
- b. distinguished Visiting Scholar positions,
- c. advisor position to national and foreign governments,
- d. board member, executive committee member and President of international associations - EIASM, ARNOVA, AIB UK, Industrial Relations Research Trust – and of national ones.
- e. editorship or associate editorship of international journals

## **B. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### ***Range of Programmes***

TCD Business School provides a good range of programmes, commensurate with its size and standing. Interesting and relevant combinations of subjects are possible at the undergraduate level. The UG programme is large for the small size of the faculty. The MBA on the other hand, though of long-established excellence, is rather small and has been problematically so for the last decade, leading to a failure to qualify for inclusion in the FT rankings which are an important driver of student awareness. It is to be hoped that the occasion of the new building will help to improve the viability of the MBA, but in the meantime a more concerted and systematic marketing / branding campaign should be urgently entertained, especially in the absence of the FT ranking. Other comparable Business School are competing very fiercely and investing considerable effort in the promotion of both their Schools and their MBA programmes **(R6)**.

The new pre-experience Masters programmes appear to be doing well, although their design seems inefficient in terms of teaching effort with many very small classes held, due to the large numbers of constituent modules and choices **(R7)**. There are plans to replace the Post Experience Masters, previously offered in conjunction with IMI. One of the external reviewers had had familiarity with the MPP in particular, and would note that this was extremely well connected into the Irish commercial and Industrial world, employing an effective action learning methodology, and contributing signally to the School's reputation.

### ***Distribution of Teaching across Staff***

The small size and collegiate nature of the School enables an informal though effective and consensual distribution of workload across all members of faculty, and specialist knowledge is extremely well integrated. Nevertheless difficulty in allocating some undergraduate teaching was mentioned and it may be that a more formal workload management model would be of benefit if the School does grow over the next few years **(R8)**.

### ***Teaching and Assessment Methods***

The teaching and assessment methods appear very effective, with small group teaching a particular distinctive strength. The ability to harness creative suggestions from students for teaching activities at both UG and PG levels is a commendable source of innovation,

attesting to effective staff-student interactions. The Trinity tutorial system, offering separate pastoral support and representation for students, is seen as another strength.

### **Quality Processes**

In general the quality arrangements appear to work extremely well. These range from extensive external examiner engagement, programme committees with student representation, and periodic reviews with evident actions arising and being implemented. The small size and collegiate character has advantages in these respects, enabling open discussion and responsiveness, although this very informality may also impose limitations. However, there were several areas where we believe there is scope for improvement and the adoption of best practices comparable to other leading Business Schools.

1. Learning goals/ objectives were attached to course outlines. However, there is a question over the extent to which these genuinely drive the design of learning experiences, or are systematically mapped and tested for achievement in exams or by other means. In this respect best practice as exemplified by the requirements of the AACSB accreditation process is far ahead of what was evident.
2. With respect to student feedback on courses: the particular examples of student feedback examined indicated that there was some variability in the quality of teaching and lecturing, with clear scope for improvement. On the positive side, student feedback was administered independently of the teaching staff, making use of standard centrally-devised questionnaire templates, and lecturers saw the feedback for their own courses. We understand that these results are discussed and acted upon at appropriate committee meetings. However, in the analyses no averages or ranges for the set of relevant comparable courses (e.g. UG or PG) were provided, which makes it difficult for lecturers to gauge how they are performing in comparison with colleagues **(R8)**.
3. In the general discourse during the visit, there was little reference to the *students' perspective*. The focus was mainly on faculty members' concerns and research. Teaching was spontaneously mentioned primarily as a component of workload rather than in terms of its value to the students, as for example in a debate about full year courses versus semesterisation / modularisation to permit blocking of time for research. In the emerging global competitive context for Higher Education, a set of considerations around "customer care"(though sometimes dismissed as not pertinent in an educational environment) are increasing in importance as student expectations are evolving. This is particularly true when it comes to postgraduate programmes in general and the MBA programmes in particular. While Trinity's reputation undoubtedly has a powerful halo effect, it would be prudent for the Business School to pay greater attention to such aspects, and to learn what they can from benchmarking with Schools in other universities, some of whom we were told were much better at such

matters **(R9)**.

