Quality Committee

Meeting Date	Thursday 18 April 2024 │ 14.00 – 16.00 via Zoom
Present	Professor Orla Sheils, Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair), Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary; Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer; Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies; Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of STEM; Mr. Patrick Magee, Director IT Services; Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, STEM Representative; Professor Brian O'Connell, Dean of Health Sciences; Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer; Professor Jan De Vries, HS Representative; Professor Emma Stokes, Vice President for Global Engagement; Professor; Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services;; Professor Carmel O'Sullivan, Head of School of Education; Dipto Barman (PG representative) and Dirk Van Damme (External).
Apologies	Professor Gail Mc Elroy, Dean of AHSS; Ms. Orla Cunningham, Chief Operating Officer, Education Officer TCD SU – Position Vacant, Ms. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian, Professor David Fennelly, AHSS Representative, Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer.
Visitor/In - attendance	Ms Lena Doherty, HS Faculty Manager; Katie O'Connor, STEM Faculty Manager, Valerie Smith, AHSS Faculty Manager

Agenda items		
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QC/23-24/038 Quality Committee minutes	Minutes from previous Quality Committee meeting held on February 29th, 2024, were approved by Academic Council on the 13th of March and College Board on 23rd of March 2024.	
QC/23-24/039 Matters arising from the minutes	**Matters arising from the previous meeting held on February the 29th, 2024.** Professor Jan De Vries, HS Representative requested an amendment to the minutes to reflect the notion that the Quality Committee functions more as a compliance committee. Two items which were withdrawn (*Teaching Council Accreditation Report and Request for Derogation from Head of School of Education*) from the previous Quality Committee	

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	were included on the Agenda on this meeting.	
QC/23-24/040 Annual Faculty Report: AHSS, STEM and FHS	**AHSS – Valerie Smith, Faculty Manager** presented the Annual Faculty Report and highlighted the following: All undergraduate and postgraduate modules were evaluated (100%) but response rates remain low. A new initiative by the School of Linguistics, Speech, and Communication Sciences "Things you learned; questions you have" using a QR code and an anonymous MS Form, has received good engagement from students. Questions are responded to on Blackboard, closing the feedback loop. External Examiner Annual Report return rates were also high (UG-95%; PGT 89%), although it was noted that Schools continue to report complaints by Examiners around access to Blackboard and the need to renew passwords. Regarding Athena SWAN nine Schools in the Faculty have Bronze awards while other Schools are in the application process. Regarding quality initiatives – the Schools of English, Law and the BESS Programme contributed case studies for the HE Degree Classification project. A number of Schools (English and History and Humanities) had enhanced communication to students around EDI Policies; while the School of Psychology had developed a Policy on Generative AI. The Dean of Graduate Studies commented positively on an initiative within the School of Social Work and Social Policy in which prospective PhD students submit a proposal to the School, where it is reviewed by a panel, who then pair the student with a supervisor matching their research interests.	**Decision QC/23-24/040:** The Quality Committee recommends the Annual Faculty Quality Report from the Faculty of AHSS to Academic Council for approval via the Consolidated Faculty Quality Report.

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	One of the big issues of concern was IT Structure and Systems and how the lack of connectivity within the systems results in duplication of effort by staff. The Director of IT Services commented that a lot of time has been taken to evaluate systems issues and noted that there are supports and fixes available which may not be widely known or utilized by staff rather than a technology issue *per se*. He advised that the requirement for renewal of External Examiner passwords at six monthly intervals was an audit requirement and not one that IT Services had control over.	
	The Senior Lecturer and Dean of Graduate Studies stated that there is work ongoing across College to collate the use of AI, to prepare advice on the challenges and to keep pace with and stay on the top of practice to respond to (i) the benefits AI offers and (ii) mitigating against its misuse.	
	In relation to Physical Infrastructure, it was noted that the Dean had invested in improvements to teaching spaces, but that more was needed. Foster Place and the School of Creative Arts were called out, as locations requiring immediate attention.	
	STEM – Professor Sylvia Draper (Dean) and Katie O'Connor (Faculty Manager):	**Decision QC/23-24/040:** The Quality Committee considers and recommends the Annual Faculty Quality Report from the Faculty of STEM to Academic Council for approval via the Consolidated Faculty Quality Report.
	Regarding Athena SWAN, six of the eight schools in the Faculty hold Bronze or Silver Awards. Two Schools have applications under review.	
	There have been recurring complaints regarding the quality of teaching spaces e.g. Goldsmith Hall, particularly by Engineering and Biological Science students who are high users of this facility. Across STEM there are concerns regarding key equipment infrastructure which is approaching end of life and the time taken for repairs or to find	

