



Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings.

XX = Board relevance

**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

A meeting of the University Council was held on 5th February 2025 at 11.15am in the Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.

<i>Present</i>	Provost, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Registrar, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, Senior Tutor, Vice-President for Global Engagement, Dean of Students, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Professor D. Geary, Professor V. Colasanti, Professor C. Kenny, Professor K. Neenan, Professor P. O'Grady, Professor G. Watson, Professor B. Fitzgerald, Professor B. Daly, Professor L. O'Driscoll, Mr M. McAndrew. Mr E. Gilroy, Ms G. Villa, Mr R. Sualnier, Mr R. Riley Dargan.
<i>Apologies</i>	Dean of Research, Dean of Health Sciences, Ms D Alexander, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Academic Secretary, Mr S Sardina, Professor A.M. Malone,
<i>In attendance</i>	Secretary to the College/Director of Governance, Librarian and College Archivist, Assistant Academic Secretary, Heads of Schools representative.
<i>Observers</i>	Ms R. Chen

SECTION A.1: Policy Matters

The Provost welcomed everyone to Council and requested that Council members declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the agenda.

CL/24-25/078 Minutes

Decision CL/24-25/078.1: The updated minutes of the meeting of Council on 16th October 2024 were approved.

Decision CL/24-25/078.2: The updated minutes of the meeting of Council on 20th November 2024 were approved.

CL/24-25/079 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising.

CL/24-25/080 Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report 2023/24

The Dean of Graduate Studies presented the Annual Report for 2023/24, which was circulated to Council for approval. She extended special thanks to the many contributors, particularly the Academic Registry for enabling the earlier reporting of data.

In commenting on Admissions and Assessment data, the Dean of Graduate Studies specifically highlighted:

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Activity: The Dean of Graduate Studies reported on the increased collaboration with Schools in relation to RPL, noting a significant rise in candidates applying for RPL from 154 in 2022/23 to 365 in 2023/24. In particular, she

- commented on the first offers of admission to a level 9 programme to candidates without prior undergraduate qualifications.
- Increase in Postgraduate Taught Applications: There has been a notable rise in the number of Postgraduate Taught applications over last few years, leading to an increase in administrative burden in reviewing and considering applications. However, total registrations did not reflect a corresponding increase. Conversion rates from offer to registration remained strong, suggesting that many applications may not have been successful initially.
 - Growth in PhD Student Numbers: There was a small increase in PhD students, now making up just under 9% of the overall student population, with further growth in applications expected in 2024/25. The main increase was observed in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (AHSS), with a higher reliance on EU students in the Postgraduate Research cohorts.
 - Postgraduate Renewal Project Deliverables: The Dean of Graduate Studies highlighted several key projects, including the new programme design and approval process, the PhD personal development plan, the research supervisor and student agreement, guidelines on managing conflict, guidelines for internal examiners, and the self-declaration form for external examiners.

In response to a comment from the Provost, the Dean of Graduate Studies advised that the percentage of eligible staff who currently do not supervise PhDs is not known. However, information on eligible staff can be accessed by Schools via Core HR, and information on PhD supervision activity is available through SITS PowerBI reports. Regarding student and supervisor ratios, Council members noted that while ratios at the College level might be considered low for a research-intensive university, certain disciplinary nuances, funding, and workload constraints can limit the ability to recruit more PhD students. Some Schools review this data locally and provide support and even funding for staff to take on PhD supervision. Council also noted that ratios reported in some Schools are very high, and a discussion on sustainable levels might be beneficial.

In response to the Senior Lecturer's query regarding whether the increase in Postgraduate Taught applications has resulted in higher quality students, the Dean of Graduate Studies reported that such data is not yet available. She explained that, due to the grading system of taught programmes, which includes fail, pass, and pass with distinction, it may be challenging to analyse this. She also noted that early applicants often have an advantage in securing places, as Schools are under pressure to fill quotas.

Additionally, the Vice-Provost for Global Engagement reported on a joint initiative between the Academic Registry and Global to review patterns and processes surrounding postgraduate taught applications. A total of 22 programmes and over 800 applications were reviewed, particularly from two key markets. This review highlighted several process and policy issues that require attention. Examples include: the effective use of the agent portal within SITS and the potential need for agent training; English language admission requirements and how changes to these can impact application levels; application fee levels; and the time and processes required to triage applications. The Vice-Provost for Global Engagement advised that she will be collaborating with the Dean of Graduate Studies on the findings and next steps.