### ***Student Experience***

Comments from the small sample of students that we met reinforced that there was scope for such developments. We should emphasize, still, that overall the students were highly satisfied, even delighted, with their educational experience and they gave us highly positive feedback. There were many reasons to assess the overall quality of the student experience as very good:

- a. The high reputation of the institution;
- b. The excellent qualifications of applications;
- c. The good levels of attainment and completion;
- d. The development of international connections by the School, which is offering exchanges and opportunities abroad that are comparable to other leading Schools.
- e. Scholarships supported through philanthropic donations are available for a number of postgraduate students. These offer a powerful marketing opportunity to promote the School, and compare favourably with other Schools.

Nevertheless, the students we met made pertinent suggestions for what might be improved, including:

- a. Better initial presentation about the Business School in the Trinity outreach programmes to Schools.
- b. The “3-9” timetabling of postgraduate courses was perceived by some (part-time) students as restricting access to the social and community life of the College
- c. The availability of coherent branded PowerPoint templates for student presentations should be clearly communicated to all relevant students and staff.
- d. WebCT was reported to be not easy to use. Although the Business School does not use this for its own courses, the College might like to take note
- e. More presentation and extended essay writing practice.
- f. Better communication about the provision of IT support and software and printing facilities for PhD students – even in the small sample of students we met, there were marked differences in understanding of what was available.
- g. Staff common room access for PhD students **(R5)**.

### ***Some other general observations***

- Even where the School itself has for whatever reason not offered management courses to other parts of the University, it should maintain awareness of the quality of alternatively sourced management offerings (e.g. in engineering). The College should perhaps consider resource re-allocation if the quality of such courses is questionable as this might incur the danger of reputational damage for both the Business School and the institution as a whole.
- PhD students can undertake seminar and tutorial teaching. This is to be welcomed, as part of the academic induction process, but perhaps more

systematic training for teaching should be given.

- Systematic market appraisal for new programmes and courses, as with the new Executive MBA, is to be welcomed, especially in such difficult times as the present in Ireland, as an essential part of the curriculum renewal cycle.

Our overall impression was that the Trinity approach to teaching quality, thanks largely to the small size and collegiate nature of the School, is informal and quite traditional in its monitoring and assurance. We believe it would therefore benefit from a *more systematic* consideration and implementation of best practices as are now being adopted in many other institutions. To this end we would recommend entering the AACSB accreditation process, which would provide a means and convenient structure for achieving best practice **(RG)**.

### **C. ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIETY AND SERVICE TO COLLEGE**

The engagement with society is internationally considered an indicator of the quality of research and the expertise that is found in a business school. At Trinity the engagement of the School of Business with society and the services to College provided by the School are well above what would be normal for the size of the School. The activities have a clear reputational impact not only for the individual faculty members but also for the School and the College. The School of Business is an important gateway between the College and the wider community.

#### ***Service to College***

In recent years the School has shown excellent College citizenship and made significant contributions to the College through the extensive committee structure of the College and through representation on the University Council. The active involvement in the recently established Innovation Academy is a further indication of this.

#### ***Contributions to Public Debate and Impact***

The interaction between the School and the society at large is seen through the broad engagement and presence of several Faculty members in various media and in the policy making field as well as in the interaction with various departments and government agencies. The research profile of the School is reflected in the faculty's contribution to public debate and in the formation of public policy in a broad spectrum of areas. Relative to its size, the contribution of the School is strong, although it is also highly dependent on the specific expertise of the individual faculty members and the small size of the faculty.

The School is a national reference point in the areas of research that it has identified as its core competencies. Through individual faculty members' participation in public commissions and committees and through international networks and active involvement as experts/advisors to various departments and agencies of the Irish and governments abroad, the research activities have an impact on society at large.



### ***Outreach and Community Involvement***

The links between the School and the professional, the educational and the public sector are strong. The interaction with the corporate world is broad both on the School level and on the individual faculty member level. The Advisory Board of the School as well as the alumni network strengthen these relationships. The Review Team commends the School for this development.

The School is involved in a number of access and outreach programmes that are run by the College.

