



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**Review Report for the
Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH)**

12-14 June 2017

External Reviewers:

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Study in Humanities and Social Sciences,

Professor Rick Rylance, University of London;

Professor Claire Warwick, University of Durham.

Internal Facilitator:

Professor Ruth Byrne, Trinity College Dublin

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REVIEW OF THE TRINITY LONG ROOM HUB

Introduction

The site-visit for the review of the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) took place between 12-14 June 2017 following reading of extensive documentation and a teleconference prior to our visit. The arrangements for the visit were well-managed and the programme was thorough and flexible. We saw a good range of people and discussed the Hub with them in depth. We added meetings and tours of facilities by request which were efficiently enabled by the organising team. TLRH and Quality Office staff were unfailingly helpful and supportive both before and during the visit. Particular thanks are due to the excellent support provided by Professor Ruth Byrne as facilitator. Hospitality and accommodation arrangements were flawless.

The Review team comprised:

Professor Wim Blockmans, former Rector, Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in Humanities and Social Sciences

Professor Rick Rylance, Director and Pro-Dean, Institute of English Studies, University of London [Chair]

Professor Claire Warwick, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, University of Durham

This report is agreed unanimously by the team.

Reviewers were apprised of the University's overall, general objectives for reviews of Trinity Research Institutes (TRI). We noted the clarification on scope: that is, that this was not a review of the quality of research outputs but of the 'effectiveness of the TRI in enabling internationally competitive research.' Accordingly, the team did not examine any outputs, though there was some prior professional knowledge of this work among the team in various fields.

There were also specific Terms of Reference for the TLRH Review set out in the document *Terms of Reference for the Review of the Trinity Long Room Hub* (October 2016). These are to:

1. Assess the purpose, goals and priorities of the TRI and to ensure the continued alignment of the TRI with the University's strategic aims.
2. Evaluate the strategic aims of the TRI itself and its effectiveness in delivering on this ambition.

3. Facilitate a critical self-assessment of the Institute by the Institute Director, its PIs, the Heads of the participating Schools and the relevant Faculty Dean of:
 - i. whether the TRI has made the appropriate investment in facilities and enabling personnel to deliver on its mission and to facilitate the submission of competitive proposals at an individual PI and institute level;
 - ii. whether the TRI has established the requisite network of academic and other third party relationships to deliver an internationally visible activity of scale;
 - iii. whether the TRI demonstrated the capacity to be an effective magnet to attract the best talent internationally.
4. Facilitate an assessment by an independent, external review panel of both current and potential performance against analogous international centres.
5. Demonstrate the continued added value of the TRI in leveraging research in the corresponding field over and above that achieved through Schools alone.
6. Evaluate the success of the Institute in adding value to the research of its constituent Schools and Library, including the facilitation of interdisciplinary work
7. Provide recommendations to the University's on the provision of future strategic funding to the TRI.

The review team understood its responsibility is to deliver a report in accordance with these Terms of Reference. Overall, we are satisfied that the TLRH is appropriately constituted and delivering on its objectives in line with the University's strategic aims. As required, we deliver 'a strategic report to College that provides':

- a. an overall assessment of the Institute and to assign a rating as set out below to the achievement of the TRI in the terms of enabling research excellence:
 1. international reference point in terms of providing the facilities, supports and research environment that enables research excellence: clearly a world leader;
 2. internationally competitive in the provision of enabling facilities, supports and research environment that enables research excellence: a significant player internationally in the field;
 3. internationally competitive but with identifiable gaps that need to be addressed: a potential player at an international level;
 4. nationally competitive but not an international player;
 5. the TRI provides no obvious added value.
- b. an assessment of the degree of success/constraints on the TRI in leveraging research in the corresponding field over and above that achieved through Schools alone, as

demonstrated by a mature approach to governance, planning, human, financial and infrastructure resource management.

- c. recommendations to the University on whether or not the TRI should continue to be recognised as a Trinity Research Institute for a further five years.

Summary Judgement

The team are confident that the TLRH is well on the way to achieving its objectives in terms of the quality of support given to delivering international-calibre research in line with the University's plans and ambitions, and that it is deserving of continued support. The strategic aims of the TLRH are clear, and its 'purpose, goals and priorities' follow coherently and are embedded in operations. Though it faces challenges (detailed below), TLRH has very many strengths and achievements (also detailed below). It is aligned with University ambitions for Trinity to be in the vanguard of cross-disciplinary as well as discipline-specific humanities research in Ireland, and to become (in many ways it already is) a beacon institution internationally. Its role in the enhancement of humanities research in Trinity in the future seems to us crucial if the College is to realise its ambitions.

