



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 29 November 2023 at 11.15am in the Trinity Board Room, Trinity Business School.

Present Provost, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Research, Dean of Students, Senior Tutor, Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, Dean of Health Sciences, Professor P. O'Grady, Professor A. Gibson, Professor D. Romelli, Professor L. O'Driscoll, Professor B. Daly, Professor K. Neenan, Professor J. Coleman, Professor B. Fitzgerald, Professor J. Wyse, Ms. D. Alexander, Mr. M. McAndrew, Ms. C. Arnold, Mr. R. Saulnier, Mr S. Sardina.

Apologies Vice-President for Global Engagement, Registrar, Professor A. M. Malone, Professor L. Carson, Dr O. Gobbo, Professor G. Watson, Mr C. Reddy, Mr. E. Gilroy, Ms. R. Emakpor.

In attendance Chief Operating Officer, Secretary to the College/Director of Governance, Librarian and College Archivist, Academic Secretary, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer, Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs), Education Policy Developer.

Observers Mr. A. Burgess.

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. The Secretary to the College/Director of Governance noted that the Academic Secretary had declared a conflict of interest for item A4 Learning Lab since she would chair the proposed group and, following discussion with her, it was agreed that she remain in the meeting. The Secretary to the College/Director of Governance also noted that Professor Davide Romelli had declared a conflict of interest for item A11(ii) PG Diploma in Applied Economics and Big Data (as course director) and that it was agreed with him that he would leave the meeting should any discussion on the item occur.

The Secretary to the College/Director of Governance advised that item C.19 (i) 'Council Membership' should be considered first, as it related to representation on University Council.

CL/22-23/039 Council membership

Decision:

CL/23-24/039.1: Council approved the nomination of Mr Conor Reddy (Faculty of Health Sciences) and Mr Seathrún Sardina (Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) to Council to represent postgraduate students for the remainder of the 2023/24 academic year.

Decision:

CL/23-24/039.2: Council approved the proposal for the Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer (CIEO), Dr Michelle Olmstead, to be in attendance at Council meetings for the remainder of the 2023/24 academic year.

CL/23-24/040 Declarations by new Members

The new members of Council made the required statutory declarations.

CL/23-24/041 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Council on 1 November 2023 were approved and signed.

CL/23-24/042 Matters Arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Ms Fedelma McNamara, Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) joined the meeting.

CL/23-24/043 Admissions Strategy update – “What should our student body look like, and how do we make it happen?”

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, outlining the background to the item, referred to memos presented to Council in November 2022 and March 2023 on the need for a coordinated University Admissions Strategy, and a clear articulation of Trinity’s vision for the composition of the student body over the next decade. Following a consultation process with the College community in Trinity Term 2023 on this question, she reported that an undertaking had been given to provide an update to Council and to consider how best to proceed.

Providing some further context, the Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) reported that in response to the funding crisis in the 2000s, Board had approved a growth strategy as part of the Trinity Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019. There is little flexibility with regard to student numbers in Schools that are linked to these strategic growth plans. Schools have been incentivised to grow student numbers but if we continue to use the same budgeting models and deliver teaching in the same way, Trinity’s cost base will rise and put us in a precarious financial position.

Speaking to a Council decision in June 2023 to approve the establishment of pilot projects with Schools that had expressed an interest in change, the Executive Director (ASD) reported that several schools are willing to explore new directions as part of a pilot project. These include:

- (i) The School of Medicine, which seeks to embark on a partnership model with the HSE to provide ongoing healthcare education to staff. Initial discussions indicate that this would primarily be through a CPD model.
- (ii) The School of Law, which is interested in improving diversity in the School through a review of its access routes and also seeks to increase the types of opportunities offered through internships. It also proposes to explore the possibility of adjusting the teaching day/week to allow for more flexibility, more opportunities and be more inclusive of adjunct staff.
- (iii) The School of Chemistry, which will relaunch the Postgraduate Diploma in Circular Economy and Recycling Technologies (paused under the Human Capital Initiative (HCI)). The Diploma will be delivered online by repurposing course materials already developed, and it is hoped that this will open the course up to a wider group of learners.

Concluding her presentation, the Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) reported that progress on these initiatives will be monitored and learnings will inform the development of the new Admissions Strategy. A progress report will be presented to Council in Semester 2.

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The Provost thanked the Executive Director (ASD) and invited questions and comments.

