



**Trinity College Dublin**  
**Quality Committee**

**Draft Minutes**

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Draft minutes of the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015 in the Boardroom, House 1.

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

**In attendance:** Professor David Scott (Head of School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies), Ms. Jacqueline Sharpe (School Administrator, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies), Mr. Philip Coffey (HR Partner, Academic Services Division), Dr. David McGrath (Director of College Health Service), Ms. Aoife Cox (Manager of College Day Nursery), Mr Ken Doherty (Staff Relations Manager), Professor Brian Foley (Head of School of Engineering), Ms. Helen Shenton (Librarian), Professor Kevin Kelly (Dean of Students), Dr. Liz Donnellan (Secretary to the Committee).

**Apologies:** Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science.

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**QC/14-15/026 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 2 February 2015**

The minutes of the meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015 were approved.

**QC/14-15/027 Matters arising**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review report for TR071 had been received by Council at its meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 and that the implementation of a taskforce to progress the recommendations was been approved.

**QC/14-15/028 Quality Review of the School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Head of the School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies, Professor David Scott, and the School Administrator, Ms. Jacqueline Sharpe, to the meeting and invited them to speak to the Reviewers' report for the School. Professor Scott commended the report, and the professionalism and expertise of the review team. He spoke to the Reviewers' 12 recommendations of which the following themes were key:

**1. Staffing concerns included:**

- a. That four Chairs be appointed to replace retirements.
- b. That the staffing crisis in the Italian Department be immediately addressed.
- c. That a strategic case also be made to ensure the continued presence of dynamic junior staff.

- d. That every effort be made, as a matter of principle and fair treatment of staff, to regularise the contracts of temporary, part-time and hourly-paid staff.
- e. That sabbatical leave should be guaranteed on equal grounds to individual members of staff across all departments.

## 2. Structural issues

- a. That the School make faster and more sustained progress towards rationalising its structures including greater centralisation of administrative functions and greater standardization of practices across the School led by the relevant School Officers and committees with the view of decreasing the administrative burden of teaching staff.

## 3. Quality of Teaching and Learning

- a. That the School should address issues of quality assurance at UG and PG level driven through the School Officers and appropriate committees and with a view to standardizing practice and efficient record-keeping;
- b. That the School should establish a school-wide staff-student committee, as part of this quality assurance;
- c. That the TSM programme be revised with a view to introducing a model which allows students to spend a Year Abroad, similarly to European Studies students and to the vast majority of Modern Languages joint-honours students in Irish and UK institutions.

## 4. Research

- a. That the organization of the postgraduate/research seminar programme be revised;
- b. That a better record of the members of staff's research output and plans should be kept and elaborated in order to allow the Director of Research and the Head of School to identify areas for improved support, collaboration and exchange of best practice;
- c. That the School/Faculty further develop its commitment towards better resources for the support of research activity of both an individual and collaborative nature.

Professor Scott noted that while the School's strength lies in its diversity, the review had highlighted fundamental issues arising from the retention of Departmental structures and practices, which needed to be addressed. The School's relationship with Faculty and College was also identified by the Reviewers as an area requiring attention.

He informed the Committee that the issues identified by the Reviewers in relation to the role of the School's Directors of Teaching & Learning and the Director of Research, and their relationship to the Heads of Discipline were critical to the management of research. He cited the shortage of senior staff to fill these roles coupled with their relatively short tenure (normally two years) as contributing factors, which highlight the impact of staff retirements on academic leadership.

While the School's research record and links to strategic initiatives such as the Long Room Hub were praised by the Reviewers, the School needs to work harder to promote funding opportunities and the research profile of staff.

In relation to the variation in the type and application of quality assurance processes between disciplines, Professor Scott suggested that more work needed to be done to harmonise overall School practice.

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences strongly supported Professor Scott's comments and the findings of the review. He reported that steps are being taken to address the acute staffing needs of the School through the Faculty staffing plan and in the context of the staffing needs of the Faculty as a whole. In addition, steps have been taken to mainstream short-term junior contract staff. In terms of the structure and governance of the

School, and the relationship between the disciplines and the School, the Dean proposes that a task force be set up to implement the Reviewers' recommendations, and in particular those related to governance, administration and the relationship of the component Departments to the School as a whole.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Head of School and the Faculty Dean for their comments and reported that many of the College-level issues raised by the Reviewers (e.g. SITS, the lack of a fixed timetable and the complexity of degree programmes) would be addressed by the College's Education Project. In relation to the availability and provision of management information, she reported that the Quality Office would be working with the Financial Services Division to provide a coherent account of financial and policy related issues for quality reviews in the future.