Recently TCD has established the TCD-UCD Innovation Academy as a joint project between the College and UCD. A faculty member of the School of Business was appointed Co-Director. The review team acknowledges this initiative and identifies several through which the expertise of the School can be transferred more broadly within the College, between the two partners involved and how synergies can be achieved through interaction with the community at large. Although this initiative stretches the faculty of the School even more, a balanced expansion of the activities of the Innovation Academy can add to the resources that are available to the School. The role of the Innovation Academy in developing the programme portfolio of the School should be taken into account.

### **D. RESOURCES**

By international standards the size of the School is small with a total of 19 full time Faculty members, of which 85 % are employed on permanent contracts. Due to the lack of critical mass of faculty in some of the key areas of a business school, the quality of research and of teaching are too dependent upon individual faculty members. This must be seen a considerable risk not only for the School but for the College at large.

The School, supported by the College, has proposed an ambitious growth strategy whereby the school would be able to reach a sustainable size. The review team strongly endorses this growth plan especially given the School's ambitions to play an even more active role nationally and also internationally (**R10**). Recruitment of international faculty and students requires a teaching and research environment, which is not limited by the size of the faculty, which today seems to be the case.

The growth plan relies mainly on external funding. The review team clearly recognises the constraints set by the present national as well as international economic conditions on the implementation of the growth plan. The role of the School's Advisory Board and the new Head of the School is evident.

Administrative support to faculty and students is provided centrally as well as on a School level. The visit by the review team confirmed that although plans to improve the support provided by the College are in an implementation stage (Student Information System) there remain support functions on a School level, which have at least an indirect impact on the quality of research and teaching. The faculty of the School is involved in administrative tasks as it should be but it is important here to keep in mind the need for a reasonable and fair share of those tasks (**R8** and **R11**).

The current facilities of the Business School are not of international standard. The present facilities do not support the growth plan of the School and do not support an interaction between faculty and students, which is a prerequisite for quality in research and teaching. The review team was impressed by the plans for building new premises and by the fundraising campaigns to support those plans. The team strongly recommends that the College continue its support of the building project and considers the building project to be the main challenge for the new Head of the School **(R10)**.

#### **E. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PLANNING**

In 2000 the School's reviewers urged the School to change the management structure towards a model that is based on a set of directorships. Today the Head of the School as well as the three directorships form the core of the management structure. In developing the present structure a key ambition was to preserve the collegiate ethos of the School, which according to the reviewers has succeeded. Nevertheless, it remains unclear to what extent the collegiate ethos is due to the size of the faculty or the management structure.

The Executive committee is comprised of the Head of the School, the three Directors, the School Administrator and a representative each of the Undergraduate and Postgraduate students. Formally, the terms of reference of the Executive Committee are broad. It remains somewhat unclear how efficient the committee is as a group. The small size of the faculty promotes informal interaction between the members of the committee rather than a more managed way of dealing with the development of the activities. The responsibilities of the Head are therefore pronounced.

The role of the Advisory Board is to generate meaningful feedback and support on the strategy of the School and to act as a link between the School and society at large. The support given by the Advisory Board to the Head of the School is strategically important. The role of the Advisory Board is critical in the fundraising campaign. The review team commends the School for retaining an active Advisory Board **(R12)**.

The mixed form of financial management, according to which the main revenues and costs are managed centrally by the College and the self-financing postgraduate revenues and costs are managed at School level does not fully support the strategy of the School. The reviewers recommend that the growth plan is supported by an increase in the financial autonomy of the School whereby incentive schemes for the faculty can also be developed at School level **(R13)**.

The funding model, which is applied by the College, does not seem to create clear incentives for the various Schools to co-operate in research as well as teaching. The review team was able to confirm the quality of the teaching, which is provided by the School of Business. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching in management, which is provided by other Schools than the School of Business could not be assessed. The review team notices that the quality of this teaching has implications for the reputation of the College as well as the School of Business. The team recommends the College explore possibilities to obtain synergies through a closer cooperation between those schools at the College that teach

business courses and through a funding model which more directly incorporates incentives between Schools and faculty members to cooperate in research and teaching **(R14)**.

The environment of the School of Business is characterized by collegiality. This is supported by the size of the faculty as well as by the management structure of the organisation. In recent years the role of formal processes and the transparency of the processes have been enhanced. The review team recommends the School to further enhance the transparency of the processes, as this is of key importance for the implementation of the growth plan and for a balanced distribution of the workload of the faculty. Today the workload has a tendency to vary between the individual faculty members **(R8, R11)**.

