



Academic Affairs

Annual Report 2023-24

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Foreword

I am delighted to present the fifth annual report of Academic Affairs (AA). The report captures the work of the AA team during 2023/24 and gives insights into work planned for the year 2024/25.

Last year saw people within the team both joining and moving on. Previous Head of the team, Linda Darbey, has moved on to the HEA, and a new Assistant Academic Secretary joined in April 2024. Lizzie Whitcher, having completed an exceptionally complex Academic Integrity project, has moved on to manage one of Trinity College's Schools and Michael Cleary-Gaffney has successfully progressed from Education Support Officer to an Administrative Officer role in our Quality Office team.

Staff changeover, coupled with a busy workload of governance meetings, support of new programme development and contributions to College's strategic teaching and learning projects, have made 2023/24 a dynamic and productive year.

I would like to commend the team - Ciara, Ewa, Liz, Lizzie, and Michael – whose dedication and commitment ensured that 2023/24 was another successful year for Academic Affairs.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "P. Fitzpatrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P".

Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs

What we do

Welcome to Academic Affairs (AA), a cornerstone division within Trinity Teaching and Learning (TT&L).

In Academic Affairs our mission is to shape **world-class academic policies**, robust **standards**, and **innovative programmes**.

Our vision is to work **collaboratively and inclusively** with academics, disciplines, and Schools, with Trinity Units and Divisions, with College Officers, with national and international partners and to nurture a dynamic and supportive environment.

Our working ethos is rooted in **consultation, collaboration, supporting innovation** and enabling teaching and learning excellence in Trinity College Dublin.

Our Core responsibilities:

We shape academic policy, regulations, and standards, ensuring alignment with both national and European legislation as well as Trinity's own guidelines.

We support the development of new programmes and modifications (e.g. major curricular changes, cessations, suspensions) to existing programmes.

We advise and assist the Academic Secretary and College Officers in policy development.

We support management of academic committees (USC, GSC, Trinity Electives, Associated Colleges, Council).

People

Rima Fitzpatrick

Assistant Academic Secretary

Rima joined Academic Affairs in April 2024, having previously managed School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies in Trinity College. As the Head of the unit, Rima holds overall responsibility of Academic Affairs office, ensuring its strategic and operational objectives are met.

Ciara Conlon

Education Support Manager

Ciara advises and supports Schools in the development of undergraduate course proposals, advises on undergraduate policy and regulations and manages Undergraduate Studies Committee.

Ewa Sadowska

Administrative Officer

Ewa advises and supports Schools in the development of postgraduate course proposals, advises on postgraduate policy and regulations and manages the Graduate Studies Committee.

Liz Donnellan

Education Policy Developer

Liz joined Academic Affairs in April 2023, having previously worked in the Quality Office and in Graduate Studies. Her areas of responsibility include the annual Academic Affairs work programme for academic policy and regulation review, and the management, development, and review of Calendar Part II & III regulations.

Lizzie Whitcher

Education Policy Developer – Academic Integrity

Lizzie worked with the team from March 2023 – June 2024 and has now moved to become a School Manager. In Academic Affairs, Lizzie had responsibility for the management and oversight of Academic Affairs activities relating to Academic Integrity and Misconduct, academic policy and regulation development, review, and implementation.

Michael Cleary-Gaffney

Education Support Officer

Michael worked with the team from September 2023 – September 2024 and has now moved to a role in the Quality Office. In Academic Affairs, Michael had responsibility for managing the administration of the Associated College Degrees Committees of Trinity's Linked Providers (Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) and Marino Institute of Education (MIE)), and the Trinity Electives Sub-Committee. Michael also supported and advised the Linked Providers in the development of their academic policies, regulations, and programme proposals.

Strategic Projects

Academic Integrity

Trinity's Academic Integrity Working/Steering Group (AISG) was established in February 2022 and, co-chaired by the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of Graduate Studies, continued its work throughout 2023/24. The committee met seven times and advanced the consultation and feedback on College's policy and regulations, and continued to circulate information from the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) to relevant stakeholders in Trinity. AISG completed its work in 2023/24 and its final report can be found [here](#).