With regard to the Reviewers' recommendations around the quality assurance of the postgraduate research student experience, the Dean of Graduate Studies reported that the implementation of the new research module in SITS will help to progress this. Additionally, the Head of School suggested that a closer monitoring of postgraduate annual reviews and a more carefully record taken of progress during the academic year would help to identify issues sooner rather than later, within the existing structures.

In response to a request from Committee members that the overarching quality issues posed by the implementation of SITS should be an agenda item for discussion by the Committee, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer agreed that this would be useful and suggested that the item be included on the agenda for the next meeting.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Scott, Ms. Sharpe and the Faculty Dean for their contributions and closed the discussion.

#### **QC/14-15/029 Mentoring Evaluation Report**

The Chair welcomed Mr. Philip Coffey, HR Partner, Academic Services Division to the meeting to speak to an evaluation report on the College's two staff mentoring programmes - the Early Career Mentoring Initiative which is aimed at new/recently appointed academics and the Momentum Programme, which is aimed at more senior academics looking to the next stage in their academic careers. The review of these programmes was prompted by a request from the Quality Committee for feedback on the success of the mentoring initiative, as staff mentoring is a recurrent issue in quality reviews.

Mr Coffey spoke to the following key findings and recommendations arising from the report:

1. There is a strong demand from new staff to be mentored but College needs to look at ways to promote the programme attract more mentors to come forward, to meet the demand.
2. The mentoring guidelines should specify a proposed duration for the mentoring partnership, and an ending protocol so mentors and mentees can bring the partnership to an end, in a professional manner.
3. College should consider how mentors are acknowledged for participating in the mentoring programme.
4. Explore what mechanisms can be developed to improve networking opportunities among Academics (i.e. mentees on the mentoring programmes) in Trinity College
5. Develop a Mentoring Calendar whereby each October to December expressions of interest are sought and mentoring activity starts from January.

Mr Coffey reported that the shortage of mentors for both programmes is an issue requiring immediate attention. He suggested:

1. Giving recognition of the mentorship roles as a consideration in promotion, or in developing an event similar to the Provost's teaching award as two possible ways to raise the profile of mentoring and encourage more academics to volunteer as mentors;
2. Improved networking opportunities for new staff;
3. A mentoring Calendar, with a structured starting point (e.g. January or September) for new mentoring partnerships as an alternative model to the initiation of partnerships on a case-by-case basis;
4. College-wide roll-out of other useful staff supports e.g. the local staff induction processes initiated at School and unit level and the 'buddy' system.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Mr Coffey for his presentation and invited comments from the Committee. In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:

- Greater clarity is needed on the role of Faculty Deans in matching mentors with mentees;
- Consideration should be given to appointing mentors from outside College where appropriate;
- Mentoring partnerships need to be monitored at key milestone periods, as sometimes they come to a natural end, when issues have been resolved or when one member of the partnership has left the College;
- It would be useful to obtain feedback on the process not only from those who are already in the mentoring system but also from staff who are eligible to participate, but who have not been involved in the mentoring programme to date;
- It would be useful to pool ideas from other mentoring initiatives such as Gradlink with regard to lessons learned;
- There is scope to publicise the College mentoring initiatives more widely, for example at the induction programme for new academics. Staff may only be aware of local initiatives and Heads of School could take a more active role in promoting the two College-level initiatives;
- Mentoring opportunities should be available for non-academic staff – a pilot programme is being rolled out in April within the Academic Services Division;

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Mr Coffey and closed the discussion.

#### **QC/14-15/030 Quality Review of the College Health Service**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of the College Health Service, Dr David McGrath, and the Dean of Students to the meeting to speak to the Reviewers' report on the College Health Service and their nine recommendations of which the following were key:

**1. Location as core strategic position:** The Review Team recommends that the Health Centre is located in facilities which are not only not fit for purpose now, but are incapable of expansion to service a student/staff population extant in 20 years' time. A space has been identified for 2017 but that this plan should be finalised and healthcare provision seen as a major priority within contesting proposals for these facilities. In the interim options for intermediary space provision should be explored to include:

- a. Extra storage facilities in accommodation nearby;
- b. Provision of a satellite clinic elsewhere such as halls of residence or other central unit space.

**2. A review of healthcare models** be undertaken:

- a. Option 1 – Consolidation of the service into 'College Health' with a commitment to complete primary care services only to those on the Director's current General Medical Services (GMS) list.

- b. Option 2 – Continuation of the current service but with considerable expansion to allow and encourage as many students and staff to join an expanded GMS list, as well as encouraging as many students and staff to attend the service as private patients.
- c. Option 3 – as option 2 but the College health Service would need to expand to have an outward facing service, recruiting GMS and private patients from the passing trade, local inhabitants and tourists.

