

Trinity College Dublin

Quality Committee

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 6th February 2014 in the Boardroom, House 1.

Present: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Dean of Health Sciences, Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Secretary, Quality Officer, Professor Ciaran Brady, Professor Simon McGinnes, Professor Catherine Coxon, Professor Sheila Ryder, Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Education Officer of the Students' Union.

In attendance: Mr John Murphy (Head of IS Services), Dr. Liz Donnellan (Secretary to the Committee).

Apologies: Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science, Senior Lecturer, Professor John Walsh, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer opened the meeting by welcoming the newly appointed Chief Operating Officer, Ms Geraldine Ruane and Quality Officer, Ms Roisin Smith.

QC/13-14/015 Minutes of the meeting of the 12th December 2013

The minutes of the meeting of the 12th December 2013 were approved.

QC/13-14/016 Matters arising

In relation to the completion of the Legal Deposit review (*QC/13-14/011i*), the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the Quality Committee's concerns were discussed at Council and the requirement for a speedy resolution was endorsed.

With regard to the options for staff mentoring discussed at the last meeting (*QC/13-14/011ii*) the Academic Secretary reported that there are two mentoring programmes currently available to academic staff – the Early Career Mentoring Programme and the Momentum Programme. While both programmes have been successful in matching staff with suitable mentors, there are not currently enough mentors available for all of those who want to avail of the service. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that she had asked the Staff Development Manager to review the data around staff mentoring and the issues in relation to availability of mentors, and to report to the Quality Committee. She also expressed concern from a quality point of view that there are no mentoring initiatives specifically for non-academic staff. It was suggested that any mentoring/leadership development initiatives currently being run or explored in College should be suitable for both administrative and academic staff.

In relation to the projects currently underway to review arrangements for External Examining (*QC/13-14/012i*), the Academic Secretary reported that the project examining the academic issues arising

from External Examiners' reports and the START project on payment of External Examiners have now been merged. The project is being managed through the START office with input from staff from Trinity Teaching & Learning (TTL). Recommendations on improvements to the process will be available for consideration by the end of April 2014.

QC/13-14/017 Strategic Planning Process 2014-19

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer tabled an update on the development of the College Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019. She reported that a Strategic Planning Steering Group has been established to oversee the process and the integration of the different elements of the plan. The Steering Group will also be the Reference Group for consideration of proposals on the future profile of the University.

In parallel, working groups have been set up to address Trinity's Vision, Mission and Values and to develop strategic objectives and high-level goals and achievements for Education, Research & Innovation, Engagement and Student Life. The Vision, Mission and Values working group will provide an analysis of the national and international educational environment and how Trinity's existing strengths in research and student demand can be best aligned with future needs. Detailed scenarios of the implications of different projections for overall Irish and overseas student numbers will be developed and discussed, at Executive Officers Group, Board and Council, in the first instance, with further consideration of the relevant objectives at Faculty Executives. The Heads of School Committee will also be invited to comment on the overall direction proposed.

The working groups on Education, Research & Innovation, Engagement and Student Life will work in parallel and are chaired by the relevant College Officers. They draw their membership from the College community including students and will also involve external stakeholders. The working groups are tasked with preparing a Reference Document which will consider the steps TCD needs to take to support excellence in these priority areas and to consider the current challenges, opportunities for development, high level goals, key objectives and dependencies. Following discussion of the issues by the College Officers at their relevant Committees, the Reference Documents should be submitted to the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer by the 21st March 2014. These Reference Documents along with scenarios for future profile will form the basis of the College-wide consultations and feed into the Strategic Plan. A detailed set of objectives and a proposed strategic direction will be discussed at a special meeting of Board in May with a view to implementing the Strategic Plan from the start of the 2014/15 academic year. By December 2014, School should be clear about how they will implement the high level priorities and goals, and what the issues are.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited comment from the Committee and in the discussion which followed, the following points were raised:

- There is a need to ensure that the strategic planning cycle and the annual budgetary cycle are connected – the two should not be conducted in isolation;
- It is not clear how the College Strategic Plan and the School's strategic Plans are linked and what synchronisation is in place. This needs to be built in along with a mechanism for monitoring implementation;
- The Library should be represented on the strategic working groups;

- It is important that systematic comparison data on internal and external staff/student ratios is provided for the planning process and to take into consideration the variation in workloads across disciplines;
- The needs and viewpoints of mature students should be included on the working groups.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Committee for its input and closed the discussion.