It is worth emphasising that in some respects TLRH is an unusual venture. As we make clear in the section below on 'Contexts' it has made great strides in somewhat adverse conditions which stands comparison with similar ventures in the Europe, the UK and the US. These centres often have different remits, scale of operation and levels and types of funding, so comparison is inexact. But in most respects, TLRH is of international calibre. In the current TCD and Irish context, it seems to us an excellent vehicle for enhancing and re-orientating humanities research for the twenty-first century which will continue to produce international-class outcomes.

We respond to the topics and related questions identified in the Terms of Reference cited above as follows.

Under (a) we believe the TLRH currently reaches level 2 on the above scale ('internationally competitive in the provision of enabling facilities, supports and research environment that enables research excellence: a significant player internationally in the field') and has the imminent potential for level 1 ('international reference point in terms of providing the facilities, supports and research environment that enables research excellence: clearly a world leader').

Under (b), TLRH has an impressive structure with respect to governance, planning, and infrastructure. It has sound human resource management, but will need to consider its succession planning and retention of key staff. It has significant strengths in leveraging

research activity, mainly through hosting workshops, the award of small ‘incubator’ grants, enabling cross-disciplinary dialogue, and public outreach. It is not yet doing so to the maximum with respect to facilitating cross-disciplinary work and grant gaining across the academic Schools. We explore the reasons for this below.

Under (c), we unequivocally recommend that the University continues to recognise the TLRH as a TRI for a further five years.

Contexts

In our deliberations, we took note of several important contextual factors relevant to the review of the TLRH as follows.

We recognised the severe, adverse circumstances in which Irish Higher Education and research support has operated since 2008-09, a period coincident with the establishment of the Hub and the construction of its building. The system-wide consequences of this are felt in many ways: severe financial restrictions in an unfavourable economic climate; consequent difficulty and loss of capacity to support innovative and internationally-oriented ventures; significant pressures on staff committed to core functions in academic Schools; budgetary and related pressures in Schools; and a disposition to support STEM disciplines preferentially in national research funding. This leaves severely competitive European funding through the European Research Council (ERC), Horizon 2020 and other Framework Programmes as the most important source of external research funding as the major source. It seems to us that TLRH has done well to emerge from this period with credit and significant achievement.

TLRH, we understand from the Board and other sources, had a slow beginning over its first few years and has only established secure arrangements, relationships and strategic direction over the last five, thanks in large part to the work of the current Director, her predecessor and their staff. It seems to us that TLRH is now best regarded as an excellent pioneer venture in process of – but close to – establishing its proper momentum. Benefits are currently delivered and will increase in due course. We can say with confidence that the facilities, organisational infrastructure and sense of purpose and direction in place at TLRH stand international comparison.

More generally, in Ireland and elsewhere internationally, research in the arts and humanities is changing in its culture and ways of working. Collaborative working and cross-disciplinary research are becoming more common, and there is significantly greater awareness of the need to raise funding from grants and other sources (and consequentially greater competition for these resources). When it comes to cross-disciplinary working there is greater appreciation of the need to adapt traditional methods and approaches to those of

other disciplines while retaining core knowledge and skills. The value to the humanities in engaging with other disciplines is felt in the generation of new knowledge, but also in advances in methods and techniques. The area of digital humanities, in which Trinity has significant presence, is a case in point. Finally, there is also better understanding in the humanities of the need for public engagement and of making the case for the value of the humanities in situations outside the disciplines themselves. Work at TLRH is exemplary in this respect.

These changes in the practice of humanities research are uneven across and within disciplines, institutions and individuals, but they are positively observable in the TLRH which functions as an instrument of change towards more collaborative activity. What occurs in the Hub is congruent with positive developments elsewhere and are on the right track, though the humanities culture at Trinity in general may have further to go on this road. (This is a surmise based on our observations of TLRH and meetings with academic Schools: a larger review would be necessary to determine this with confidence.) The changes are, in part, generational, but TLRH seems to us likely to be a crucial agent in the development of the humanities at Trinity. The College has a long and distinguished record of excellence in humanities research and scholarship which continues. However, if it is to maintain this for the future it may need to accelerate this transformation. TLRH offers a powerful vehicle for this. We note that support for research in the humanities has until recently been very limited. This has not provided an adequate 'breeding ground' for larger initiatives as has been the case in some other countries.

As noted in the Introduction above, we were not required to read research outputs, nor to offer a view on the quality of the research produced. In the humanities, this can only be done through systematic peer review, as research assessment processes in the UK have incontrovertibly demonstrated. In the humanities, there are no reliable proxies for research quality based, for example, on research grant income, the assumed prestige of publishers or journals, or bibliometric data. (One issue with the latter is that less than half of humanities outputs are in the form of journal articles.) What we can say with confidence is that we recognise the pedigree of the research culture in the humanities at Trinity, are aware of the international standing of many of its researchers, and have first-hand knowledge of the quality of some of the international-class publications produced.