In response to the query on the Doctoral Academy plans, the Dean of Graduate Studies reported that work is underway to propose a bespoke structure to support Postgraduate Research needs. A working group has been established to explore how synergies can be developed between Schools and professional areas to best support Postgraduate Research students and their supervisors. While the full proposal for such a structure is still in development, it is broadly agreed that key elements for success would include a joint annual working programme addressing the needs of students and supervisors, a one-stop-shop digital space for finding information on resources, key contacts, and processes, and some form of physical space.

Decision:

CL/24-25/080: Council approved the Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report 2023/24.

CL/24-25/081 Academic Year Structure

The Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies presented a proposal for revisions to the Academic Year Structure. He provided an overview of the motivations behind this review, the membership of the working group, and the consultation process that informed the proposed revisions. Key considerations for the revised structure included the need for additional time for the reassessment period, extending assessment periods to eight days, protecting study, revision, and summer research periods, increasing teaching weeks for the (currently delayed) incoming Junior Fresh students, aligning study week with the Halloween mid-term break, and ensuring the visibility of Academic Year Calendars for two years. The Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies outlined the key changes as follows: starting Michaelmas Term teaching one week later; incorporating eight days for the assessment period in Michaelmas and Hilary Terms; ending Michaelmas Term exams on 22nd December each year; and no changes to Hilary Term other than the later publication of provisional Michaelmas Term results. He also noted that Open Day will be moved to 29th November 2025.

The Vice Provost / Chief Academic Officer thanked the Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies for all the work conducted while consulting, negotiating and developing solutions for this proposal.

Members of Council from the Faculty of STEM acknowledged that, given the constraints surrounding the Academic Year Structure, particularly the requirement for a 13-week research period, this proposal is the best possible compromise. However, they expressed concerns that there may be insufficient time in the revision period (between end of teaching and semester exams), which could impact student well-being. Council noted the comments.

In response to student well-being comment, Student Union Educational officer confirmed that the visibility of dates and transparency were key for the students to manage their time. He confirmed that the Students Union has extensively discussed Academic Year Structure and endorsed the proposal from the students' perspective.

Council members engaged in a general discussion, noting that many constraints on the Academic Year Structure are imposed by the TEP, the semesterised system, and interdisciplinarity. They acknowledged that disciplinary nuances will always exist, making a one-size-fits-all solution unlikely to address everyone's concerns. Council also recognised that the Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, along with the working group, have considered many options and solutions.

Decision:

CL/24-25/081: Council approved the proposal for the revised Academic Year Structure (Option A) for 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28.

CL/24-25/082 Student Conduct and Capacity

The Registrar addressed the proposed changes to the 2010 Consolidated Statutes - Chapter on Student Conduct and Capacity and Schedules 1 – 5 (on Committee on Student Conduct and Capacity, Discipline, Mental Health, Fitness to Study, and Fitness to Practise) as well as the Code of Practice for Student Disciplinary Investigation.

The Registrar emphasised that the current rules are challenging to understand, navigate, and operate. He provided Council with an overview of the consultation and approval process and thanked the members of the Review Group and the Statutes and Schedules Working Party who drafted the proposals circulated to Council.

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings.

The Registrar sought Council's approval for the changes to the Statutes as outlined in the memorandum and supporting documentation circulated to the Council. Additionally, he requested Council's approval for the proposed Code of Practice for Student Disciplinary Investigation, as detailed in the memorandum. The Registrar explained that, if approved by Council, the proposed changes would proceed to Board, then to the Fellows, and finally to the Visitors.

In response to a wording query from the Dean of STEM, the Registrar and the Postgraduate Student Support Officer confirmed that sector-specific terminology had been used in drafting the documentation.

Decision:

CL/24-25/082.1: Council approved the Proposed Changes to the 2010 Consolidated Statutes - Chapter on Student Conduct and Capacity and Schedules 1 – 5 (on Committee on Student Conduct and Capacity, Discipline, Mental Health, Fitness to Study, and Fitness to Practise).

CL/24-25/082.2: Council approved the Code of Practice for Student Disciplinary Investigation.

Action:

CL/24-25/0.82.3: The Registrar to bring the Proposed Changes to the 2010 Consolidated Statutes - Chapter on Student Conduct and Capacity and Schedules 1 – 5 and the Code of Practice for Student Disciplinary Investigation to College Board for approval.