The Dean of STEM suggested that the concept of an industrial PhD, which is currently being explored as part of the E3 initiative, might be considered for inclusion in the pilot project. The Provost agreed, and pointed to the pre-doctoral Fellowship with IBM as a similar initiative. The Dean of Graduate Students also reported an increased focus on industrial PhDs in the Marie Curie programme. The VP/CAO suggested that the greatest scope for projects in this area lay in the STEM and HS disciplines, both of which were early adaptors of industrial PhDs.

Speaking to the introduction of more flexibility to the teaching day/week being piloted in the School of Law, the Academic Secretary reported that delivery times had been a constraint when the Trinity Education Project was being implemented and that this pilot would open up the possibility of reviewing teaching hours. With regard to the repurposing of programmes for online delivery, she queried whether a feasibility study was required in all cases or whether Schools not included in the pilot could repurpose in-person programmes for online delivery if they had identified a demand or market for it. The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that there is a specific course proposal process for online courses, but that if the learning outcomes remain the same, a feasibility study may not always be required in order to switch to an online delivery. She noted, however, the requirement to align with the QQI Statutory QA Guidelines for Blended and Fully Online Programmes.

With regard to the marketing of new micro-credential (MC) courses, a member raised concerns about the lack of a co-ordinated approach to this across College. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, noting that this was an HCI-specific issue, reported that the recent reconfiguration of the HCI project had resulted in centralised marketing with a budget to support the development of new MCs. The member raised an additional general point around the ability of the College IT infrastructure to support new online courses. The VP/CAO agreed that investment in systems and infrastructure would be essential. She further clarified that it was envisaged that the School of Medicine pilot programme would be run on HSE sites.

Decision:

CL/23-24/043.1: Council approved the update on the Admissions Strategy: 'What should our student body look like and how do we make it happen?' and the proposed pilot projects.

The Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) remained for the next item.

CL/23-24/044 Learning Laboratory (Learning Lab)

The Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) referred to research by SUMS consulting commissioned by the Academic Secretary in 2020 to inform the design of a model for a new centre for continuous pedagogical renewal, which would be a hub of expertise for enhanced teaching and learning practices. She reported that discussions on the Centre were paused during the pandemic but that recent global initiatives and drivers necessitated revisiting and reigniting the concept of a 'Learning Lab'. She advised that many universities have learning labs and that the intention with this project is not to reinvent the wheel but to signpost existing teaching and learning resources within Trinity, which many people may not be aware of.

The expected benefits, as outlined in the SUMS consulting report, include enhancement of an inclusive and diverse student learning experience, connecting existing Trinity resources (Trinity Teaching and Learning, Academic Practice, Trinity Online services, Learnovate, Tangent, HR professional development and other supports provided by the College Disability Services, EDI, and the Library) and adding value for academics at all stages of their career. The Executive Director (ASD) cited KU Lueven's Learning Lab as an exemplar. She reported that it offers support for blended and future-orientated programmes through (i) a support portal/hub, (ii) an academy for training programmes and online modules on blended education and (iii) a one-stop-shop for university-wide services.

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As a first step to developing a Trinity Learning Lab, it is proposed to establish an advisory group chaired by the Academic Secretary/Head of Trinity Teaching and Learning with wide representation across College. The Advisory Group's remit will be to scope out how existing resources might align to establish a Learning Lab model for Trinity and, if the model is approved, to recommend how the Trinity Learning Lab model might be operationalised.

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed the return to this initiative, noting that social change around the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) necessitated the provision of different supports. She queried whether the Learning Lab was aimed at staff or students, and recommended that Student Learning Development (SLD) should be involved if the Lab was targeting students. The VP/CAO confirmed that students would be involved. The Academic Secretary reported that extensive consultation with the College community had taken place before the pandemic and that the data from this process had been synthesised to inform the project. She concluded by advising that sustainability will also be considered in the initiative.

The Senior Lecturer remarked on the exciting nature of the initiative, noting that there many teaching and learning resources already in existence. He queried the composition of the steering group and the VP/CAO reported that it would be comprised of both academic and professional staff. A member suggested that the activities of the Learning Lab should be mapped against existing provision in the School of Education to ensure that there is no duplication or overlap with, for example, the Masters in Higher Education. He expressed concern that new staff are not receiving fee remission to undertake the course. He suggested it would be good if staff undertaking any new course provision under the auspices of the Learning Lab would get a fee remission. He also suggested that resources in the research space should be considered. The VP/CAO confirmed that the advisory group would scope out existing provision to avoid duplication, where possible, and she suggested that the block on fee remissions referred to by the member was School-specific, and not College wide.

