

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, 7 May 2024

Boardroom, Trinity Business School (hybrid)

MINUTES

*In attendance*

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)  
Prof. Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research  
Prof. Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research  
Prof. Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research  
Prof. Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts (via Zoom)  
Prof. Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education (via Zoom)  
Prof. Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, School of Histories & Humanities (via Zoom)  
Prof. James Hanrahan, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies (via Zoom)  
Prof. Mark Bell, Director of Research, School of Law (via Zoom)  
Prof. Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology  
Prof. Benjamin Wold, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies (via Zoom)  
Prof. Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry & Immunology (via Zoom)  
Prof. Marco Ruffini, Director of Research, School of Computer Science & Statistics  
Prof. Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering  
Prof. Frank Wellmer, Director of Research, School of Genetics & Microbiology (via Zoom)  
Prof. Andrei Parnachev, Director of Research, School of Mathematics (via Zoom)  
Prof. Ortwin Hess, Director of Research, School of Physics (via Zoom)  
Prof. Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery (via Zoom)  
Prof. Aideen Long, Director of TTMI (via Zoom)  
Prof. Eve Patten, Director of Trinity Long Room Hub (via Zoom)  
Prof. Rhodri Cusack, Director of TCIN  
Dr Michelle Olmstead, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer, Trinity Innovation & Enterprise (via Zoom)  
Prof. Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies

Dr Sally Smith, Director of Research, Trinity Research  
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office (via Zoom)  
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement, Trinity Research (via Zoom)  
Ms Mary Tracey, Executive Director, Trinity Innovation & Enterprise (via Zoom)  
Dr Gordon Elliott, Trinity Innovation & Enterprise  
Ms Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division (via Zoom)  
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services (via Zoom)  
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist  
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Trinity Research

*Apologies*

Prof. Catherine Welch, Director of Research, Trinity Business School  
Prof. Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry  
Mick Reilly, Procurement  
Prof. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work & Social Policy  
Prof. Pádraic Whyte, Director of Research, School of English  
Prof. Sharyn O'Halloran, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Prof. Yvonne Buckley, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