CL/24-25/083 Vice-Provost/ Chief Academic Officer's Report

The Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer reported on three substantive items:

- Strategic plan: the Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer reported to Council that the team are currently consolidating the input gathered through the consultation process. The Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer specifically highlighted work on educational masterplan pillar of the strategy, which will incorporate initiatives such as Postgraduate Renewal, Generative AI, the admission strategy, the Learning Innovation and Research Hub, among others.
- Senior Academic Promotions: the Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer reported that a review process is ongoing and reminded Council that the primary aim is to develop a comprehensive framework to support the professional development of academic staff and provide clarity on career progression pathways. The Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer noted to Council that Faculty leads are currently engaging with the academic community to gather discipline-specific insights to help shape the criteria, ensuring that they are holistic, clear, and transparent while recognising the diverse contributions of academic staff.
- Leaving Certificate Results Inflation and Publication: the Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer updated Council on recent meetings she attended on behalf of the IUA with the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the State Examinations Commission, and the Department of Education. The Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer reported that, although there is a shared desire to find a solution to remove post-Leaving Cert Modification of marks, no resolution has been reached as. The previous minister favoured a gradual reduction in grade inflation, while many higher education institutions (HEIs) advocate for an immediate end. As such, discussions are ongoing. The Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer also informed the Council that the late publication of results – with Ireland being the last country in Europe to release them – has been highlighted again to both Departments as an issue most particularly for NI students. This delay affects both Irish students wishing to study abroad and international students wishing to study in Ireland.

In response to Council member's comment regarding the administrative burden of the senior academic promotion process, the Vice-Provost / Chief Academic Officer agreed that it is important to strike a balance. The application process and details should be both clear and streamlined for the applicant, while also being informative and easy to follow for the reviewers.

The Registrar left the meeting.

CL/24-25/084 Provost's Report

The Provost informed Council that James Lawless, T.D., has been appointed as the new Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science. He is a Trinity alumnus with a strong interest in higher education. The Provost and the Irish Universities Association (IUA) hope to meet with the new Minister soon. The Provost noted to Council that the Programme for Government includes commitments highlighted in the IUA Manifesto for Future Talent and Innovation. She emphasised that an ongoing dialogue will be important to ensuring that these commitments are upheld.

Additionally, the Provost highlighted that the final Seanad election for the Dublin University panel took place in Trinity last week, resulting in the election of Lynn Ruane, Tom Clonan and Aubrey McCarthy. She advised the Council that proactive engagement with the senators is important.

The Provost briefly addressed the global geopolitical situation and the extent to which political decisions in other jurisdictions may affect us. For example, the threat of freezing federal funds would have had significant implications for many US students at Trinity, as well as for research grants linked to the US. She emphasised the need for continuous monitoring and risk assessment at a School, College, and sectoral levels.

The Provost provided an update on the European Competitiveness Compass, which is based on Mario Draghi's recent report that flagged how Europe is lagging behind in terms of competitiveness. The Provost highlighted the most pressing risks at present, including the lack of information on FP10 and the worry that it may not exist as an independent programme; potential changes to the autonomy of the European Research Council (ERC), with grants possibly becoming more aligned with strategic priorities rather than remaining bottom-up and open to broad research areas; and the influence of political issues - such as defence spending - on EU research funding strategy. The Provost concluded that Trinity and, indeed, Ireland need a robust EU strategy, particularly given Ireland's current position in Europe, and highlighted to Council the importance of maintaining active engagement through the League of European Research Universities (LERU).

The Provost concluded the report to Council by advising that she and the VPCAO had updated staff in January about the development of the Strategic Plan.

In response to a Council member's observation that Mario Draghi's report encouraged more research, the Provost noted that while it could be read that way it is uncertain if all the funding made available to research will be accessible to higher education institutes in Ireland or whether any additional funding would be for higher TRLs only. In making this point, she also took the opportunity of noting the importance of ringfencing research funding.

CL/24-25/085 Any Other Urgent Business

There was no other urgent business.

SECTION A.2: Policy Matters which have already been considered by Committees**CL/24-25/086 Annual Quality Report 2023/24 to QQI****Decision:**

CL/24-25/086: Council Approved the Annual Quality Report 2023/24 to QQI.

CL/24-25/087 Quality: Assurance, Compliance and Governance.**Decision:**

CL/24-25/087: Council approved the proposal on Quality: Assurance, Compliance and Governance.

CL/24-25/088 Postgraduate Course Proposal for new MSc in Accounting and Analytics.**Decision:**

CL/24-25/088: Council approved the Postgraduate Course Proposal for new MSc in Accounting and Analytics.