Key achievements in Academic Integrity 2023/24

Calendar Regulations

In June 2023, Council approved new **Calendar regulations** related to academic integrity, including a revision to the procedure in cases of academic misconduct. 2023/24 saw a pilot of these procedures, with feedback sought from the academic community in January 2024. The feedback was considered by the Academic Integrity Steering Group in March 2024. As a result, several changes were made to the new procedures immediately, whilst others were incorporated into proposed changes for 2024/25. These changes included:

- Recalibration of indicative scores, particularly for upper year students and repeat instances of concern.
- Classification as to who makes decisions on capping/reducing of marks.
- Offering students the option of a referencing penalty at level 1.
- Provision of a suite of options of mandatory academic training in collaboration with Student Learning Development (SLD).
- Classification of the wording in the consequences.
- Classification of whether a record of academic misconduct will appear on a student's transcript.

Academic Integrity (AI) Policy and Procedures

In June 2024, Council approved a new [Academic Integrity Policy](#) and associated [Procedures in Cases of Suspected Academic Misconduct](#), to replace the Plagiarism Policy. The new Policy refers to the Curriculum Glossary, which has been updated to include Academic Integrity and Misconduct definitions taken from the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN) National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms.¹ In addition to the above, updates have been made to the Academic Integrity sections of the Calendar Part II and III.

AI Workshops for College Community

To support the implementation of the new Academic Integrity Policy and associated Procedures, Academic Affairs developed and provided **workshops** to Directors of Teaching and Learning (DTLs) (Undergraduate and Postgraduate), College Tutors and the Postgraduate Advisory Service. These interactive workshops helped to enhance understanding about the new procedures for academic misconduct, the background and rationale for the changes, and to provide opportunities for DTLs to ask questions specifically relating to academic

¹ <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/2021-11/academic-integrity-national-principles-and-lexicon-of-common-terms.pdf>

misconduct cases within their Schools. Six workshops took place, with 80% of Schools having representation at these workshops. Similar sessions were held with College Tutors, with a focus specifically on the tutor's role in supporting undergraduate students. In Michaelmas term 2023, approximately 30 tutors attended an in-person session on Trinity's main campus, and approximately 10 tutors attended an in-person session at St James's hospital. In Hilary term, an online session was facilitated and attended by 26 people, including members of the Postgraduate Advisory Service.

Online Resources to support Academic Integrity (AI)

Academic Affairs also developed a suite of **online resources** to support staff. These include:

- visual supports for navigating the new Procedure,
- an interactive academic integrity form which provides indicative scores and levels,
- downloadable forms and templates,
- frequently asked questions,
- information on the consequences of academic misconduct.

National Academic Integrity week 2023/24

Academic Affairs collaborated in the delivery of a range of events during the **National Academic Integrity Week** which was held on the 16th-20th October 2023. Trinity hosted a number of in-person lectures and workshops tailored for staff and students. Some online external events were facilitated by the National Academic Integrity Network and the International Centre for Academic Integrity. Further details about events held during Academic Integrity Week 2023 can be found [here](#).

Further information on Academic Integrity can be found at <https://www.tcd.ie/teaching-learning/academic-affairs/academic-integrity/>.

Postgraduate Renewal

In May 2023, Council approved a new two-stage process for postgraduate programme development and approval. To support the implementation of the new process, AA on behalf of the Postgraduate Renewal Programme team worked on the development of new proposal templates, namely a proof-of-concept template (business case) and a curriculum plan template. The templates were developed in consultation and collaboration with the Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Practice, Global Engagement, the Financial Services Division (FSD), and the Academic Registry (AR). Guidelines to support the completion of these templates was also developed by AA. During 2023/24, Academic Affairs, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Director of the Postgraduate Renewal Programme met with Schools to present and socialise the new process. 2023/24 also saw the start of the development of an abridged process for major changes in existing programmes.