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	replacements parts. Downtime from equipment failures impacts negatively on the Learning Experience and Capstone Projects. The Dean spoke to challenges the Faculty faces with Module Evaluation (UG 84%; PG - 92%). The VP-CAO asked if the proposal to incorporate functionality to address module evaluation on the new VLE project will be a good option. The Dean of STEM agreed this would be a positive intervention. The Dean highlighted the continuing challenge associated with the cost of Fieldtrips and Capstone Projects but noted that these were a valuable addition to STEM education. The Dean and the STEM Faculty Manager spoke to the lack of a PG representative on the Faculty Executive and noted that volunteer PG representatives rather than elected PG representatives were providing a PG student voice on many School Executives. The Dean of Graduate Studies (DGS) sought clarification on whether this was an issue for 2022/23 only or if it remained an issue for the current academic year. It was confirmed that this was an ongoing issue, and the DGS asked the Faculty Manager to liaise with her to ensure representatives were in place for next year. In terms of quality initiatives, the Dean noted the work by the School of Computer Science and Statistics who have established a Working Group of Generative AI, the School also introduced a new system for assigning Demonstrators and Teaching Assistants to modules. She also mentioned the Plagiarism Evaluation system introduced by the School of Engineering and efforts by the School of Natural Science to redesign assessments to mitigate the risks associated with Generative AI.	. **Action QC/23-24/040.1** STEM Faculty Manager to liaise with Dean of Graduate Studies in relation to PG representatives in advance of next academic year.

	Health Science – Professor Brian O'Connell (Dean) and Ms. Lena Doherty (Faculty Manager).	Decision QC/23-24/040: The Quality Committee considers and recommends the Annual Faculty Report from the Faculty of HS to Academic Council for approval via the Consolidated Faculty Quality Report. .
	The Dean commenced by stating that Schools have implemented actions in response to Student Feedback e.g., making sure all students have access to Blackboard and that teaching material is available in a timely fashion and before lectures. The Faculty has also benefitted from pedagogical improvements that have resulted from the Deans Awards for Teaching and Innovation e.g., developing software to enhance the Learning Experience for anatomy teaching in the School of Medicine.	
	The School of Pharmacy implemented a "No Formal Teaching" on Mondays initiative that has been welcomed by staff and students alike and which allows space for reflection and an opportunity to decompress.	
	Two Schools were granted Athena Swan Bronze Awards.	
	2022-23 was the first full year enjoying the benefits of the newly created roles of Academic Registry Faculty Liaison Officers (FLO), and the Dean acknowledged the assistance of the Chief Operating Officer in securing funding for these key positions and noted the positive impact they had.	
	The Faculty reported concerning issues related to physical and research infrastructure. The lack of student spaces at the east end of campus and sequential timetabling of classes does not allow students time to commute to nearby cafes for lunch or breaks. The withdrawal of eating/break-out facilities at the Trinity St James Centre was raised on by the VP-CAO. She mentioned there were no Trinity spaces at SJH or TUH where students could get food or drink. This was confirmed by the VP-Global Engagement who suggested that lack of space issue may have been the reason. However, the VP-CAO emphasized that there were canteen spaces available, but they had been withdrawn	

	without any attempt at replacement.	
	The Dean noted the work of the Faculty Manager in driving an Action Plan to address Racism in Health Sciences. A report was produced during 2022/23 and a seminar series with visiting professors was initiated to draw attention to this issue. A question has been added to all module surveys requesting feedback on how the faculty may better address EDI. The Academic Secretary noted the Retention Rates figures. The Dean noted that in the case for Pharmacy lower retention was related to students transferring to Medicine rather than withdrawing from college. It was suggested that it would be good to investigate the retention rates further, particularly among Non- EU students.	
	Overall comments from all Faculties presentation	
	Members discussed opportunities to disseminate best practices and innovations across Faculties/ College to a broader audience. Faculty Managers noted the challenge in securing Case Studies for the Annual Faculty Quality Reports.	
	The VP-CAO noted Survey Evaluation response rates as an ongoing problem. She referred to the opportunity to embed feedback functionality in the new VLE as a means to improve results. She referenced discussions at the IUA Registrars meeting on ongoing revisions to the National Student Survey and the need to balance competing interests of questions on wellbeing with ones on academic quality, while working to keep the survey short.	
	The VP-CAO also flagged serious concerns relating to equipment failure, lack of research infrastructure and the critical inflection point we face with many key core facilities nearing end of life without any means to replace them and ongoing concerns regarding inadequate teaching infrastructure in places.	
	She commended the progress on EDI and the positive impact of the Faculty Liaison	

	Officers from Academic Registry. She thanked the Director Student Services for the efforts by staff in AR in bringing 80% of student exams back on campus and the impact this had on the student and staff experience. She closed by thanking the Faculty Deans and Faculty Managers for their Reports.	