The students are represented on the Executive committee, the Undergraduate Committee and the Postgraduate Committee. The involvement of students in the School of Business is of international standard.

## **F. OVERALL VIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

We provide a list below of the main recommendations that emerged from our visit and different discussions. We classify those recommendations per section and they are listed in the order in which they appear in our report. While we discussed those different recommendations, we realized that many of them met in a broader, more general recommendation (a "meta-recommendation" as it were). This general recommendation **(RG) is for the School of Business at Trinity College to enter rapidly – may be as a new Leadership takes over – into the AACSB pre-accreditation process**. We all agreed that, at the current stage of development of the School of Business, entering this process would help the school address many of the questions it has to face today in a complex period of transition, where many challenges – and hence many opportunities – lay ahead.

### ***Research***

**R(1):** It seems important that Faculty members – and particularly younger members of staff – have the opportunity to attend some of the major international conferences in their field, if not every year at least every other years. Those conferences are key for network building and for the emergence of cross-national research opportunities. But they are also very valuable as platforms for publication – participation is often dependent on a blind review selection process that comes together with quality feedback from reviewers on the paper to be presented. If the current level of quality in publication output is to remain, the School of Business should have (find) the resources to allow its more active research staff members (and particularly the younger faculty members) to attend at least one such conference on a yearly basis.

**R(2):** One may want to think about two complementary (or alternative in the worst case) paths:

- a. First, it might be necessary to move to a more institutional fundraising effort

where the School as a whole structures a fund raising drive or parts of its fundraising drive with a focus on research

b. Second, there might be a need to turn to European sources. We know, though, that European grant competition is a complex and highly selective process. We also know that for Schools or Institutions to be involved in an efficient manner, it is necessary that there exists some central administrative resource center to help with some of the more tedious and bureaucratic dimensions of the process.

**R(3):** It might make sense to identify a) what are the resources the School and University can put into this overall; b) the “priority experiences” – those that are likely to generate more value for the amounts invested; and then to c) define a scheme that will apply to all students in the same way (for example: one conference per year and a one-week doctoral seminar over the PhD period).

**R(4):** It might make sense, at this stage of development of the School of Business and of the Postgraduate Research Program to move towards a degree of formalization, centralization and systematization of the funding information and of the funding process. As soon as a research student arrives at the school or even possibly before, he or she should have access to a clear roadmap as to the different opportunities available and be presented in a clear form with the steps that need to be taken and when, in order to maximize his or her chances to benefit from those opportunities. This would allow all students, independent of who their supervisors might be, to have access in a parallel manner to the same information.

**R(5):** It might be interesting, at this stage of development of the School, to revive a more collective/intellectual form of liaison between the Academic staff and the research students. It is important that the school manages to create and maintain, beyond disciplinary or project differences, a sense of intellectual community that could be achieved, for example, by the running of a school-level research seminar that would bring together the intellectual community as a whole around either the presentation of internal projects or seminars of external visitors. Naturally, the sense of community also goes through the logistical integration of research students, as far as this is possible, in the life of the Faculty – ie. sharing of a common room, organization of common social events or opportunities.

### ***Teaching and Learning***

**R(6):** For the MBA programme, a concerted and systematic marketing / branding campaign should be urgently entertained, especially in the absence of the FT ranking.

**R(7):** Explore and exploit systematically the possibilities for synergies that could exist between the different pre-experience masters (with respect to the sharing of courses) but also possibly between those programmes and programmes in other schools within the

University.

**R(8):** At this stage of its development, and in anticipation of its growth, it would make sense for the School of Business to propose and implement more formalized processes when it comes to the management of its Staff. More particularly formalized processes for the distribution and assessment of teaching obligations would be useful and they would be complementary with the process of formalization of research output that is right now undertaken at the level of the school.

**R(9):** The School of Business should move to include a systematic capability for "customer care" in postgraduates programmes – particularly pre-experience Masters and the MBA. This is now an important part of the competitive context in higher education for these types of programmes in particular.