Award Classification Distributions in Honours Bachelor's Degrees (2012-2022)

In 2023/24, Academic Affairs worked collaboratively with colleagues in TT&L on a number of sectoral initiatives, which included drafting an Award Classification report for Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). This report was in response to a perception that, overall, an increasing number of graduates are being awarded first-class honours degrees. The aim of the report was to understand the causes of variation in the classification profile of honours bachelor's degrees between 2012-2022 across Irish Higher Education Institutions. AA drafted the institutional perspective on the classification system and outlined how honours bachelor's degrees' classification practices are captured, interpreted and moderated across Trinity. The Report was submitted to QQI in March 2024, and QQI is currently compiling a meta-analysis of the reports

received from various Higher Education Institutions. A draft report from QQI will be received by Trinity later in 2024.

International Education Mark / TrustEd application

The International Education Mark (IEM) is a new quality mark, established by QQI and branded TrustEd, that is intended to represent and promote public confidence in the quality of Irish Higher Education providers delivering programmes to international learners. The IEM/TrustEd will be awarded to providers who have demonstrated that they meet national standards to ensure a quality experience for international learners, from enrolment through to the completion of their programmes of education and training.

During summer 2024, Academic Affairs worked closely with the Quality Officer to project manage the development of Trinity's application for the IEM/TrustEd. This involved collaborating with Trinity Global, Academic Registry, the Transition to Trinity Officer, HR, FSD, the Quality Office and Academic Affairs, and collating a comprehensive application for College. Trinity's application will be submitted during early 2024/25.

Programmes

Support and collaboration with Schools and academics on new and revised programmes is one of the core functions of the Academic Affairs Team. AA provides feedback and support to Schools throughout the programme development and approval process. AA also reviews academic proposals for new programmes, Trinity Electives and Micro-credentials, and proposals related to significant curriculum amendments/developments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

All Trinity programme proposals are developed and approved in line with the '[New Programme Design and Approval Policy](#)', which ensures that the same standards are applied to all programmes, including programme proposals submitted by Trinity's Linked Providers, Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), those developed under inter-institutional framework agreements/partnerships, and the micro-credentials developed under the HCI Pillar 3 pilot programme.

A list of undergraduate and postgraduate proposals and curriculum developments, which were both reviewed and supported by AA in 2023/24 and subsequently approved by University Council, can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: UG and PG proposals and curriculum developments approved by Council in 2023/24.

Undergraduate Education	
New Approved UG Courses	Two-Subject Joint Honours in Early Irish
Amendments to Existing UG Courses	Integrated Pharmacy Programme: New Programme Learning Outcomes introduced
	Geography and Geoscience Programme: Amendments to the structure of the programme to enhance its academic delivery
	Joint Degree of Bachelor in Science in Physiotherapy with Singapore Institute of Technology: New Exit Award
New Trinity Electives	Post Beginners Chinese Language and Culture Post-Beginners Japanese Language and Culture Beginners Polish Language and Culture
Postgraduate Education	
New Approved PG Course	MSc in Climate Adaptation Engineering MPhil in Digital Arts and Intermedia Practices MSc in Responsible Business and Sustainability Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Programme in Theatre Spaces (Theatre in Social, Participatory Art, Community and Educational Contexts) Postgraduate Diploma in Irish for Teachers (comprising a Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma Top-up) PgDip in Applied Economics and Big Data PgCert in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance

Amendments to existing PG Courses	<p>New strand in Theatre Producing for the Master in Fine Arts</p> <p>Renaming and expanding the MPhil in Early Irish to MPhil in Medieval Irish</p> <p>New Admissions Framework Structure for the M.Sc. in Midwifery Practice and Leadership</p> <p>New Programme Outcomes for the integrated Master in Pharmacy programme</p>
New Linked Provider PG Courses	Master in Education Studies (Further Education) - MIE
Amendments to existing Linked Providers PG Courses	<p>New Irish language pathway on the Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching) - MIE</p>
New Micro-credentials	<p>Climate Leadership Development (School of Natural Sciences)</p> <p>Practical Frameworks for Innovation (Tangent)</p>