Major Areas of Strength and Achievement

We found a substantial number of distinctive and highly creditable achievements and areas of strength in the Hub as follows. They are not in order of importance.

- The TLRH building and facilities are outstanding by any measure, and genuinely world-class. The design is ideal for purpose and the building, as well as those who

work in it, are welcoming and enabling. It is well-used and wonderfully well-located. All users spoke well of it; non-occupants and visitors spoke with envy. TCD should be proud of it, as it is.

- The leadership offered by the current Director, and her predecessor, is outstanding with respect to depth of engagement, skilful development of relationships with others, management of the building, modelling appropriate behaviours, and strategic planning and initiative taking.
- Administrative staff are equally outstanding both as individuals and as a team. All of those we spoke with testified to the quality of the service they provide and we observed this in action. They work terrifically hard and were universally valued. Unusually, we heard no contrary view from academics. A large part of the Hub's day-to-day operational success is attributable to them. All are commendable, but we heard that particular pressure is placed on the Manager and the Research Programme Officer (RPO) in terms of work-load demand. (We will return to this in our recommendations.)
- We noted that the Institute Board is engaged and committed and provides a good source of strategic advice and helpful involvement. It is very well chaired and we commend the inclusion of external members who provide refreshing perspectives and ideas.
- The relationship with the College's academic community in the humanities is strikingly positive. In our experience, in some other universities, this can be edgy or worse. What we found at Trinity was entirely supportive and positive. It is a tribute to, and probably a consequence of, the excellent leadership provided by the two most recent Directors, other Hub officers, and the work of Administrators.
- The Hub's Public Engagement provision is impressive with highly commendable and innovative elements such as 'Behind the Headlines'. This feature of their work is as strong as any we have observed anywhere. The Hub provides excellent ambassadors for the College and their disciplines.
- The TLRH's philanthropic endeavours are also strong. Relationships are nurtured, some success has been gained, and the potential is high building upon the cultural pedigree of Trinity, Dublin, and Ireland more widely. Leadership by the Director is strong in this respect, being both energetic and strategically well-judged. This commitment (and therefore workload) is widely shared, and its importance was recognised by both academic and administrative colleagues alike in discussion. As we will say below, we anticipate that this will be an increasingly important part of Hub activity in years to come, not only to secure financial support, but also in Public Engagement. Activity is building. We heard accounts of an impressive recent event in London, for example.
- The Hub provides notable support for Postgraduate students and early-career researchers crucial for the future. The facilities are excellent, and are used wisely

and respected by occupants. The spaces offered for discussion as well as those for private study are excellent. Some training is provided.

- We found evidence of good use being made of the modest amounts of funding provided through the Research Incentive scheme, including follow-through to larger projects, further funding and large grant applications to the ERC. Award holders paid fulsome tribute to the Hub's role, not just in providing funding but also in stimulating and enabling partnerships, and providing hands-on advice to applicants and award-holders. We understood, from many spontaneous tributes, that TLRH staff – and especially the RPO – were enormously helpful in steering the development of research projects and grant applications whether these were held in the Hub or not. This seems a highly-valued service to the whole humanities community in the University.
- The Fellowship scheme appears to be working reasonably well, though we have only modest evidence to guide our assessment. We note the commendable success in obtaining an EU COFUND grant to provide a total of 9 twelve-month fellowships over the next three years from 2017-2019/20. The visiting fellows with whom we spoke were generous in their praises and fully committed. The facilities are very good and visitors are welcomed into day-to-day business and intellectual life of the Hub. The Fellowship scheme provides useful external engagement and circulation of ideas, and has the potential to increase collaborative research. We did not have the opportunity to pursue the scheme in depth, but we noted its importance. The Hub might consider a more focussed look to assess its value and progress, the nature of Fellows' integration into the Hub's business, and especially its long-term potential for the development of collaborative research, including research grants. The TLRH might consider the possibility of reciprocal arrangements with similar centres or HEIs internationally for mutual benefit.
- Finally, what struck us forcibly and impressively throughout our visit was the ample evidence of the depth and extent of commitment to the Hub and its success both internally and from outside. Again, in our experience, this external support is not always the case in other institutions. We observed this positive and supportive attitude among core staff, visiting Fellows, academic members of Schools, senior College Officers, and the Board. We would like to commend the College's commitment to this venture, its far-sightedness in establishing it, and their continued support for it.

Without doubt, then, TLRH offers significant added value to the research within its remit and to the University, including its public presence and its philanthropic endeavours. These are strong achievements. Our conclusion is that these should be recognised, but there is more to come.

Issues and Challenges

Despite its achievements, the TLRH faces challenges. The following are among the issues we explored during the Review.