A member queried whether intrinsic drivers of change, for example, individual academics developing novel or innovative practices, had been engaged with as part of the consultation process, and whether exemplars that could be harnessed had been identified. The VP/CAO reported that the consultation process had identified pockets of appetite for change and that further engagement with these areas to provide supports and streamline processes would take place. The Academic Secretary reported that Academic Practice works closely with academic colleagues to identify good practice in Schools, for example in the area of AI, and she referenced the appointment of the teaching fellows as example of the close co-operation between professional and academic colleagues in this area.

The Dean of Research queried whether consideration had been given to teaching spaces, noting that suitable spaces would be required to deliver on the ambition of the project, and the Dean of STEM queried the reporting line of the steering group. The VP/CAO advised that part of the planned scoping exercise would consider the spaces required and costs of delivery for digital transformation. The Academic Secretary stated that the steering group would revert to Council with updates on progress and would also keep the School community updated through the Heads of School. She concluded by reporting that the scoping exercise would develop the Terms of Reference and the membership of the steering group, and confirm its reporting lines. The VP/CAO advised that the projects section of the ASD website would also have a timeline and regular progress updates.

Decision:

CL/23-24/044.1: Council approved the outlined steps to initiate scoping of a Learning Lab model for Trinity, within existing resources.

The Executive Director, Academic Services Division (ASD) left the meeting.

CL/23-24/045 Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer's Report

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The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that Trinity had responded to the HEA requirement for a System Performance Framework 2023-28 agreement. Following College-wide consultation, a group established by Provost and comprising the Dean of Research, the Vice-Provost for Global Engagement, the Vice-Provost for Biodiversity and Climate Action and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer had completed the document and submitted it to the HEA.

Briefly summarising the Performance Framework, the VP/CAO reported that it comprises four pillars and a series of transversals capturing national system-level priorities and outcomes for the higher education and research system. The pillars of the framework represent key activities in which institutions engage, namely (i) teaching and learning, (ii) research and innovation, (iii) access and participation, and (iv) engagement. The Framework's transversals represent key areas of impact for the system. Institutions are required to identify specific and measurable targets that will be used to evaluate performance against an objective over the timeframe of the agreement. The VP/CAO reported that Trinity had chosen its target to be based on quantitative data and that this data would be drawn from existing databases where practicable, which should reduce the workload associated with the exercise. To that end, of the total number of indicators (30), some 77% are quantitative measures supporting more robust analysis and providing clarity on aspects of success deemed most appropriate for each objective.

Under the Teaching and Learning pillar, Trinity has selected Student Success as the transversal, and will look at using both discipline-specific and interdisciplinary approaches, with the objective that all Trinity students and staff will be empowered to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to act as successful agents of change, individually and collectively, in working for sustainable development within planetary boundaries. The work of the SATLE-funded Fellows in Education for Sustainable Development will support the work of this transversal. Under the Research and Innovation Pillar, Trinity has selected Climate and Sustainable Development as the transversal, which will seek to embed sustainability in research and innovation practices and culture at Trinity, to harness our creativity and world-leading research across disciplines and domains tackling the challenge of climate change and biodiversity loss and to create a more resilient, sustainable, and healthy future. Under the Access and Participation pillar, Trinity has chosen Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging as the transversal, and will aim to consolidate and extend Trinity's supports for students from all walks and stages of life so that they can realise their potential. Finally, under the Engagement pillar, Trinity has selected Society as the transversal, and will work to ensure that impactful engagement is woven into the fabric of our university for the benefit of society and of our students and staff. Concluding her report on this item, the VP/CAO advised that the next step involves a presentation of the document to the HEA in December 2023. Feedback from this presentation will inform the final draft, to be submitted by March 2024. The VP/CAO undertook to notify Council when the agreement had been approved by the HEA.

The VP/CAO reported that the Secretary of the Heads of School Committee had raised the issue of the timely processing of research contracts through the CORE HR portal. She noted that a Researcher Recruitment Project was currently underway and, drawing Council's attention to the Research Committee minutes of the 17 October 2023, reported that Siobhan O' Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Strategic Projects had presented a draft policy and process roadmap to the Research Committee. Providing further context, she reported that the project had evolved from a desire by Heads of School to centralise the researcher recruitment process and reported that Trinity was committed to implementing an open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment process as part of its obligations under the EU Charter, Athena Swan, and the EU Gender Equality Award. The challenge with a centralised system is to maintain the flexibility and agility currently enjoyed by PIs and the importance, for continuity, of being able to keep entry records of researchers' employment history was stressed.