AA also reviews undergraduate programme curriculum mapping documentation, due diligence forms, and legal agreements concerning proposed articulation routes and dual and joint degree programmes. In particular during 2023/24, AA assisted the development of a proposal for a new UG Dual Degree in Social Policy and Human Rights with the University of Sydney. AA also supported the approval of a partnership agreement between Trinity's School of Law and the University of California, Berkeley, allowing Trinity students to undertake the summer executive track LLM in place of a study abroad opportunity.

New and Revised Academic Policies, Procedures & Regulations

In association with relevant stakeholders, Academic Affairs reviews and updates academic policies and procedures, in accordance with a cyclical schedule of reviews. New policies, procedures and regulations are also developed, as required, in response to sectoral or statutory initiatives or identified need.

In 2023/24, AA managed the development of one new Policy and associated procedures, and the review and update of three others, which are listed in Table 2 below. Significant updates to the Curriculum Glossary were also made.

Table 2: Academic Policies Developed and Reviewed during 2023/24

Academic Integrity Policy & Procedures (new)
Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy (revised)
Programme Handbook Policy (revised)
Appeals Policy (Academic Progress) under review
Curriculum Glossary (revised)

Academic Affairs also informed the development and review of undergraduate attendance regulations, managed the review and updating of derogations to the TEP regulations relating to course assessment and progression, and managed the review and updates to sections of Calendar Part II and III.

Academic Committees

Academic Affairs works closely with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Registrar, and provides support to University Council and its principal committees namely, the USC and its sub-committee on Trinity Electives; GSC and its sub-committee on micro-credentials; and the sub-committees of University Council – the Associated Colleges Degree Committees (ACDC) of Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM). Table 3 below provides information on the number of committee meetings held in 2023/24.

Members of the AA team with specific responsibility for a committee support the relevant College Officers in setting meeting agendas, drafting documentation to support initiatives and practices, collating and reviewing papers for circulation, acting as minute secretary to meetings, communicating committee decisions to relevant stakeholders and following-up on committee actions.

Table 3: Academic Committees and sub-committees supported by Academic Affairs – Key figures 2023/24.

Key figures 2023/2024	
42	Committee/sub-committee meetings, of which:
9	University Council
9	Undergraduate Studies Committee
9	Graduate Studies Committee
8	Associated College Degrees Committee (inc. Annual Dialogue Meeting)
4	Trinity Electives Sub-committee (inc. Trinity Electives assessment review meeting)
3	USC/GSC Sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials

Contributing to College Groups and Industry Networks

Team members in Academic Affairs actively participate in and bring expertise to a wide range of College's working groups, project groups and committees. This includes, for example, the Academic Integrity Working Group, the Undergraduate Studies Advisory Group, the Postgraduate Renewal Project, the Trinity Learning Lab, and Education for Sustainable Development.

The AA team also actively engages and represents Trinity College in industry-wide networks and events, including:

National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN)

NAIN is a peer-driven network on Academic Integrity that was established by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) in November 2019. The network's focus is to actively support higher education institutions in embedding a culture of academic integrity and addressing the challenges presented by academic misconduct. AA attended monthly online plenary meetings of the Network in 2023/24 and disseminated information and findings to relevant stakeholders across College. AA attended the [Academic and Research Integrity Conference](#) held from the 4th – 6th October 2023, which was hosted by the University of Galway in partnership with NAIN, and attended the NAIN Plenary meeting at the Athlone Campus of the Technological University of the Shannon.

EUA Thematic Peer Group

The EUA Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups gather a selected group of EUA member universities each year to discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching at the institutional level. During 2023/24, Trinity participated in the EUA Thematic Peer Groups (TPGs) on Transnational Joint Education Provision. The group aims to discuss the key challenges related to the theme and to establish the institutional, national, and European policies and processes can help address the challenges. The former Assistant Academic Secretary attended a meeting of the Group in October 2023.