- Relationship with Schools: We note the sense of good will towards the Hub from those we met from relevant academic Schools, and their positive engagement with it. We also understand from Board members and others that this has not always been the case. As we remark above, there has been a positive sea-change in relationships and modes of working with the Schools over recent years.

However, there is still work to be done. Financial contributions to the Hub place significant pressure on hard-pressed Schools in austere times, and – as is often the case with such institutes – it is usual that humanities research projects are developed and conducted in both places, making attribution complex and ‘ownership’ by Hub or School unclear. One form this can take is uncertainty about where grant income resides. These complexities of attribution are normal in humanities research centres of this kind because lead times in projects are extensive and particular phases of long-duration work, as expressed in grant applications for example, are long-rooted. In addition, we noted that the flow of services in terms of advice, facilitation and bid development appears to pass unevenly from Hub to School-based researchers. The Hub’s facilities are also generously used for School-based events being (we were told) far superior to those available elsewhere.

We investigated the operation of the intersection between the Schools, the Hub and the University research themes. Here the synergy appears positive and we heard accounts of some notable success, particularly investigations under ‘Making Ireland’ which led to a €250k grant from the Irish Research Council (IRC) and a planned ERC application. The Hub has a significant role in bringing together dispersed researchers and facilitating their work. This is a strength which might be built-upon.

Overall, the multiple ways in which the Hub interacts with the academic Schools with which it is connected appears soundly-based but somewhat disjointed and lacks a coherent framework. We do not feel that this is beneficial in the long term for all parties and we recommend that the Hub and the Schools explore the possibility of developing a joint ‘compact of understanding’ to frame current and future engagements. This might include such issues as apportionment of grant income, level of service to be expected on either side, hosting of postgraduates, and protocols for developing cross-disciplinary research involving the Hub and more than

one School. There are elements of good practice already – for example in the appointment of Visiting Fellows – and, as noted, there appears to be good will and positive spirit on all sides.

- Trinity Library: Like the Hub, the Trinity Library is world-class in its collections and facilities, many of which appear currently under-exploited for research. Together they represent an impressive platform for library- and archive-based research and a major opportunity for significant grant gain and complementary philanthropic activity. Some steps have been taken in this direction in relation to the Fagel collection, and in digital imaging, but these are still at a relatively early stage. We found relations between the library and the Hub to be cordial and constructive, but we see further value in developing this more substantially, perhaps through the production of a joint research plan—though we recognise that the Library too is under severe financial and staffing constraints. Nonetheless, jointly-conceived and executed endeavours will increase range and potential as well as the possibility of success.
- Financial Sustainability: Long-term financial planning is the most important issue facing the TLRH. Broadly speaking, we understand it to receive income from three sources: contributions from the Schools; contribution from College; and income generated through other sources such as research grants and philanthropic donations.

At present, the Hub does not derive income from sources such as charging for events (where the concern is that this would discourage public engagement) and fees for educational initiatives such as Masters-level courses, short courses, day schools, summer schools or professional development courses, which are sometimes offered by similar centres elsewhere.

We will return to this in a different light in our discussion of Education below. For now, we note that, from a financial point of view, to become revenue-generating at any significant level, initiatives such as these require major input in terms of time, staffing (both academic and administrative), planning and other resources including marketing, publicity and recruitment. They will place additional pressures on an already heavily-used building, and often they require patient liaison with other parts of a university already active in these areas. It would therefore be a substantial commitment and in our view it would be unwise to embark on such activity without a major cost-benefit analysis and feasibility assessment.

Finally, it remains unclear to us how the Hub derives income from hosting a substantial number of postgraduate researchers, unless it is regarded as part of the

service offered to Schools by the Hub in return for their block contribution. This would benefit from clarification.

As of now, we understand the plan is to substantially increase the proportion of income derived from grants and philanthropy to reduce contributions from College and Schools. (This assumes that costs are efficient, necessary, and not reducible: we saw no evidence to suggest otherwise.) There have been various formulations of this plan over recent years and the history is set out in the Self-Assessment Report and in documents presented during the visit. As outlined to us, the current intention is to develop a budget which diminishes the portions derived from Schools and College and enhances the portion from earned income by 2021. If achieved, 30% will be earned from grant income, 40% from philanthropic sources, and 30% from Schools and College contributions.

To achieve that level of success in grant revenue over four years seems to us unrealistic. The grant-winning culture is not sufficiently developed to do that; we saw little evidence of a sufficient number of projects of appropriate scale at a developed stage and quality that are ready to go; nor did there appear to be successor projects in the pipeline to maintain this growth over time; the infrastructure of support for developing successful applications – though excellent in itself – is not large enough to support all this additional activity; relations with Schools to ensure agreement about where grants will be held and overheads derived is not quite there yet; finally, funders operating at appropriate volume are few. The IRC has modest resources for the Humanities; the ERC operates at ample scale but is exceptionally competitive with success rates sometimes below 10%. Applying to the ERC also requires heavy investment of preparatory resource. We will return to question of grant winning shortly, but for now the proposed pace and volume of growth seems too ambitious.