<b>Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval</b>	
<b>A.1</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>An amendment from the Librarian was incorporated into the minutes which were then accepted by the committee.</p>
<b>A.2</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p>No matters arising</p>
<b>A.3</b>	<p><b>Terms Of Reference for the Research Ethics Policy Committee</b></p> <p>Prof. Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research</p> <p>An audit carried out by the Internal Audit office identified that the Terms of Reference for the Research Ethics Policy Committee had not been updated since 2010. Proposed new TORs were circulated to the Research Committee for approval. Specific updates included formalising the reporting into the Research Committee and changing the frequency of meetings.</p> <p>The TORs were approved by the Research Committee.</p>
<b>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</b>	
<b>B.1</b>	<p><b>The use of AI in research</b></p> <p>Prof. David Lewis, ADAPT</p> <p><i>Prof. Lewis joined the meeting via Zoom for this item.</i></p> <p>The committee was presented with an overview of recent developments in relation to the use of Artificial Intelligence in research. During the presentation it was noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the performance of Large Language Models had significantly improved very quickly;</li> <li>• Generative AI was now being used in the writing of proposals, and discussion had begun on its use in publication and research. It was noted that AI could be of assistance to non-native English speakers.</li> <li>• Gen AI could sometimes generate inaccurate information, and could also generate correct information but with incorrect attribution.</li> <li>• Discussion had taken place at a recent EARMA event about the use of Gen AI in writing funding proposals, how to account for the decision of a university to use Gen AI. It was noted that there was a risk that as more generative content ends up in a proposal that funding might not go to the best researchers/teams to conduct that research. This could lead to more costly review processes and increased face-to-face interviews.</li> <li>• There was a need to be very careful in relation to who proposals and reviewer feedback are shared with as these, along with textbooks, learning and teaching resources, were becoming critical data sources for LLMs.</li> <li>• ADAPT had begun exploring the ethical implications of the use of AI in research as it touched on everything related to research but has particular implications for export controls and dual use.</li> <li>• COARA, LERU, EARMA etc were all beginning to examine the use of AI in relation to research and funding, ethics, integrity, copyright etc.</li> <li>• European Commission’s Group of Chief Scientific Advisors were drafting a scientific opinion on the “successful and timely uptake of AI in science in the EU”</li> </ul>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Significant challenge posed by the fact that the technology is developing much faster than any guidance can keep up with.</li><li>• EU guidelines would want more transparency about how we use these tools, and there was a need for clearer language about the different uses. Copyright situation was still very uncertain with active court cases and legal challenges underway.</li><li>• Open access obligations were also a factor. There was no protection for openly available resources. Universities may have to consider developing their own rules about the use of their own models.</li></ul> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Different types of research would have different uses so there would possibly be a need for discipline-level protocols regarding responsible use of AI. The key would be to enable autonomy but not leave it to disciplines to figure out the intricacies themselves.</li><li>• There was a risk that the use of AI in proposal writing could lead to a huge increase in the number of submitted proposals to funding calls. There was potential for repetition or duplication in proposals as a result. There was also concern about the impact this would have on EDI as it would be difficult to ensure that any model used did not have implicit bias. The possibility is that more funding will have to be allocated for assessment and review. Procurement processes could be deployed to ensure that vendors were addressing issues of bias in their models.</li><li>• Machine translation was technically a possibility but there was a question as to whether the developers of LLMs would ensure translations were done well. The vast majority of the training data used for the models was in English.</li><li>• Dean of Graduate Studies noted that a working group in College was developing a college-level statement on the use of AI and Gen AI in teaching and learning. The Committee agreed that it would be of strategic value to coordinate on the statement to include the use of AI in research so that there was one overarching statement for Trinity. It was noted that decisions on use would still be devolved to schools. DOR noted that the tools could be very useful, but people needed to have a clear understanding of what they were using.</li></ul>
<b>B.2</b>	<p><b>Update from the Dean of Graduate Studies</b> Prof. Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies</p> <p>The Dean of Graduate Studies presented an update on the Postgraduate Renewal Project to the committee. During the presentation the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work was organised into three horizons to make it more manageable. Launched into Horizon 2 in January this year; it had been thought this phased would take be 18 - 24 months, but now more likely to be three years. DGS noted that digital transformation was required.</li><li>• Horizon 1 saw significant work on structured PhD and doctoral programmes. It was noted that there are extraordinary expectations on PhD candidates. Horizon 1 also saw the consolidation of the various internal awards into one Trinity Research Doctorate Award which were allocated the same way that the 1252s were to ensure every school has one, with others competitively awarded.</li><li>• Agreement had been given by Board to write down the fee differential for non-EU PhD students funded by all Irish state funding agencies. DGS noted this had been transformative in redistributing the proportion of EU and non-EU students. DGS noted that this was a pilot project and a proposal would have to</li></ul>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<p>go to Finance Committee to continue it. DGS also noted that the fee differential applied for the full four years of studies for any students recruited as part of the pilot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was estimated that the new progression reports have saved approximately 1,000 staff hours.</li> <li>• DGS noted that good work had been done as part of Horizon 1, but that some communication could have been better. DGS also recognised the contributions of the Dean of Research, Associate Deans of Research and all the colleagues across College who contributed to work packages.</li> </ul> <p>The Dean of Research congratulated the Dean of Graduate Studies on the progress of the project so far, particularly the increased stipends for college awards. DOR noted that this forced the government and wider sector to act when they may have not wanted to.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the committee welcomed the work done on stipends and fee differentials but noted that there was more to do. It was noted that while stipends have increased, the fee contribution has not. DGS noted that other universities in the IUA group were challenged by Trinity's move on stipends. It was noted that more could be done to address the issues surrounding the fee differential.</li> <li>• DGS advised that it was expected that the waiver of fee differential would still be in place for recruitment in Sept 24 but unclear after that. It was noted that if the vision was to make PhD research affordable for everyone, the longterm ambition would be to move to a single fee that was not based on domicile. DGS noted that this would be a very complex challenge. It was noted that the financial situation in College generally was challenging, particularly in light of recent events. Some discretionary income that had been used to cover the fee differential was now being closed off because of other costs. Members of the committee also noted that AHSS PhD students tend to be recruited earlier before they might secure external funding, and were automatically ineligible for the fee differential waiver. DGS noted that there were lessons to be learned from the initial implementation that would be carried forward. It was also noted that current calls such as that for the SFI centres emphasised PhD programmes so there would be implications for how students were funded.</li> <li>• Members of the committee noted that there was scope for more strategic engagement with policymakers, employers and employment agencies.</li> <li>• DGS noted that developments as part of the project now allowed for greater creativity in how research students demonstrated their research skills beyond the traditional dissertation. There was now scope for other forms of research such as case studies, performance pieces etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B.3</b></p>	<p><b>Research Culture - update</b> Dr Sally Smith, Trinity Research</p> <p>The committee was presented with an overview of the workshop on research culture that was held on April 12<sup>th</sup>. It was noted that 'research culture' was a very capacious term that could be used to cover a range of activities. It was also noted that the workshop was a first step in what would be an ongoing dialogue across Trinity; the decision to begin with the members of the Research Committee was felt to be most appropriate but there would be wider consultation with a more diverse group of colleagues.</p>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<p>In summarising the feedback collected during the workshop, the main points that were articulated were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of postdoctoral researchers</li> <li>• Academic freedom</li> <li>• Transparency across college processes, especially promotions</li> <li>• Celebrate all kinds of research achievement, not just the usual “stars” and large grant capture</li> <li>• More efficient admin; reduce needless bureaucracy</li> <li>• Dignity and respect</li> <li>• Diversity and inclusivity within research teams and structures, and also college committees and decision-making processes</li> <li>• Embed the Research Charter</li> <li>• Recognise the contribution of researchers to essential college activities such as ethics committees for promotions, research leave etc.</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that whatever next steps were taken, they would have to be specific to Trinity needs and not just follow trends at other institutions. DOR noted that there was some work to be done first to define what ‘research culture’ means in a Trinity context. The committee was advised that Trinity Research would identify a series of actions based on this initial feedback. The next update to the committee would be in September or October.</p>
<p><b>B.4</b></p>	<p><b>Postdoc Academy - update</b> Prof. Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research</p> <p>The committee received a verbal update on the progress of the Postdoc Academy. It was noted that work began two years to look strategically at how to improve the postdoc experience at Trinity. The first steps were to create an umbrella website targeted at postdocs and resolve some HR-related issues particularly around the ability of postdocs to gain teaching experience. It was noted that the academy aimed to achieve four things for postdocs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. acknowledge the research they do;</li> <li>2. increase their visibility. It was noted that this cohort was made up of close to 800 people in Trinity;</li> <li>3. community building;</li> <li>4. communication.</li> </ol> <p>A structure was now in place with one rep from every school and a first meeting had been held with them to discuss goals for the group. It was noted that during this meeting it became apparent that some schools were too large for one rep to represent everyone so it was agreed that this could be addressed at a local level. ADOR Warntjes encouraged the Directors of Research to connect with the reps in their schools to identify how best to connect with the cohort in the school.</p> <p>It was noted that initial plans for the next year was community building based around events: a postdoc day as part of START/European Researchers’ Night in September and collaborating with the RDO on a focused information day on research funding. It was noted that as there was such a large turnover within this cohort, monitoring at a local level would be imperative to ensure the academy remains active and useful.</p> <p>The Dean of Research thanked ADOR Warntjes for all his work on this initiative to date. In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p>