NFQ 20th Anniversary Conference

AA members attended a conference (16th -17th November 2023) hosted by QQI to mark the 20th anniversary of the Irish National Framework of Qualifications. The conference programme included a range of topics related to qualifications and the NFQ. Sessions covered the diversity of education and training in Ireland; the role and influence of the NFQ in the global context; the role of the NFQ in the development of innovative and new qualifications; the integration of the NFQ within employment, workforce planning and professions; access, transfer and progression (ATP) and recognition of prior learning, and the role of academic integrity in qualifications systems, amongst others.

Quality in Irish Higher Education: Sectoral Findings & Enhancement Showcase

On the 17th October 2023, AA members attended an event hosted by QQI which provided a thematic overview of annual quality reporting in 2023 and showcased a selection of the quality enhancement case studies submitted by higher education institutions within their Annual Quality Report to QQI. It provided opportunities for reflection and peer learning for higher education staff from across the public and private/independent sectors on a diverse range of quality enhancement initiatives, including: Quality Assurance & Enhancement of Work Placements; Student Engagement & Student Voice; Access, Mobility & Progression; Teaching, Learning & Assessment. It also discussed the outcome of an Independent Evaluation of the QQI Annual Quality Reporting Model and considered how it might be refined.

Looking forward to 2024/25

Continuous improvements and developments are planned for 2024/25, including:

- The continued embedding of the two-stage postgraduate programme development and approval process. A new abridged process for approval of major changes and a regular programme review process are also in development. Academic Affairs will work collaboratively with the PG Renewal Team to ensure that these processes are well designed and that programme proposers are well supported.
- At undergraduate level, a number of innovative course proposals and curriculum developments and revisions will be managed and supported by AA in 2024/25. In addition, AA will manage the consideration by USC of a number of revisions to undergraduate regulations in response to feedback from the academic community.
- Building collaborative community with Schools and academics. Taking into consideration the recommendations from the external panel of the Academic Affairs Quality Review in February 2023, the AA team are continuing to implement a plan to address the panel's recommendations. For example, Academic Affairs will be offering an induction/refresher session to School Managers and Directors of Teaching and Learning to update them on changes to processes managed by Academic Affairs, such as the course development process, and to highlight the academic policies coming into effect from 2024/25. These communication sessions will also signpost what academic policies will be reviewed during 2024/25 and advise on the supports available to Schools to assist with the development of course proposals. The AA team will also host focus sessions, workshops and surveys with the School in areas of resource development and policy reviews.
- Planning is underway for the review and updating of several College academic policies and it is envisaged that the following policies will be considered for approval by USC, GSC and Council prior to the end of the 2024/25 academic year:
 - Academic Awards Policy.
 - Appeals Policy (Academic Progression) - continuing the work commenced in 2023/24.
 - Assessment and Academic Progression Policy.
 - Dual and Joint Awards Policy.
 - Operation of an Online Viva voce Examination of a Research Thesis or Dissertation.
 - Postgraduate Research Remote supervision.
 - Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy.
 - Programme Suspension and Cessation Policy.
 - Recording of lectures guidelines.
 - Return of Coursework Policy.
- AA will completely refresh its website with the intention to streamline information, reduce duplication and present information in a clear and accessible manner for all users. The website will host all academic policies, procedures, and regulations in one place, and will provide resources to assist with course development at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

- The AA team will continue contributing to on-going and new strategic teaching and learning projects across College – PG renewal, ESD project, Academic Integrity week, new Teaching & Learning strategy, to name a few.
- Business as usual in 2024/25 will comprise the management and support of USC and GSC and their respective sub-committees on Trinity Electives and micro-credentials, supporting development of new programmes and policies by Associated Colleges, and providing policy and regulation guidance to College community and College officers.

The AA team looks forward to providing continuing guidance and support to the College community in 2024/25. If you have any ideas/feedback to inform our work, please do get in touch!