We think that better headway can be made through philanthropy. 40% is a steep target but not entirely out of reach. There is already some achievement alongside a good strategic development and commitment. And it is always worth recalling that success begets success in this area. A lot will depend not only on the amounts donated and how they are donated (i.e. over what time period and so forth), but also what conditions are necessary (one can only name the building once, after all). The objective presumably will be to assemble a sufficiently large, unencumbered endowment for the Hub to cover a major portion of its annual core costs. This is the model used successfully in similar centres in the US for example. Although we are not experts in such fund raising, we think Trinity has the right blend of institutional prestige, pedigree and support, an outstanding building, and energetic staff to

enable significant achievement in philanthropic revenue. But momentum must be maintained.

On the third component of the funding formula, that derived from Schools and Colleges, it is our view that the Hub will require support in addition to the 30% intended, and more in line with current levels. This will enable the Hub to lead a change in grant culture in the humanities (see below), establish its philanthropic efforts, and continue to provide major services to the university and to research as outlined above. In addition to the quality research produced and postgraduate recruitment, Trinity benefits from reputational enhancement, public and philanthropic engagement, and collateral advantages through its international involvement and attractiveness to high-quality staff in recruitment.

A FURTHER NOTE ON RESEARCH GRANTS: Though our remit is to report primarily on the Hub, that is inseparable from consideration of its potential as a generator and facilitator of research funding across the Humanities at Trinity. As indicated above, we think that the Humanities at Trinity may need to reflect on its readiness and capacity to generate significant and sufficient grant income for its purposes from EU sources. We understood, for example, that performance in obtaining ERC grants in the humanities at Trinity is not strong when compared to other Irish universities, some of lesser reputation. This matter touches on issues beyond our remit. But we note once again that the TLRH is an agent of change and one whose research remit – drawing together talents from across the Schools, generating collaboration, provoking ambition, and facilitating cross-cutting and cross-disciplinary work – is in line with a powerful direction in recent humanities research. We were asked to advise on ways of increasing the numbers of PIs holding their grants in the Hub. This may be the wrong question. The more immediate question is how to raise the overall level of quality grant applications in which the Hub can play a crucial role. The secondary question is then to devise ways in which this might be sensibly and equably distributed to support both the TLRH and the Schools.

- Education: we were asked to advise on the issue of whether the Hub should enlarge its educational activity to include engagement in Masters level courses or undergraduate teaching (let alone the extra-curricular activities noted above). Our view is that it might be possible to consider a distinctive offering at Masters level and that would not be inappropriate in relation to the Hub's mission and role. However, Masters courses can be easy and exciting to design, but significantly more difficult to recruit to. If the Hub is to consider this, it will need to have confidence that it is not going to run these courses at a loss and/or divert scarce academic and administrative resources to marginal advantage.

We do not think it prudent for the Hub to engage at this stage in undergraduate teaching at any scale (though it should continue to welcome undergraduates to its events as a matter of course). There are three reasons: it is not part of its core mission and mission-creep should be avoided as distracting; resources are finite and to engage in this direction would divert resource from mission-critical activity; finally, there is some evidence from the UK that, over time, centres of TRLH's kind which turn their attention to undergraduate activity on any scale tend to diminish the outward-facing and research focussed activity which is their purpose.

- International Developments: The Self-Assessment Report has good examples of international engagements by the TLRH. This is strong. The Fellowship also draws in international colleagues and potential collaborators who enrich the research environment both for Hub and Schools. The Hub will wish to continue to develop this and may want to consider greater strategic planning and targeting of areas and institutions who might become regular partners through, for example, reciprocal sabbatical schemes. We were asked to comment on any possible consequences that might follow from Brexit. We think that this situation is too young and too volatile to hazard what would, at best, be only speculation. But it is not difficult to see that, for example, it would be in the interests of TLRH and the College to explore opportunities for bi- or multi-lateral relationships, with a view to enhancing collaborative grant applications and other research partnerships. A second area to consider may be in postgraduate work for international students using the attractive and distinctive qualities of the Hub.
- Risks and Mitigation: We note that the Hub does not maintain a risk register, and while there is little point in doing so as a paper exercise, registers done well can focus attention on key points of vulnerability and forward planning for mitigation. Two matters struck us forcibly. One was the issue of leadership succession when the current Director's term expires. The other was the pressure placed over time on an excellent administrative team working under some pressure. There will be a retention aspect to consider in this as well as an efficiency aspect. We were invited to comment on an idea to recruit a second RPO to support the outstanding work of the current postholder. This seems to us a strong proposal and probably essential if TLRH is to perform its role in developing greater and better grant applications.
- Data collection and communication: Based on this review, the Hub would benefit from more functional record keeping and data collection, though this should not be allowed to add to the pressures already placed on administrators. The most important aspect concerns the gathering and communication of excellent achievements in terms of research publications and other outcomes to enable the

Hub to tell an impressive story quickly. This will provide a point of shared success between the Schools and the Hub. It may also be an asset in planning and discussion of priorities.