Updating Council on the development of a Learning Management System, the VP/CAO reported that a working group, chaired by Geoff Bradley, is assessing what the Trinity community requires in a Virtual Learning Environment. She noted that the current license agreement with Blackboard will soon be up for renewal and a review of the VLE requirements is being

undertaken. She stressed the importance of ensuring that whatever VLE Trinity signs up to is appropriate and suitable for our needs, and is future-proofed. She also stressed the importance of the wider College community being aware of this work and she requested that Council members consult with their own communities and provide feedback to the project. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies informed Council that he is jointly chairing a working group with the Dean of Graduate Studies to identify the academic requirements of any future VLE for Trinity. The VP/CAO welcomed the project and stressed the importance of keeping it as lean as possible to avoid over-complication.

With regard to the Researcher Recruitment Project, the Dean of Research reported that the implementation of a process for open and fair recruitment is an obligation for Trinity, as the Provost had noted, and she stressed the importance of taking a bottom-up approach to its development. She noted the engagement of the Research Committee in the process and welcomed the ongoing consultation with Schools, noting the importance of ensuring that the new process does not impinge on recruitment. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer agreed that it was important that the process was not a top-down one and the Academic Secretary welcomed the opportunity provided to units to input to the process. Responding to a query from the Dean of STEM as to whether the review of research contracts was forward-looking or retrospective, the Dean of Research reported that it was forward-looking as it involved recruitment and not existing contracts.

CL/23-24/046 Provost's Report

Referring to events in Dublin on Thursday 23 November 2023 when Trinity was required to close the campus for security reasons, the Provost praised everyone involved in coordinating the response on the ground, including the Students Union, the clubs and societies in the GMB, the Chief Operating Officer and her staff, as well as everyone involved in providing pastoral care on the night, including the Senior Tutor and the Junior Dean. She also praised the staff and students who spent the night in Trinity and remarked on how wonderful it was to see the Trinity community coming together. Highlighting the negative impact of the event on some international students and on Irish students from a multicultural background, the Provost stressed the importance of finding a way to support these students without giving in to the small group of people who were responsible for the riots. In this regard, she highlighted the importance of Trinity remaining open and active. She underlined the need for the Trinity community to stand up for its values but also to be tolerant of different voices and opinions. She noted that the Dean of Research was considering a response that harnessed our engaged research and involved our local community. The Provost concluded by thanking everyone who played a role in securing the College that night and stated that Trinity should be a place where people are physically safe as well as intellectually challenged, and encouraged to express views safely.

Reporting that a number of students from Maynooth University had stayed on campus overnight on the 23rd, the VP/CAO advised that the registrar of Maynooth University had contacted her to thank Trinity for its collegiality in this regard. The Education Officer of the Students' Union thanked the Provost for her positive comments regarding the SU's response to the event. She requested that more clarification be provided on the powers that staff have to provide accommodations for students during such an incident. The Provost agreed that lecturers need to know that they can make reasonable accommodations if required. She noted that emergency events are, by their nature, difficult to predict and she stressed the importance of being able to respond to them in an agile and timely manner. She encouraged everyone to use the Safezone app, as it provides the most up-to-date information.

The Librarian and College Archivist stated that the Library has its own emergency plan and has been querying how it aligns with, and interacts with, the Trinity emergency plan. She reported that on the night, direct communication from the Librarian to the COO worked well and that overall feedback about communications to the College community was very positive. She noted that during the pandemic, discussions had taken place on the best method of providing

information quickly to everyone and she cited the example of the all-staff/student texts used by Harvard University during the Boston bombings. Finally, she praised students for their calm response to the closing of the Libraries and to the subsequent closing of the campus.

The Provost reported that work is being undertaken to update the Trinity Communication Plan. The COO advised that a new Head of Security has recently been appointed and has been involved in relevant discussions since the events in the city on Thursday. She stated that, currently, the Safezone app is the most effective method of communicating quickly with staff and students, and she asked Council members to encourage colleagues to download it. The Dean of Students reported that an email was being sent to all students inviting anyone experiencing stress following the incident to attend drop-in counselling sessions, hosted by Trinity's Student Counselling Service in the Global Room and online, starting on Thursday 30 November.