CL/24-25/089 Revised Remote Supervision of Postgraduate (Doctoral) Students Policy.**Decision:**

CL/24-25/089: Council approved the Revised Remote Supervision of Postgraduate (Doctoral) Students Policy.

CL/24-25/090 Change to English Language Requirements for the Bachelor in Social Studies.**Decision:**

CL/24-25/090: Council approved the Change to English Language Requirements for the Bachelor in Social Studies.

SECTION B**CL/24-25/091 Global Engagement Committee****Decisions:**

CL/24-25/091: The minutes of 11th December 2024 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/092 Graduate Studies Committee**Decision:**

CL/24-25/092.1: The minutes of 12th December 2024 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/092.2: The minutes of 23rd January 2025 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/093 Research Committee**Decision:**

CL/24-25/093.1: The minutes of 5th November 2024 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/093.2: The minutes of 3rd December 2024 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/094 Undergraduate Studies Committee**Decision:**

CL/24-25/094.1: The minutes of 10th December 2024 were noted and approved.

CL/24-25/094.2: The minutes of 21st January 2025 were noted and approved.

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings.

SECTION C

CL/24-25/095 Council Business Approved by the Written Procedure

The Council noted that the following circulated items were approved by Council on 17 December 2024:

- (i) **CHARM-EU Revised Postgraduate Course Proposal – Master in Global Challenges for Sustainability**
- (ii) **Postgraduate Course Proposal – M.Phil. in Theology and Social Justice**
- (iii) **Nomination for Head of Discipline of Geology, School of Natural Sciences**

XX

(iv) Senior Academic Promotions Committee Recommendations for the Award of Adjunct Titles

The memorandum from the Acting Secretary to the Senior Academic Promotions Committee, dated 2 December 2024, that the candidates listed below be awarded the following academic titles:

In compliance with the Data Protection Acts, this information is restricted.

CL/24-25/096 Higher Degrees – Reports of Examiners

The Council noted and approved the reports of examiners on candidates for higher degrees (Higher Degrees List) dated 5 February 2025.

M.D. Danielle Byrne; Julianne Clowry; Emma Maureen Groarke; Colm Kirby; Stephen P. Klaus; Claire Marie Murphy

Ph.D. Silvia Alós Pereñíguez; Majed Alturbag; Simone Arrigoni; Sara Benceković; Alby Benny; Stephen Christopher Byrne; Shilpi Bhunia; Liam Burke; Laura Byrne; Luis Alberto Canizares; Ee Liang Chua; Wai Wan Choy; Anna Ciotti; Aoife Jane Cosgrove; Aoife Costigan; Peter Lebrocquy Cox; Helena Dolphin; Fábio Rangel Duarte Filho; Eoin Duggan; Rosie Faughnan; Seyedeh Delaram S Golpayegani; Zongtian Guo; Darragh Liam Higgins; Vicky Kate Holland; Cansu Ilhan; Jacinta Jardine; Lena Kadri; Danilo Lelin Li; Wen Jun Lim; Patrick Manning; Caitlín Ní Chasaide; Deirdre O'Connor; Markéta Odlová; Cliona O'Doherty; Joshua Pepper; Shannan Marie Quigley; Darren Ajay Ramsook; Jean Reale; Alexandra Rumenova Taseva; Lianne Shanley; Rasha Shraim; Annaël Maria Floriane Sort-Montenegro; Erika Stewart; Jojanneke Stoof; Yifan Sun; Glenna Swinand; Kate Tallon; Daniel David Tobin; Rishabh Vishwakarma; Yihe Weng; Ka Lo Yau

D.Ch.Dent. Annie Margaret Hughes; Panupol Kunasarapun

D.Music.Perf. Mary Pedder Daly

M.Sc. Pdraig Edward Maher; Grace Alice Morris; Eoghan O'Driscoll

CL/24-25/097 Heads of Discipline

The Council noted and approved the following nominations:

- (i) Professor (James) Paul Spiers as Interim Head of Discipline of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, School of Medicine, from 1 January 2025 for a period of no longer than one year.

Incorporating any amendments approved at subsequent Council meetings.

- (ii) Professor Anil Kokaram as Interim Head of Discipline of Electronic and Electrical Engineering, School of Engineering, from 13 December 2024 to 12 June 2025.

CL/24-25/098 School Director

The Council noted and approved the nomination of Professor Nicola Carr as Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy, from 2 January 2025 to 3 June 2026.

CL/24-25/099 Titles of Personal Chairs

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer dated 28 January 2025.

SECTION D

In compliance with the Data Protection Acts, this information is restricted.

Signed

Date