QC/13-14/018 Quality Reviews - Progress report for Information Systems Services

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of Information Systems Services (ISS), Mr John Murphy, and invited him to speak to the Progress Report which had been circulated with papers for the meeting. Mr Murphy began by explaining that the quality review of ISS did not confine itself to a review of the IS Services department but also looked at the IT service delivery in College as a whole and commented on existing governance arrangements.

Addressing the Provost's recommendations in the first instance, the Director of ISS reported that the recommendation in relation to the development of a College-wide IT Strategy was now being progressed under START, with a planned completion date of April 2014. The recommendation that clear mechanisms be developed for incorporating and tracking benefits realisation for e-Strategy projects is being addressed by the Chief Financial Officer, who is driving a benefits realisation programme in consultation with the project sponsors of the individual e-Strategy projects.

The Director of IS Services reported that 23 of the 38 recommendations have been implemented to date, with one of the recommendations (in relation to the availability of a wireless service for mobile devices) leading to approval by Executive Officers of a College-wide Mobility proposal in July 2013. Of the remaining 15 recommendations, three have a dependency on the implementation of a College-wide Information Strategy. Three are dependent on the appointment of a Chief Information Officer (CIO), which has been deferred under START governance arrangements until August 2014. The Committee was informed that the Information Strategy working group comprising internal and external stakeholders, and chaired by the Director of ISS, is working to complete the Information Strategy by April 2014.

In relation to the Reviewers' recommendation to conduct an inventory/analysis of current and future IS skills needs, the Director of ISS reported that the British Computer Society had been engaged to capture the 'as-is' roles and skills set of all staff in ISS. This exercise will be completed by May 2014 with a view to then extending it to all IT staff in the College, in addition to mapping skills needed for the future.

The Reviewers made a number of recommendations in relation to commodity and complexity IS/IT services and the Director of ISS reported that it is planned to address these issues through agreement of the College-wide Information Strategy with the Schools. Some in-house services have already been outsourced e.g. management of student email was moved to Google in 2007 and consideration may be given to a similar outsourcing of staff email in the future. However, concern about privacy and where the data is stored has been raised at the Library and Information Policy Committee (LIPC) in relation to staff emails. A paper is being prepared for consideration by Executive Officers in April 2014 on standardising to a single email system for staff and students.

With regard to the perceived disparity of grading of existing IS/IT staff, the issues relating to this are historical and therefore may be difficult to change. However, job profiling of new positions will address this and coupled with the development of the Information Strategy should remove the disparity.

The Reviewers recommended that all IS/IT activities, commodity and complexity, be captured in a Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) evaluation compiled by the CIO and annually reviewed and benchmarked against comparator institutions. They also recommended that the CIO compile an annually-reviewed Service Catalogue which defines and provides all commodity IS/IT activities. The Director of ISS reported that although the CIO has not yet been appointed, both exercises have commenced. The total cost of running all services in-house has been estimated and a market research exercise conducted to see how much it would cost to out-source a selected number of services e.g. management of PC labs. A report will be considered by START governance at the end of March 2014. The development of a Services Catalogue has also been initiated and will incorporate service descriptions for all services that are delivered. The exercise will be completed as part of an organisational design piece in April 2014.

In relation to the recommendation to provide a standard package for new computers to include simplified ordering, delivery, data transfer, set-up and support, and removal of old equipment, the Director of ISS reported that negotiations with the existing supplier (DELL) were on-going.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of IS Services for his report and acknowledged that a large amount had been achieved given the very fundamental nature of the issues being considered. She invited comment from the Committee and in the ensuing discussion a query was raised as to the ease with which in-house commodity IT services in Schools can transition to IS Services. The Director of ISS acknowledged that there may be reluctance on the part of some Schools to relinquish control of legacy IT systems such as in-house email servers but discussions are on-going between the Director of IS Services, the START Director of Change Management and the Schools with a view to reducing duplication of these services.