**3. Operational funding models.** Prior to any fundamental change in the nature of the service as per above, consideration should be given to increasing sources of funding. Some considerations might include:

- a. Charging a Student Consultation Fee or increase current charging for particular services;
- b. Expand the provision for Staff members with associated charges;
- c. Some years ago a Health and Counselling budget was ring-fenced individually in the university core funding. This could be reinstated by charging students a levy to cover these areas of Student Support at source on admission;
- d. Increase the Subvention from the Global Relations and introduce a subvention from Access funding to reflect their disproportionate usage of the College Health Service.

**4. Staffing Level.** The staffing levels and skills would benefit from a review but the issue of space provision for 1:1 consultations in the current facility is a constraint to the recruitment of new or additional staffing positions.

Dr McGrath welcomed the Reviewers' report and recommendations, and acknowledged that space and staff were the key issues to be addressed. The proposed move to Oisín House would alleviate the Service's space issues in particular in the context of the globalisation initiative which will put additional pressure on the Service. He acknowledged that while the staffing requirement suggested by the reviewers could not be met, one extra GP and 0.5 nurse would be of considerable help and, coupled with a move to Oisín House, would give the Service more options. He suggested that the 2<sup>nd</sup> healthcare model proposed by the Reviewers in which staff and students would be charged for the service would be more realistic if the planned move to Oisín House goes ahead, and he noted that in other Irish universities students pay a nominal charge for GP services.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) agreed with the points outlined by Dr McGrath and reported that while a move to Oisín House is the preferred option, immediate action to redesign the existing space has been taken and some inroads to address the staffing shortage have been made. The Dean of Students argued that a fit-for-purpose Health Service is not only an essential requirement for all universities but also part of the business model for any successful internationalisation initiative. He reported that the Health Service would be required to contribute to the capital development of Oisín House and that the possibility of obtaining philanthropy to fund the capital development was being investigated.

In the discussion that followed the Education Officer of the Students Union requested that students are consulted from the start in any discussion around the introduction of a student charge for the Health Service and that other avenues should be explored before a further student levy is considered. Dr McGrath reported that he had obtained agreement from previous Student Union officers to a nominal student charge to support a new premises, provided that it is ring-fenced. In response to a query from a Committee member, Dr McGrath clarified that there were no immediate plans to introduce free GP care for 18– 25 year olds as part of the roll-out of the government scheme.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr McGrath and opened the discussion to Committee members.

In response to a query, Dr McGrath confirmed that in order to support the additional cost of international students, a portion of the overseas fee income has been ring-fenced. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer enquired whether international students are required to have their own medical insurance. Dr McGrath clarified that there is no such requirement. He explained that a bespoke insurance package for international TCD students is available but that this does not cover primary care.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Committee for their contributions and closed the discussion noting that an Implementation Plan will be built around the College decision on space and a funding model.

#### **QC/14-14/031 Quality Review of the College Day Nursery**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Manager of the College Day Nursery, Ms. Aoife Cox, and the Staff Relations Manager, Mr. Ken Doherty, to the meeting.

Ms. Cox spoke to the reviewers' recommendations of which the following were key:

1. Compliance and risk mitigation issues in relation to:
  - a. Child Protection training for all staff including Child Protection policies and training;
  - b. Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 and implementation of Siolta and Aistear Quality Assurance Programme;
  - c. Assessment of Fire and Health & Safety in line with legislative requirements.
2. Staff relations and morale;
3. Financial sustainability - the need to undertake a business case review to determine market demand as well as address issues on viability and sustainability. A critical priority for Trinity College is the running of Nursery provision which is linked to future strategy and reflects the importance of delivering childcare solutions on campus.
4. Leadership and Management. The reviewers recommend that the manager is provided with support to develop effective management and leadership skills.

The Nursery Manager reported that a number of actions have already been taken in response to the Day Nursery review. The services of independent childcare specialists who provide an auditing and service resource function have been employed to review the Nursery's policies and procedures. The Nursery's child protection policy has been updated using the TCD child protection policy, in line with HSE requirements, and has also been reviewed by the independent consultants. The Nursery manager reported that she has also engaged with TULSA, the Child and Family Protection Agency in this regard. Training for staff has been sourced through Soilta and Aistear, and the Nursery's Fire and Health & Safety procedures have been updated in consultation with the College Health and Safety Manager, to bring them in line with College and HSE requirements. The Service has engaged with Early Childhood Ireland in relation to HSE compliance but also with regard to where savings in the Service can be made.

The Chief Operating Officer supported the comments of the Day Nursery Manager and commended the work that has already been done to ensure that the Day Nursery is fully compliant with HSE requirements. The Staff Relations Manager reported that he has been working with the Nursery Manager to improve staff relations and to provide management training which will help to facilitate full engagement by Nursery staff with the necessary improvements to the Service.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Day Nursery Manager and the Staff Relations Manager and acknowledged that a lot of work has already been done to implement the Reviewers'

recommendations. An Implementation Plan will be drawn up in consultation with the Chief Operating Officer to address all of the Reviewers' recommendation and will be submitted to Board.