- Other topics: In the Self-Assessment Report, we were asked to advise on several topics. Some have received comment already. This section completes the picture.
 - *Rankings and Reputation*: we understand the issue here, but do not feel we have useful advice to offer, other than to ensure that the excellent work of the TLRH becomes as widely known as possible. Enhanced participation (already underway) in international networks and the development of collaborative research projects are obviously areas to prioritise.
 - *Leadership Model*: we have commented on this as an area of current strength, and have remarked on the need to develop robust succession planning. Looking ahead, as business expands, there might be a case for an Executive Deputy Director with appropriate time buy-out and compensation for the School(s). This could be a vehicle for succession and retention of organisational knowledge and momentum.
 - *Bandwidth*: this is correctly identified as a challenge and we have made several observations on this in relation to the administrative team and the proposal to extend activity in Education. The Hub will need to assess the extent and nature of its commitments and its priorities among them. It will also need to work closely with the College and Schools to ensure appropriate recognition and promotion opportunities for key staff.

In addition, we have an observation on the following:

- *Committee Structure*: as outlined on p.17 of the SAR. We did not examine this closely but the Hub appears to operate a relatively onerous structure in the context of a relatively modest budget. It may wish to look at this structure to ensure efficiency internally and in relation to College committees to avoid duplication and unnecessary obligation. We heard some comment to this effect during our visit.

Recommendations

The review has the following recommendations:

1. The Review team assessed the value of the TLRH, the value it adds to the College and the Humanities at Trinity, and its progress and potential. We strongly recommend that the College maintains its status as a TRI and continues its support.
2. Recognising that the Board provides significant added value in terms not only of mature governance but also operational input, we recommend the TLRH considers increasing the number of external members on the Board from as wide a range as possible keeping in mind the Hub's commitment to outward facing activity and raising philanthropic funding.
3. The Hub and the Board should, as a matter of priority, consider its processes for succession planning for the Directorship and review the retention risks among key administrative staff.
4. The Hub should assess the value and operation of its Fellowship scheme to ensure it meets the strategic needs of the TLRH.
5. The Hub should examine its support for university research themes and consider ways to enhance already good provision.
6. The Trinity Library and TLRH should explore ways of working more closely together to develop a shared research agenda and actions related to this.
7. The Hub and Schools should explore the potential of a 'compact of understanding' as a framework for their interactions to ensure maximum benefit to both parties.
8. The College, Faculty and the TLRH should examine realistic ways in which a greater number of quality grant applications at scale can be developed in line with the ambition to eventually secure 30% of Hub income from this source. (It might also wish to review the realism of this target in the immediate term.) This seems to us a shared responsibility, requiring full commitment from all parties, but the TLRH will be a key agent in its development.
9. The Hub has excellent facilities for postgraduates. It may wish to look again at training arrangements for these and their potential to operate as a platform for training across the College.

The Response of the Director and Dean of the AHSS Faculty to the Reviewers Report

On behalf of the Trinity Long Room Hub and our constituent partners and stakeholders, I would like to thank Professor Rick Rylance, Professor Claire Warwick and Professor Wims Blockmans for their thoughtful and constructive approach to this review and the depth of interrogation, expertise, and insight that they brought to the process. I would also like to echo the thanks expressed by the reviewers to Professor Ruth Byrne for facilitating an intense process with great skill and ease.

I welcome the findings of this first external review of Trinity's Arts and Humanities Research Institute and below provides a response to the comments and recommendations made in the reviewers' report.

I particularly welcome the summary judgment of the reviewers that the Institute is *'well on the way to achieving its objectives in terms of the quality of support given to delivering international-calibre research in line with the University's plans and ambitions, and that it is deserving of continued support'*.

The reviewers recognised the adverse, especially financial, context in which we operate, yet concluded that the TLRH is *'internationally competitive in the provision of enabling facilities, supports and a research environment that enables research excellence'* with *'imminent potential'* to go from **being a significant player internationally in the field to being a world leader**.

Response to the key recommendations:

Recommendation 1. The Review team assessed the value of the TLRH, the value it adds to the College and the Humanities at Trinity, and its progress and potential. We strongly recommend that the College maintains its status as a TRI and continues its support.