### ***Resources and Others***

**R(10):** The School of Business needs to establish a reasonable growth strategy that will include:

- a. Reaching the fundraising goals that will make it possible for the School to move into a building that would be more adapted to its needs and constraints in a highly competitive global market for business education
- b. Increasing the Faculty size to an extent sufficient to reduce the current strong dependence in some areas on one or two individuals and also in order to reach, in those research areas identified as priorities or core competencies of the school, a basic critical mass.

**R(11):** As the School of Business needs today to formalize its research outputs and teaching allocation processes (see above), it also should move towards a better and more formalized management of the allocation of academic administrative responsibilities. It should, in particular, pay attention to its younger staff and make sure that:

- a. They are not overburdened with administrative responsibilities and tasks
- b. When they take over such responsibilities or tasks, they receive adequate training or briefing as well as access to formalized procedures, knowing all along where to go to when issues arise.

**R(12):** In a period of transition, it is important to think about the ways of ensuring that the Advisory Board will continue to play the useful role it plays today for the School.

**R(13):** The reviewers recommend that the growth plan be supported by an increase in the financial autonomy of the School thereby enabling incentive schemes for the faculty to be developed at School level.

**R(14):** The reviewers recommend that the College explore possibilities to foster synergies through closer cooperation between the different schools within the College that teach business or management but also between the School of Business and other Schools of complementary competencies (eg. Economics, Engineering, Law and Social Sciences). This would require an “internal cost transfer model” that would support and foster rather than create obstacles to such synergies and collaborations – whether in teaching or in research.

## **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

The School of Business at Trinity College has defined its strategy for the coming years through three key words:

### **Existing Strategy**

#### **INTERNATIONALIZATION, INNOVATION, INTEGRATION**

Our review of the materials and documents, our site visit and associated discussions, in the situation of transition we described above, has led us to make a number of concrete recommendations to both the School and the College. We hope that these recommendations could help the School revitalize their existing strategy and we suggest, with this in mind, a partial re-ordering of priorities. We propose that a revitalized strategy would start first with Integration, then move on to Innovation, to finally aim at Internationalization.

### **Proposed Revitalized Strategy**

#### **INTEGRATION, INNOVATION, INTERNATIONALIZATION**

### **INTEGRATION:**

In the current situation, characterized by important transitions, anticipated challenges and real constraints, we feel that the INTEGRATION objective should be granted first priority. Integration should be a priority at different levels:

1. Integration of the Faculty and intellectual community of the school – retention, motivation and management of incentive systems, formalization of tasks and expectations, nurturing of intellectual exchange are all dimensions that we identified as highly important in our recommendations
2. Integration of the School in the University – what is the role and place of a Business School in a University like Trinity College? How can the School of Business make the most of being embedded within a broadly generalist University? How can the University benefit even more from the competencies and realizations of its School of Business? Integration at that level could play itself out with respect to research, teaching but also outreach and internal administrative skills.
3. Integration of students in their learning environment – developing a formalized sense of “customer care”, embedding learning outcomes in programmes in a more

systematic manner, improving further quality review processes for teaching and research.

4. Integration of the School of Business with its national community (and more particularly the Business community) – nurturing the Advisory Board; working more in depth with the Alumni with a view (but not only) to the Fundraising campaign; keeping a voice and a place of prominence in the public debates; and developing a replacement for their post experience programmes that had been very effective in engaging with the Irish commerce and industry establishment.

## **INNOVATION**

1. Leveraging the Innovation Academy – how can the School of Business appropriate what is being done now and use it may be to a greater extent?
2. Can this project be a first step towards cooperation with the School of Engineering at Trinity College that would be highly beneficial to both Schools but also certainly to the University as a whole?
3. Sustain the efforts around Entrepreneurship and Social Entrepreneurship but also their cross-fertilization.

## **INTERNATIONALIZATION**

1. The School should scrutinize its growth objectives with a view to building a critical mass of people in a chosen number of key areas. Rejuvenating the PEOPLE/MONEY/MARKET trilogy to think about those key areas?
2. With this growth strategy in mind and a reasonable recruitment plan, the School of Business should scrutinize its HR management processes today (and those of the University) to see how they can be brought in closer alignment to the conditions that prevail in the international business school market. What conditions will be conducive to attracting and retaining a group of young international Faculty members with a clear research orientation and obligation?
3. Leveraging the Trinity Brand in a way that will be beneficial to the School but can also serve as an interesting experience for other Schools in the University as well as for the University as a whole

As we proposed through our General Recommendation above (RG), going through the process of AACSB pre-accreditation and then accreditation could certainly help the School of Business work on those different dimensions.

