

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
11:00, Tuesday 9 March 2021, via Zoom  
MINUTES

**Attendees**

Professor Lorraine Leeson, Associate Dean of Research (Chair)  
Professor Andrew Bowie, Associate Dean of Research  
*Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*  
Professor Brian Lucey, Director of Research, School of Business  
Professor Orla Flanagan, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Ann Devitt, Director of Research, School of Education  
Professor Daniel Geary, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Clemens Ruthner, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Blanaid Clarke, Director of Research, School of Law  
Professor Redmond O'Connell, Director of Research, School of Psychology  
Professor Peter Stone, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, Director of Research, School of Religion  
*Faculty of Engineering, Maths and Science*  
Professor Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Thorfinnur Gunnlaugsson, Director of Research, School of Chemistry  
Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Gareth Bennett, Director of Research, School of Engineering  
Professor Jane Farrar, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Stefan Sint, Director of Research, School of Mathematics  
Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences  
*Faculty of Health Sciences*  
Professor Jeff O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science  
Professor Anne-Marie Brady, on behalf of the Director of Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Lidia Tajber, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
*Trinity Research Institutes*  
Professor Aideen Long, Director of Trinity Translational Medicine Institute  
Professor Kingston Mills, Director of TBSI  
Professor Eve Patten, Director of Trinity Long Room Hub  
Professor Mani Ramaswami, Director of TCIN

Mr. Leonard Hobbs, Director of Trinity Research & Innovation  
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association

*In attendance:*

Dr Raquel Cabral Harper, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation  
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist, Library  
Dr Geoff Bradley, Director of IT Services  
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development, Office of the Dean of Research  
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director of European Engagement, Trinity Research & Innovation & Global Relations  
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

**Apologies**

Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English  
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

<b>Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval</b>	
<b>A.1</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b> Minutes of the previous meeting of Feb 9<sup>th</sup> were circulated in advance and accepted as read.</p>
<b>A.2</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p><b>RS/20-21/9</b> The DPO’s slides on Brexit and research were circulated to the committee after the last meeting.</p>
<b>A.3</b>	<p><b>RS/20-21/ 11 Proposal to change name of Centre for War Studies</b> Prof. Daniel Geary</p> <p>A memo outlining a proposal to change the name of the Centre for War Studies to the Centre for International History was circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting. Prof. Geary explained the reasons behind the proposed name change which would better reflect the research interests of the academics involved and the long-term strategy of the Department of History.</p> <p>The committee unanimously approved the proposal.</p>
<b>A.4</b>	<p><b>RS/20-21/5 Good Research Practice Policy</b> Prof. Lorraine Leeson</p> <p>Prof. Leeson addressed some of the questions that were raised at the last meeting of the committee in relation to the data retention policy and the timeframes for holding particular types of data. Prof. Leeson noted that the goal of the policy was to summarise other Trinity policies and point to them rather than putting specific details in to the Good Research Practice Policy as doing so would mean it would have to be updated every time any of those policies were amended. It was noted that if there were concerns around retention of data the Data Protection Office should be consulted.</p> <p>It was noted that some RECs were concerned that they were not always aware of where relevant policies were. LL noted that the DPO had suggested guidelines were more appropriate than binding policies given the diverse nature of research activities. LL also encouraged the committee to feed back any concerns or gaps that needed to be addressed. LL noted the need to have sensible documents that join up the dots and make it easier to do research. LL also noted that the intention was that paragraphs or sections of the GRPP could now be updated as required rather than having to review and update the document every year.</p> <p>Committee agreed to approve the document as circulated.</p>
<b>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</b>	
<b>A.5</b>	<p><b>RS/19-20/3 HR guidelines for Postdocs and teaching</b> Antoinette Quinn, Director of Human Resources</p> <p>A memo from HR outlining Trinity’s position in relation to postdoctoral researchers who engage in teaching activities was circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting, and the Director of HR joined the meeting for this item.</p> <p>AQ gave the committee an outline of the rationale behind the memo. Noted that HR had to find a balance between researchers’ needs and protecting the university from ongoing employment claims. The first section of the memo summarised Trinity’s</p>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

obligations and the implications for schools in the event of a successful permanency claim. Second section outlined options available to schools to accommodate some teaching experience. AQ noted that Trinity is the only university that pays redundancy when research funds cease.