#### **QC/14-15/032 Procedures for Course Approvals**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak to procedures for undergraduate and postgraduate course approvals, which have been developed in response to feedback from users.. There is also a requirement under the European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance to have documented procedures for the course approval process. The circulated procedures incorporate feedback from the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) and Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), and from the Librarian.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and invited comment from the Committee. In the brief discussion that followed concern was expressed that the proposed procedures still required too much documentation to support a course proposal. It was agreed that a balance needs to be struck between providing sufficient information for approval of a new course and streamlining the information required so as to reduce the burden on Council members. Members suggested that minor changes to a course could be approved at GSC or USC but that more significant change (such as a course name change) or a completely new course proposal needs to be approved by Council. The Academic Secretary agreed that a proposal for a new course requires sufficient background information in order that an informed decision on the viability and market for the course can be taken. She recommended that advice course proposals should be sought from Trinity Teaching & Learning. The Committee agreed that a word-count be introduced for course proposals. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion.

#### **QC/14-15/033 Progress report for School of Engineering**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Head of the School of Engineering, Professor Brian Foley, to the meeting. Professor Foley spoke to the progress report for the School and reported that all six of the Reviewers' School-level recommendations were now completed.

In relation to the three College-level recommendations, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that a Heads of School induction programme was completed in January 2015 and that steps to improve the existing induction processes for new staff of all types have been taken. The transition from a financial allocation model based on historical allocations to one that links earnings from new and incremental activity to actual reward is underway, and the revised principals for annual budgetary allocations have been approved by Board and communicated to Heads of School.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Foley and closed the discussion.

#### **QC/14-15/034 Progress report for Library**

The Chair welcomed the College Librarian, Ms. Helen Shenton, to the meeting to speak to the progress report for the Library. Ms Shenton began by recording her thanks to the Deputy Librarian, Ms. Jessie Kurtz for taking the lead as Acting Librarian in the implementation of the Reviewers' recommendations.

The Librarian reported that most of the outstanding recommendations will be subsumed by a new Library Strategy which will be presented to Board in March 2015. This will outline the strategic direction of the Library for the next 15 years, and an implementation plan on resourcing and structures will follow. A diversified funding stream is part of this strategy and work has commenced with Trinity Foundation to identify philanthropic support. The relationship between commercialisation and the Library will also need to be defined and the new Librarian has been working closely with the Bursar on the 'Library specific components' of the Trinity Visitor Experience. A space master plan will be formulated within the context of the new Library Strategy.

The Librarian reported that in her new role she has spent a significant amount of time communicating and meeting with the Library's diverse stakeholder groups in order to raise the profile of the Library and increase connectivity.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Ms. Shenton and noted that the TR071 Reviewers had highlighted opportunities for schools to connect to the library and add value to curriculum and pedagogy.

#### **QC/14-15/035 Procedures for Programme Reviews**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak to the draft procedures for a programme review which had been circulated in advance. The Quality Officer informed the Committee that the draft procedures have been developed following lessons learned in the pilot review of the TR071 programme. Feedback has also been obtained from staff involved with the TR071 and BESS programmes.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and drew the Committee's attention to the requirement for Faculty Dean and Finance Partner sign-off on the financial data presented for a programme review. She reiterated the importance of having common university-level data on finances that inform the quality review process. In the absence of a comprehensive data repository with a data management policy, she stressed the need for standardized College-level information that is updated annually.

The Academic Secretary reported that a lot had been learned from the TR071 pilot review and noted that in developing a programme review procedure it was important to move away from the School review format and incorporate elements of the review that had worked particularly well such as stakeholder surveys, focus groups and a more strategic focus. She reported that review guidelines would now be revised to incorporate more group meetings, time for the reviewers to draft their report and to give an exit presentation to stakeholders.

In the discussion that followed the difficulty in obtaining College data by gender breakdown was noted by a Committee member and it was agreed that the requirement for a gender breakdown of the data presented to Reviewers would be included in the draft procedure. In response to a query regarding the scope of the review, the Quality Officer confirmed that all programmes including interdisciplinary programmes that don't get captured in school reviews would be reviewed. The procedure will also apply to linked providers and transnational programmes. Programmes which undergo a professional accreditation, however, will not be subject to an additional review.

#### **QC/14-15/036 Any other business**

The Quality Officer reported that the Irish Survey of Student Engagement was underway and that the response to date had been very good. She reported that with one week to go, a response rate of 22% would be achieved if all those who started the survey completed and submitted it. She encouraged Committee members to continue to promote the survey. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and the meeting closed.