## 6. School's response to the Review report for Business

During Hilary term 2011, the School of Business participated wholeheartedly in the College's School Review process. The School welcomes the report of the reviewers, which is a very positive assessment of the School, and is delighted that the reviewers were impressed by what the School has achieved over the past decade (p1).

Like the reviewers, we recognise that the School is at a significant turning point, and we are pleased that the reviewers have endorsed the School's strategy for growth. Despite the challenges facing the country and the College, the School believes that it will continue to thrive and play a vital role in helping the College achieve its strategic ambitions.

Paraphrasing the reviewers, we take their central messages to be:

1. 'There is an unmistakable spirit of excellence that is broadly shared within the School of Business' (p.1)
2. 'The School of Business is to be highly commended for its research output on the following three grounds; quantity, quality and balance' (p3).
3. 'The teaching and assessment methods appear very effective, with small group teaching a particular distinctive strength' (p6)
4. 'The engagement of the School of Business with society and the services to College provided by the School are well above what would be normal for the size of School' (p7)
5. 'The review team strongly endorses the School's growth plan especially given the School's ambitions to play an even more active role nationally and internationally' (p8)
6. 'The review team was impressed by the plans for building new premises and by the fundraising campaign to support those plans. The team strongly recommends that the College continue its support of the building project and considers the building project to be the main challenge for the new Head of School.' (p9).



The reviewers make fifteen recommendations; one meta-recommendation and 14 specific recommendations in each of the following areas: *Research (5)*, *Teaching and Learning (4)*, and *Resources and Other (5)*. The meta-recommendation is that the School should enter the process leading to accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). AACSB is the gold-standard accreditation for Business Schools in the United States, and is rapidly gaining currency outside of the United States. From beginning to end, the process for a first accreditation takes approximately three years. Subsequent re-accreditation visits take place every five years – and are similar in style to the College’s Quality Review procedure. While the School accepts the logic of this recommendation, the costs (money and resources) associated with seeking and maintaining AACSB accreditation are not trivial. In 2005, the School’s Executive decided against seeking AACSB accreditation for that reason. On foot of the Reviewer’s recommendation, the School’s Executive will reconsider this matter immediately.

The 14 specific recommendations across the School’s various activities are all prescient. Prior to the review, action had already been taken with respect to a number of the matters that are the subject of recommendation. The remaining recommendations are now under active consideration by the School’s Executive. In the remainder of this note, I comment by category of recommendation rather than to each specific recommendation.

#### *Research (Recommendations R1 to R5)*

Overall, the reviewers identify that ‘the strong research-driven orientation of the School is something that should be nurtured and envisioned as a distinctive trait of the School’ (p1). Their five specific recommendations presented on page 10 are all aimed at reinforcing that orientation. The recommendations deal with the following specific issues: (i) identifying new sources of research funding, (ii) ensuring sufficient conference funding is made available to early stage career colleagues, and (iii) reviving a more collective form of liaison between academic staff and research students.

All these recommendation are accepted and will be acted upon by the School’s Executive.

#### *Teaching and Learning (Recommendations R6 to R9)*

The reviewers found that ‘an unmistakable spirit of excellence.... leads each individual and group to give all they can within existing constraints to achieve excellence in their different activities (research, teaching and outreach)’. Their four specific recommendations deal with: (i) improving the marketing and branding of the School’s MBA, (ii) exploring synergies in course delivery on the pre-experience taught masters programmes, (iii) more formal management and comparison of teaching quality, and (iv) developing a ‘customer care’ capability for the postgraduate programmes.

All these recommendations make eminent sense, and have been or are being acted upon. With regard to the MBA it is important to note that significant new investment has been made in the academic year just ending, including the appointment of a new full time MBA Director, and in the immediate future the expansion of the Student Recruitment Officer position from part-time to full-time. As a result of these investments, the fulltime MBA programme numbers are growing, and the programme is being offered on a part-time schedule from September 2011. Finally, the School has already begun to exploit opportunities for course-sharing between masters students and will continue to seek further opportunities.