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that reps from Trinity Research Institutes could be included in the group.</li> <li>• Trinity Innovation &amp; Enterprise expressed interest in engaging with the group.</li> <li>• Members of the committee welcomed the academy as a really positive development.</li> </ul>
<p><b>B.3</b></p>	<p><b>Update from the Dean of Research</b> Dean of Research</p> <p>DOR noted that the Research Boost Programme call would have closed to applications during the meeting. While nothing had been reviewed at this stage, DOR noted that it was evident that the general boost (Stream 2) had been heavily over-subscribed which reflects the severe limitations the HEA and DFHERIS placed on the HEREG/Stream 1 funding. A fuller update on the programme would be forthcoming at the June meeting. It was noted that the total funding available for Stream 1 and Stream 2 combined was €3million. The total value of applications across both streams as of 9.00 that day had been in excess of €8million with more than 200 applications at that point.</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to newly elected Fellows including members of the Research Committee: Hal Duncan, Edurne Garcia Iriarte, and Michael Monaghan.</p> <p>DOR noted the College announcement from the previous evening in relation to the ongoing student protest. In relation to the taskforce on academic freedom, the DOR noted that updates would be shared with the committee once they were available. The Librarian confirmed that all libraries were open, with the 1937 Reading Room and Kinsella Hall open 24 hours with all other libraries operating summer hours which had been scheduled for today. It was also noted that today marked the opening of the new research collections study centre.</p> <p>DOR will share updates on the announced taskforce once it becomes available. Helen - all the libraries are open. 1937 and Kinsella Hall are 24 hours. All other libraries were due to go to summer hours today anyway. Today is also the opening of the new research collections study centre.</p>
<p><b>Section C – Items for Noting</b></p>	
<p><b>C.1</b></p>	<p><b>Items for Noting</b> No items for noting.</p>
<p><b>C.2</b></p>	<p><b>Items for future discussion</b></p>
<p><b>C.3</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b> No AOB.</p>