We welcome the reviewers' unequivocal recommendation that *'the University continues to recognise the TLRH as a TRI for a further five years'*. To enable the Institute to achieve sustainability in the longer term will, in their opinion, require continued investment from University in line with current levels for at least the next five years. As noted *'This will enable the Hub to lead a change in grant culture in the humanities'* and deliver its ambitious, but achievable, philanthropic targets as part of the current fundraising campaign.

I will work with the Provost, Dean of Research, Faculty Dean and Director of Trinity Development and Alumni, to maintain our current momentum and accelerate our fundraising. Through our 'Telling Our Story programme' and philanthropic forum, we will

continue to develop a culture supportive of engaging with philanthropy amongst AH researchers.

Recommendation 2. Recognising that the Board provides significant added value in terms not only of mature governance but also operational input, we recommend the TLRH considers increasing the number of external members on the Board from as wide a range as possible keeping in mind the Hub's commitment to outward facing activity and raising philanthropic funding.

We are actively considering two new external appointments for the coming year, one from the cultural sector and the other from the policy sector. This will increase the Board's external membership to four, which includes one academic expert.

Recommendation 3. The Hub and the Board should, as a matter of priority, consider its processes for succession planning for the Directorship and review the retention risks among key administrative staff. In particular, it should consider the level of administrative support provided for research grant applications.

I agree that the leadership and team bandwidth risks are serious challenges to the sustainability of the Institute. The succession planning for the directorship including the exploration of the appointment of an executive deputy director is something that needs to be discussed with the Provost, Dean of Research, and Chair of the Board with a view to bringing a proposal to the Board.

I welcome the reviewers' recognition of the Hub's administrative staff which they noted '*are equally outstanding both as individuals and as a team. All of those we spoke with testified to the quality of the service they provide and we observed this in action. They work terrifically hard and were universally valued... A large part of the Hub's day-to-day operational success is attributable to them*'. They also flagged retention issues – the review of all work loads and the addition of a second RPO - which I would like to address as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 4. The Hub should assess the value and operation of its Fellowship scheme to ensure it meets the strategic needs of the TLRH.

We would consider our fellowship programme one of the great achievements of the Institute and we review its effectiveness with our Board and Directors of Research Forum on an annual basis to ensure that it evolves and develops to the highest international standard and in line with the strategic priorities of the Hub, our partners and the university. Nonetheless the recommendation to undertake a '*more focussed look to assess its value and*

progress, the nature of Fellows' integration into the Hub's business, and especially its long-term potential for the development of collaborative research, including research grants, is timely and wise.

Recommendation 5. The Hub should examine its support for university research themes and consider ways to enhance already good provision.

The reviewers noted that the *'synergy between the Hub, the schools and the research themes appears positive'*. Thanks to the Dean of Research a new project officer has now been appointed to the Hub to give much needed organisational and promotional support as well as grant application capacity to the 'Making Ireland' and 'Identities' themes. The Hub is also hosting a new project officer for the Digital Humanities Centre. In the absence of bespoke University or external funding for the 'Creative Arts Practice' and 'Manuscript, Book and Print Cultures' themes, the Hub will continue to provide support to these, as well as emerging research areas such as cultural trauma and medical and neuro humanities, where significant Wellcome Trust funding has been secured.

Recommendation 6. The Trinity Library and TLRH should explore ways of working more closely together to develop a shared research agenda and actions related to this.

We welcome the reviewers' acknowledgement of the world class quality of Trinity Library's collections and facilities. We also agree that the Hub and the Library have not fully exploited the potential of our relationship which *'represent an impressive platform for library- and archive-based research and a major opportunity for significant grant gain and complementary philanthropic activity'*. The production of a joint research plan is a sensible way forward and could facilitate multi-annual planning and collaborations of substance at many levels. I will explore this proposal with the Librarian. I should also note that the Directors of Research Forum at our June 2017 meeting agreed to establish a sub-committee dedicated to identifying strategies to draw scholarly attention to the Library's research collections.

Recommendation 7. The Hub and Schools should explore the potential of a 'compact of understanding' as a framework for their interactions to ensure maximum benefit to both parties.

We welcome this constructive recommendation at a very positive juncture in the ongoing relationship with our partnering Schools which the reviewers noted *'is strikingly positive. In our experience, in some other universities, this can be edgy or worse. What we found at Trinity was entirely supportive and positive'*. We are fortunate to have a very supportive and committed research community and the recommendation for a compact offers a new framework for reviewing and establishing good practices in line with the strategic priorities

and needs of the schools and the Institute. We look forward to exploring this proposal with our partners in the coming term.

Recommendation 8. The College, Faculty and the TLRH should examine realistic ways in which a greater number of quality grant applications at scale can be developed in line with the ambition to eventually secure 30% of Hub income from this source. (It might also wish to review the realism of this target in the immediate term.) This seems to us a shared responsibility, requiring full commitment from all parties, but the TLRH will be a key agent in its development.