The committee discussed the memo and the wider issue in detail with AQ. In response to queries as to why a clause could not be inserted into contracts that stated any teaching did not constitute a renewable position, AQ noted that it was not possible to sign away legal rights.

Members of the committee suggested that a contract with an 80/20 research/teaching split be created, or two separate contracts. Committee was unclear as to why teaching duties could not be written in to a contract from the beginning. It was also noted that the memo provided to the committee showed very little change from previous discussions with HR on this issue.

AQ noted that other HEIs permit researchers to teach but they are not paid for this work. Also noted that split contracts still created an obligation on the employer. Committee suggested that Trinity's stance is in conflict with the national framework around postdoc career development. AQ noted that the framework is aspirational as opposed to binding. The committee noted that Trinity researchers are taking up teaching positions with other HEIs to gain experience. AQ suggested that it is illegal for individuals to hold contracts at multiple institutions.

The TRSA representative broadly welcomed initiatives to improve if and how research staff can lecture and the recognition that teaching benefits both researcher careers and Trinity. Noted concerns with the tone of the memo, and that gaining teaching experience was very beneficial to those seeking an academic career and not a way to secure a permanent position. Regarding the public service agreement and the WRC referred to in the memo, noted that to the best of his knowledge all HEIs used the "existing exit mechanism" to terminate the contracts of research staff and it wasn't a special provision to Trinity.

The TRSA rep raised the following issues:

- The proposal to facilitate "guest lectures" is not implemented by other HEIs which created the impression that researchers were a group of employees separate from the College even though they are core to its mission
- The stipulation that the same lectures could only be delivered for 3 years ignored the work that goes into preparing lectures and created extra workload
- TRSA agreed that lecturing should be voluntary but the lack of remuneration is problematic. Questioned why teaching fellows would be paid for the same work but researchers would not.

The TRSA rep also noted that provisions as outlined in the document could act against research staff applying for positions such as Senior Research Fellow. Advertisements for Assistant Professorships in College require experience in teaching, lecturing, curriculum design etc and the provisions in the memo would be harmful to any current research staff who might apply for those positions. Overall, the TRSA would welcome a consistent approach for research staff but not at the expense of employment rights or future career opportunities.

ADOR Bowie noted that the document was a briefing document to spell out the current issues. Also noted that the ultimate goal was to provide some kind of contract that will