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QC/23-24/041 Teaching Council Accreditation Report (resubmission)	Professor Carmel O'Sullivan – Head of School of Education presented an update informing the committee that the Teaching Council Accreditation was successful, and no recommendations were made. The only requirement is that no later of 6 months from the date the report was issued, the School needs to revert to the Teaching Council with a plan on how to achieve a Staff Student ratio of 15:1 on the Professional Master Education (PME NFQ Level 9).	**Decision QC/23-24/041:** The Quality Committee recommends the Teaching Council Accreditation Report to Academic Council for approval.
	Prof O'Sullivan explained that she was in negotiations with the Faculty Dean and Faculty Finance Partner to determine if sufficient funding was available within the School budget to secure additional teaching staff.	**Action QC/23-24/041.1** The Head of School to revert to Quality Committee at a future meeting to confirm that plan is in place to address the Teaching Council requirement.
	The VP-CAO recalled that Prof O'Sullivan had previously noted the school had attained the requisite staff quotient through summing composite FTEs and questioned if this was no longer the case? She suggested that the Action Plan should include a strategy through which the school will maintain the required ratio. The Dean of Graduate Studies referencing comments by the Head of School at the February Quality Committee indicating that Schools of Education across the country were experiencing similar difficulties in are meeting this ratio and asked for an update on the sectoral approach to deal with national challenges in achieving the necessary ratio.	
QC/23-24/042 Request for Derogation from Head of School of Education (resubmission)	Professor Carmel O'Sullivan – Head of School of Education presented a request for a derogation from the normal constraints regarding selection of reviewers for the scheduled school quality review in 2025.	**Decision QC/23-24/042:** The Quality Committee recommends the request for derogation of a reduction of the time period from five to three years in
	The reasoning behind the request related to the high level of engagement the school has within the sector. This means that there are relatively few potential reviewers of sufficient esteem that have had no formal interaction with the school for more than five	

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	years. On that basis the request was made that this timeframe might be reduced to three years.	this instance to Academic Council for Approval.
	The VP-CAO indicated there was support for this request at the previous meeting when the matter was first aired, and it seemed a pragmatic proposal. The Dean of Graduate Studies indicated that the new External Examiner Policy- Research Programmes has reduced the period where an Examiner has previously acted as a Supervisor within the School to three years. However, she added that where the nominee had been a supervisor for the Head of School, that this should preclude them for a period of five years and suggested a similar approach might be adopted in this instance.	
QC/23-24/043 Progress Report Genetics and Microbiology	Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of STEM presented progress on the actions and divided the update into those actions which were already completed, those in train and those with some difficulties.	**Decision QC/23-24/043:** The Quality Committee recommends the Progress Report for Genetics and Microbiology to Academic Council for approval.
	She reported good progress on the integration of module delivery across disciplines and the interdisciplinary seminar programmes.	
	Ongoing improvements are being made in:	
	• supporting technical integration, • joint mentoring of Junior Staff. • staff development.	
	She commended the updated EDI committee and its work the appointment of a new EDI Director in the school.	

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	It was noted that the School Executive Meetings are effective, and the Head of School is engaged in several decision-making fora e. The new structure of Principal Committees offers additional opportunities to Heads and school members to participate in College governance.	
	The Faculty Finance Partner is working to provide clarity to the school on the implementation of the Budget Planning and Allocation (BPA).	
	The Senior Lecturer commended the great progress shown in the report and noted that such efforts are not taken for granted; He offered congratulations to the team involved.	
QC/23-24/044 School of Physics-Progress Report on Institute of Physics, Accreditation for noting.	The Senior Lecturer indicated that progress has been made though USC and Academic Council in addressing for the conditions from the accreditation of the School of Physics.	**Decision QC/23-24/044:** The Quality Committee notes the Progress Report on Institute of Physics-Accreditation.
	The School submitted a derogation request to the Undergraduate Studies Committee on the 26th of March for capping at a level of 60% on resits (reassessment). The request was recommended to the meeting of Academic Council on 10th of April 2024 where it was approved.	
QC/23-24/045 RIAM Policies for Noting	The resubmission of the RIAM English Language Policy and Education Recruitment Agent Policy was noted by the Committee and had been approved by Academic Council at the meeting of 10th April 2024.	**Decision QC/23-24/045:** The Quality Committee notes the RIAM Policies.
	RIAM Corporate HR Policies: Fee Support and Education Assistance Policy (New) and Continuous Professional Development Policy (Revised).	**Action QC/23-24/045.1** The Memo to College Board to be amended to reflect

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	It was pointed out the covering Memo for updates to policies should state that the policies would be submitted for Noting and not Approval by the Committee, and that this be corrected prior to submission to Board.	that the RIAM Corporate HR Policies are for Noting.