### Resources and Other

The reviewers most critical comments concern the School's resources. Inter-alia they observe that: (i) 'by international standards the size of the School is small with a total of 19 full time faculty' (p8), (ii) 'the current facilities of the Business school are not of international standard.....these facilities do not support the growth plan of the School' (p9) , and (iii) 'the funding model, which is applied by the College does not seem to create clear incentives for the various schools to cooperate in research as well as teaching' (p9). The reviewers make five recommendations to address these challenges. The five recommendations really amount to an endorsement of the School's current strategic plan, which sets out a clear target for growth in faculty numbers funded by taught postgraduate programmes and a fundraising campaign to build a new Business School on the campus. Action on the twin tracks of the plan are well underway.

### The future direction for the School

In an interesting final reflection (p13) the reviewers suggest a re-prioritization of the School's strategy. The School's current strategy uses the key phrase: *International, Innovative and Integrated* to capture the essence of the School's strategic orientation. The strategic plan sets out the meaning of these terms and actions to be taken under each of these headings.

The reviewers propose reversing the priorities as follows: *Integration, Innovation, Internationalization*. The reviewers speak of deepening integration on a number of levels: (i) within the School's intellectual community, (ii) of the school in the university, (iii) of students within the School and (iv) of the School within the national community. This is a thoughtful proposal; in holding a mirror to the School, the reviewers seem to be identifying a need to strengthen integration internally on a number of fronts. This is something that the Executive will act on, and the opportunity presented by the election of a new Head of School is an ideal time to reinforce these values, which the School has always believed define it.

Finally, the School wishes to restate its commitment to doing everything in its power to support the College's strategic aims, and enhance its national and international reputations.

Gerard McHugh

May 2011.

## **7. Pro-Dean's response to the Review report for Business**

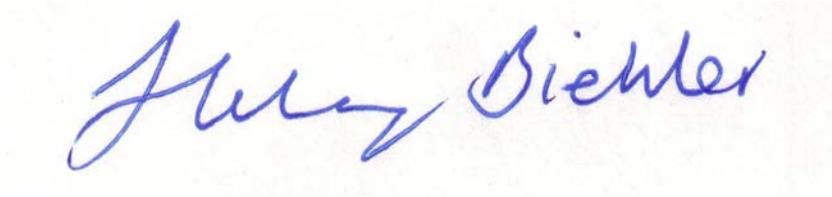
I commend the School on the results of this review and note that the reviewers describe aspects of the School's activities and achievements as remarkable. They make reference to the School's strong research-driven orientation and commend its "unmistakable spirit of excellence". They also praise the School's well-developed and effective fund-raising campaign which might well form a model from which other Schools in College could learn.

I agree with the Head of School when he states that the most critical of the reviewers' comments concern the School's resources, both in terms of its physical infrastructure and the relatively small number of full time staff. Undoubtedly College's financial situation poses challenges for the recommendation that the School establish a growth strategy. However, the School has one of the best RPM outcomes in College and some of the decisions it has made recently, such as moving from a part time to a full time student recruitment officer, show its commitment to seeking to enhance its recruitment capabilities in areas which will benefit the School and the College and to developing its income streams.

Undoubtedly the process of seeking AACSB accreditation will involve significant cost, both in terms of financial resources and staff time. While I welcome the suggestion that the School reconsider the decision not to seek such accreditation given the reviewers' strong recommendation to this effect, I would be guided by the School as to whether it considers the investment necessary to seek and maintain AACSB accreditation worthwhile at this juncture.

I agree with the realignment of the School's strategy along the lines suggested by the reviewers to priorities of "Integration, Innovation and Internationalisation" in that order. There are a number of aspects to any integration strategy which will benefit the School and its students and I look forward to seeing the results of a renewed focus from the School on such a strategy.

The reviewers have noted that the School is about to go through an important change in leadership and I suggest that it is an opportune time for College to prioritise an appointment to the vacant Chair of Business. There is clearly a need for strong and effective leadership if the School is to realise its potential going forward and securing such leadership should be a priority.



Professor Hilary Biehler

Pro-Dean

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

31 May 2011