In response to a query, the Director of ISS confirmed that IS Services is now providing the structures to support the SITS and that a cost-benefit analysis for SITS was conducted as part of the initial business case. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the main benefits arising from the introduction of SITS are efficiency-based, and the Academic Secretary confirmed that the bespoke student administration was unable to support the needs of the College, and this was the main reason for implementing SITS. She commented that as the system will require time to bed-in, the main benefits will not be realised until the G2 phase, and especially the facility to register students to modules, is implemented. A further query in relation to the prudence of implementing G2 without a benefit analysis of G1 was raised and the Director of IS Services reported that support structures are being put in place to make and embed changes in the system. He also reported that a number of smaller projects may be required to resolve some of the initial problems but that this should not delay the initiation of phase 2 of the project.

The Acting Librarian reported concern with regard to the title 'Information Strategy', as the Library is the main source of information across College. She noted that the title was discussed at the LIPC and it was agreed there that it should refer to Information Technology. The Director of IS Services agreed that the title should be reconsidered to reflect its purpose.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of IS Services and closed the discussion.

QC/13-14/019 Programmatic Review – update on TR071

The Quality Officer spoke to an update on progress with implementing a pilot programme review of TR071, the common entry Science programme. The review is planned for the 2014 calendar year and is being co-ordinated by the Faculty and the Science Course Office with support from the Quality Office. A sub-committee of the Quality Committee has been established and is tasked with designing and developing a process for programme reviews, based on best practice and lessons learnt from the pilot, which can be rolled-out to future programme reviews.

In the ensuing discussion, the importance of running the review during the 2014 calendar year was stressed. The Quality Officer reported that the difficulty in securing all members of the review team at a given time can often contribute to delays in identifying a suitable date for a review. The link with the accreditation process was raised and the importance of ensuring that those areas that are not professionally accredited are facilitated in the programme review process. As the accreditation process is well established in some areas, it was suggested that there is a considerable degree of expertise in schools which run professional courses and that this expertise could input to the process. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stressed that accreditation bodies have a particular remit and that there is very little commonality between the requirements for a professional accreditation and that for a programme review. In response to a query as to how the breadth of the moderatorships in the TR071 programme is being captured in the membership of the review team, the Quality Officer reported that potential reviewers will need to have a common disciplinary background and a broad breadth of experience, with elements of programme evaluation and design. The need for graduates and employers to be represented and for international input to the review team was also emphasised. The Quality Committee stressed the importance of conducting the review within this calendar year.

QC/13-14/020 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2014

The Quality Officer spoke to a report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement, a collaboration between the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI), the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Union of Students in Ireland. The survey of Junior Freshman, Senior Sophister and postgraduate taught course students will be open to TCD students from the 17th February – 7th March and it is envisaged that raw data results will be available in April, which will be anonymised by year of study, mode of study and broad discipline. She reported that 2014/15 is the first non-pilot year and that it is hoped to double the participation of TCD students from last year to 25%. The initiative is being led by Professor Amanda Piesse and the results will feed into the Strategic Planning process.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and opened the discussion to the Committee. The following points were raised:

- The importance of a high participation rate was stressed in order that data returned is a valid representation of views;
- The platform has changed since last year – the survey will come via the student email address and can be completed on-line;
- It is hoped that the involvement of the Students' Unions will encourage greater participation in the survey;

- It is important to compare our results with those of other Universities from a benchmarking perspective;
- The process is new and it will take time to get full engagement and successful embedding;
- Closing the feedback loop is important to show that the university is using the data and that things are changing as a consequence.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer for her presentation and closed the discussion.

QC/13-14/021 QQI Programme of Work 2014

The Academic Secretary spoke to an outline of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) programme of work that had been circulated. She reported that a template for the Annual Institutional Report to the QQI on quality assurance had been modified in consultation with the Designated Awarding Bodies (DABs) and that the revised template was expected in early February. The revised template includes a section requiring detailed information on collaborative arrangements and linked providers and the Quality Officer reported that a working group has been established from the DABs to work with the QQI on developing a linked provider taxonomy of collaborative arrangements. The Quality Officer reported that she is working with Quality Officers Group to determine what collaborative programmes should be included and those that should not e.g. ERASMUS programmes. In relation to quality assurance of the Designated Awarding Bodies, the outcome of the 'Review of Reviews' will determine the process that will be put in place for future institutional reviews. The implementation of the International Education Mark and the development of a Code of Practice against which institutions will be evaluated in order to achieve the IEM is currently being developed by the QQI.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Secretary for her report and closed the discussion.

QC/13-14/022 Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting closed. The next meeting will take place on the 20th March 2014.