We accept the view of the reviewers that our aspirations to achieve 30% research income by 2021 may be unrealistic and we appreciate their recognition of the complex amalgam of cultural and behavioural change required in current research practices in the Arts and Humanities, the need for more technical and administrative support for grant application activity such as a second Research Programme Officer, better practices of grant collaborations and support between the Institute and our Schools and their PIs, and, of course, more external funding opportunities nationally.

The question remains of how best we can raise the overall level of quality grant applications in which the Hub can play a crucial role and share a portion of the overhead? We will work closely with the Dean of Research and Faculty Dean to devise a strategy for addressing these cultural challenges as part of our Implementation Plan. However, College support for a second Research Programme Officer to support the outstanding work of the current RPO would be a priority to hasten the cultural transformation of grant application activity now underway and hugely appreciated by our community for the direct individual support it provides.

While this emphasis on the generation of research income is essential it is important to note, as the reviewers did, that *'In the humanities, there are no reliable proxies for research quality based, for example, on research grant income, the assumed prestige of publishers or journals, or bibliometric data.'*


Recommendation 9. The Hub has excellent facilities for postgraduates. It may wish to look again at training arrangements for these and their potential to operate as a platform for training across the College.

We feel that Trinity needs to provide the level of integrated professional research supports being provided in Europe and in other Irish universities in a way that links in careers, HR, research and innovation. We would happily support efforts in this regard and will continue to work with Trinity based fellowship programmes (such as the EDGE Cofund and TCIN

global brain initiative) to see how we can extend our efforts to provide top quality research and career development supports to researchers under those programmes to the rest of the Trinity research community.

Conclusion:

I am confident that we will take advantage of any opportunities presented to address the recommendations in the report. I look forward to working with the Provost, Dean of Research, Faculty Dean, and other College Officers, to prepare a more detailed Implementation Plan to unlock the imminent potential of the Hub to go from being a significant player internationally in the field to being a world leader.



Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of the Trinity Long Room Hub



Darryl Jones, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

2 October 2017

The Response of the Dean of Research to the Reviewers' Report

As Dean of Research I welcome the very positive review of the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH). The reviewers make clear that TLRH is well on its way to achieving its ambitious objectives, is deserving of continued support and also point out that not alone are the strategic aims clear but are coherently embedded in its operations, which is evidence to me of an efficient and well-functioning institute.

The report draws attention to the important role of the TLRH as an agent for cross-disciplinarity within Trinity and internationally, a point which should be further leveraged in the development of our research strategy in Trinity as a whole. While the reviewers comment on the fact that their remit was not to do a research evaluation, they did make clear that they are aware of the international standing of many of the TLRH researchers, and have first-hand knowledge of the quality of some of the international-class publications produced, which is a very welcome observation.

The strengths of the TLRH, listed in the report, are impressive and while it is not necessary to repeat them here, it is worth drawing attention to two strengths. Firstly, it is important to formally note the comments made about the Director and the administrative team, all of whom are deemed *outstanding*. Our institutes cannot function without the right leadership and without high-quality administrative support, and it is great to see such high praise for those involved in the TLRH. As Dean of Research I would very much echo that praise. The reviewers' comments on the *exemplary* nature of TLRH public engagement are also a highlight. TLRH is increasingly 'telling its story' to wider audiences in ways that respect the complex nuances of the topics under discussion, while at the same time making them accessible. This is not alone of benefit to the public, but of much benefit to the researchers involved.

The report goes on to make nine recommendations for further improvement of the institute. The recommendations made are sensible and practical. An implementation plan is being prepared by the TLRH in response to these and I will work with the TLRH in this regard. As part of that process, all nine recommendations will be of interest. For the purpose of this report, the following high-level points, in relation to a number of the recommendations, should be noted:

Recommendation 1: As Dean of Research, I fully support maintaining the status of the TLRH as a Trinity Research Institute (TRI).

Recommendation 3: Succession planning is of the utmost importance. This has significant implications for the TLRH philanthropic fundraising plans, as this activity can be personality driven. I will fully engage in discussions on this topic with the Director of the TLRH and the TLRH Board.

Recommendation 5: As Dean of Research I welcome the opportunity to work with the TLRH to explore how the TLRH can further build synergy between the Hub and the research themes. This is also important in the context of a deeper engagement with the AHSS Faculty.

Recommendation 8: While we work in a resource-constrained environment it should be possible to collectively find practical solutions to help increase the number of quality grant applications secured. As Dean of Research, I will seek to explore options with the TLRH.

Recommendation 9: It would be important to tackle any initiatives around training from a joined-up-thinking and College-wide perspective. Trinity will increasingly have to meet training needs for postdoctoral researchers and others more systematically.



Professor Linda Doyle
Dean of Research

8 January 2018