CL/23-24/047 Any Other Urgent Business

There was no other business.

SECTION A.2:

Policy Matters which have already been considered by Committees

CL/23-24/048 Undergraduate Studies Committee

The Senior Lecturer reported that the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Committee had not been reviewed since 2012 and that the revisions were intended to make the TOR more fit-for-purpose.

Decision:

CL/23-24/048.1: Council approved the revised Terms of Reference and Membership for the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

CL/23-24/049 Thematic Review of Mental Health – Implementation Plan

Decision:

CL/23-24/049.1: Council approved the Thematic Review of Mental Health – Implementation Plan.

CL/23-24/050 Postgraduate Renewal Programme

Decision:

CL/23-24/050.1: Council approved proposed recommendations to progress development of best practice supports for conflict management and resolution in supervisor-research student relationships.

CL/23-24/051 Postgraduate Courses

Decisions:

CL/23-24/051.1: Council approved the proposal for a one-year part-time Postgraduate Certificate in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance from the Trinity Business School leading to a Certificate in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance (30 ECTS) at NFQ minor level 9, with a first intake in September 2024.

CL/23-24/051.2: Council approved the proposal for the one-year full-time Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Economics and Big Data from the School of Economics leading to a Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Economics and Big Data (60 ECTS) at NFQ level 9, with a first intake in September 2024.

CL/23-24/052 Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy

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The Dean of Graduate Studies drew Council's attention to Appendix 1, which usefully outlines the approval process for programme and curriculum changes at different levels. She thanked Academic Affairs for its work on the Policy.

Decision:

CL/23-24/052.1: Council approved the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy

**SECTION B – Reports
from Committees**

CL/22-23/053 Global Engagement Committee

Decision:

CL/22-23/053.1 Council noted and approved the minutes of 8 November 2023.

CL/23-24/054 Graduate Studies Committee

Decision:

CL/23-24/054.1: Council noted and approved the draft minutes of the meeting of 9 November 2023.

CL/23-24/055 Quality Committee

Decision:

CL/23-24/055.1: Council noted and approved the minutes of 19 October 2023.

CL/23-24/056 Research Committee

Decision:

CL/23-24/056.1: Council noted and approved the minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2023.

CL/23-24/057 Student Life Committee

Decision:

CL/23-24/057.1: Council noted and approved the minutes of the meeting of 23 May 2023 and the draft minutes of the meeting of the 7 November 2023.

CL/23-24/058 Undergraduate Studies Committee

Decision:

CL/23-24/058.1: Council noted and approved the draft minutes of the meeting of the 14 November 2023.

SECTION C

CL/23-24/059 Council Membership

(i) Postgraduate Students

This item was taken at the start of the meeting. See CL/22-23/039.

(ii) Council Attendee for 2023/24

This item was taken at the start of the meeting. See CL/22-23/039.

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CL/23-24/060 Membership of Committees of Council

(i) Research Committee

This item was deferred.

(ii) Postgraduate Student Representatives

The Council noted and approved the circulated memorandum from the Registrar dated 27 November 2023

CL/23-24/061 Higher Degrees – Reports of Examiners

The Council noted and approved the circulated reports of examiners on candidates for higher degrees (Higher Degrees List) dated 29 November 2023

M.D. Qurat Ul Ain

Ph.D. Abeer Sulaiman M Alsheaibi; Francesco Barilari; Conor Brennan; Anna Caitriona Donovan; Hao Ding; Haley Rose Dolton; Michael Antonio Kirwan Ferreira; Mélanie Garcia; Aisling Fiona Hearn; Jennifer Christine Hengeveld; George Jacob; Oisín Cormac James Joyce; Reham Ahmed Hassan Kalim; Meric Manuel Eftal Kucukbas; Tiarnan Mullarkey; Mark Daniel Nolan; Chiara Paletta; Asil Sadeq; Colin Simon

D.Mus.Perf. Máire Carroll

D.Ch.Dent. Hussain Ibnahmad

SECTION D

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

The Provost concluded the meeting by drawing members’ attention to the fact that it was Linda Darbey’s last Council meeting, and she thanked Ms Darbey sincerely for her work in advising and supporting Council. Members expressed their appreciation with a round of applause.

Signed

Date

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