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<p>be acceptable to everyone. Noted that the teaching needs of schools were also important, but not as important as the career development of researchers.</p> <p>The committee noted that there seemed to be a different interpretation in different parts of College of the role/definition of a researcher. Academics would see it as encompassing all activities including teaching and supervision. AQ disagreed with this and noted that her responsibility was to protect the university. Members of the committee noted that schools were hiring staff from other HEIs to cover teaching.</p> <p>Members of the committee noted concerns with the optics of the document, and asked at what stage potential new hires should be advised of the situation regarding teaching provision and career development.</p> <p>Members of the committee noted that allowing postdocs to teach was vital to the running of the university as it was the most efficient way of covering teaching loads for academics who were willing to step up to senior leadership roles. It was also noted that the Irish Research Council specifically allows postdocs to teach for a certain amount of time.</p> <p>AQ noted that HR was sympathetic to helping postdocs gain more experience, but also noted that staff should not be hired to do a specific task and then be expected to perform other duties.</p> <p>Members of the committee asked that what is meant by “researchers” be clearly defined at the beginning of the document as the terminology was currently too vague. Members of the committee also noted that the document should not discuss colleagues as potential liabilities.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> the committee’s feedback to be shared with the Associate Deans of Research and HR for further discussion.</p>
<b>B.1</b>	<p><b>Update from Associate Deans of Research</b> Lorraine Leeson, Andrew Bowie</p> <p>AB noted that SFI launched its new strategy. Noted that there was not much specific detail on funding calls and schemes. There was no further update on possible all-island centres since the last meeting. Noted that SFI would be launching a number of schemes soon and had met with the VPDORs group to alert/ask for input. A postdoc scheme and a SIRG-style scheme for all disciplines in conjunction with IRC would be announced soon. AB encouraged schools to start identifying candidates who might be proposed. Noted that there would also be an infrastructure call and info would be shared as it was received. Another scheme would see funding ringfenced for IOTs or TUs that would have to find a collaborating PI at a university. This would be STEM-focused. AB also noted that this particular scheme had met some resistance from VPDORs.</p> <p>ADOR Leeson advised the committee that the research ethics management system would be coming to the committee for approval in April/May. LL noted that a huge amount of work had gone on behind the scenes to advance to this stage. Goal is to have procurement ready to go by September 2021. Noted that it was important for the committee to feed into the document when it was circulated.</p>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<p>LL noted that a STEM representative had been sought for the REPC but to date no names had been put forward. Urged the committee to find a volunteer so as to ensure full representation of faculties on the REPC.</p> <p>LL advised the committee that the TORCH project was making progress. Representatives from participating universities were being identified to help lead out on work packages. Noted that a full presentation would be made to the committee at a later meeting.</p> <p>Members of the committee asked about the ODRES research boost programme. FK advised that a proposal would be brought to the committee later in the year.</p> <p>The committee noted congratulations to schools on the announcement of the QS Subject Rankings.</p>
<p><b>B.2</b></p>	<p><b>RS/20-21/2 HEA Covid-related Costed Extensions</b> Fiona Killard</p> <p>FK provided the committee with an update on the HEA Covid-related Costed Extensions fund. FK noted that when the campus was closed in March 2020, ODRES opened a log where researchers could submit issues they encountered as a result of the pandemic and related restrictions. Based on the issues submitted to the log, ODRES wrote a paper that was shared with the IUA, HEA, DPER, and used as a briefing document for the Minister for Further and Higher Education. €47 million was allocated to HEIs in October 2020, with €8.24 million allocated to Trinity research.</p> <p>FK noted that the first round of funding opened in October 2020, with a second round opened in February 2021. Approximately 400 applications were reviewed and awarded funding: 25% Research Staff; 53% Funded PhD Candidates; 11% Self-Funded PhD Candidates; 34% Funded Research Projects. To date, approximately €3.5 million has been allocated from the fund. FK noted that in round 2 PhDs in any year were allowed to apply. Also confirmed that student fees were not covered by the fund.</p> <p>FK advised that a third round of funding was expected, and that the ODRES was working to have the eligibility criteria loosened significantly for this.</p>
<p><b>B.3</b></p>	<p><b>RS/20-21/7 TR&amp;I Research Expansion Funding Strategy</b> Leonard Hobbs</p> <p>LH advised the committee that the strategy had been approved at the February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting of EOG. A hiring taskforce was to be established. Noted that 14 positions would be filled in the first 12 months, with interviews expected to take place around late May, June. Noted that post-award strategy is still a gap and would need a lot of feedback to identify the issues. Also noted that mobilisation would be addressed in the new hires.</p>
<p><b>Section C – Items for Noting</b></p>	
<p><b>C.1</b></p>	<p><b>Items for Noting</b></p>
<p><b>C.2</b></p>	<p><b>Items for future discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Ethics Approval Management System</li> </ul>

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

<b>C.3</b>	<b>AOB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Research Themes webpages</b> JD noted that the research theme webpages received regular traffic and asked the committee to help identify relevant contacts so that the information on each page could be kept up to date.</li><li>• <b>Post-award page</b> JD advised the committee that a new webpage had been created to list all of the current supports for research award management in Trinity: <a href="https://www.tcd.ie/research/dean/resources/post-award.php">https://www.tcd.ie/research/dean/resources/post-award.php</a> Advised committee that any suggestions for additions/amendments could be sent to her.</li><li>• <b>Horizon Europe</b> DA advised the committee that the launch of Horizon Europe in Ireland would take place on March 25<sup>th</sup> and asked the committee to share anything they saw from the RDO during that week.</li></ul>
------------	---