



Trinity College Dublin

Quality Committee

Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the Quality Committee held on 27th April 2015 in the Boardroom, House 1.

Present: Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Secretary, Quality Officer, 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: Ms Deirdre Flynn (Director of Student Counselling Services), Ms Vickey Butler (Assistant Secretary), Dr Erika Doyle (Global Officer Co-ordinator), Dr Jose Sanchez-Morgado, Professor Kevin O'Kelly (Dean of Students), Dr. Liz Donnellan (Secretary to the Committee).

Apologies: Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences, Professor Simon McGinnes

QC/14-15/037 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 5 March 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the 5 March 2015 were approved.

QC/14-15/038 Matters arising

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the progress report for the Library which was discussed at the last Quality Committee meeting (QC/14-15/034) will be considered at the Board meeting of the 29th April 2015.

The Quality Officer reported that initial results for the 2014 Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) indicate a response rate of 23% for TCD students. The final response rate along with the detailed export data for TCD will be available in the coming weeks.

QC/14-15/039 Quality Review of Student Counselling Services

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of the Student Counselling Services (SCS), Dr Deirdre Flynn to the meeting and invited her to speak to the Reviewers' report for SCS. Dr Flynn welcomed the report and the Reviewers' recommendations. She noted that the Reviewers commended the high quality of service provision and that they were confident that the activities of SCS were aligned to TCD's strategic goals of recruitment of international and non-traditional students.

Dr Flynn drew attention to the Reviewers' concerns regarding staffing levels and short-term contracts. She noted the Reviewers' criticism of the SCS's counsellor to student ratio as being well below international recommendations (1: 1,000). This raises concerns about the possibility of

staff burnout and a reduction in the quality of service to students. The SCS's 5-year Strategic Plan proposes the staggered creation of key strategic positions to continue delivering on its goals and prevent the scenarios outlined by the reviewers. In the interim, SCS has attempted to maximize efficiencies within existing resources by extending supports for students over a longer time-frame and through the use of interns. This is not however a sustainable model for service delivery and Dr Flynn stressed the need to make key decisions regarding resources in order to address these issues. Any further reduction in resources would have serious consequences in terms of the quality of the service provided to students; the ability of SCS to continue to support key activities; and deliver on the College's Strategic goal of producing productive and well-rounded students.

The Reviewers' recommended the introduction of a ring-fenced Health and Counselling levy to generate additional income. In response, Dr Flynn stated that in order to protect accessibility for all students, the SCS favoured a universal levy to fund services rather than a service charge at point of delivery. She welcomed the recommendation that SCS should seek accreditation from the International Accreditation of Counselling Services (IACS) but felt that the staffing ratio would need to be addressed before any international recognition could be sought. Concerning the recommendation that SLD and S2S should operate as standalone services, Dr Flynn cautioned that this proposed restructuring would have resource implications in terms of staffing, as a strong management structure would be required to support both.

The Chief Operating Officer praised the Reviewers' very comprehensive report and agreed that the issues of staffing and resources raised by the Reviewers would need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. She reported that the data integrity issues and data protection practices in the Service would be addressed in the College Digital Strategy, and that the professional development requirements of staff would also be addressed. The Dean of Students agreed with the concerns expressed regarding the risk of staff burnout and a reduction in the quality of service to students posed by the existing operating model. He suggested that the SCS will be impacted by an increasingly diverse student population to a greater extent than some of the other student services, as international students are traditionally more frequent users of the Service. In terms of the Education Project and the development of both academic and non-academic attributes in our graduates, Dr O'Kelly proposed a closer partnership between student services and the College's academic structures in order to ensure that difficulties are identified and addressed early on in a student's career.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited comment from the Committee and in the ensuing discussion the following issues were raised:

- The current pressure on the Service and any consequent reduction in the quality of care to students has serious implications;
- The human cost of failing to invest in the SCS is very high;
- The impact of the Service on student retention and the associated savings to College have not been adequately assessed;
- Consideration should be given to alternative funding sources such as once-off funding from government or philanthropic funding through the Trinity Foundation;
- The introduction of a levy to fund student services requires a consultation process across College. Such a proposal, if it were to proceed, must ensure that the Student Counselling Service continues to be free to students at the point of delivery

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

QC/14-15/040 Procedure for Review of a Trinity Research Institute (TRI)

The Chair invited the Quality Officer to speak to the procedure for review of a Trinity Research Institute (TRI) which was circulated with papers for the meeting.

The Quality Officer reported that this procedure has been developed as part of a suite of policies and procedures to support quality assurance in Trinity. It fulfils a requirement to review TRIs every five years which is outlined in the College's policy on Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs) and also demonstrates to QQI that College is assuring the quality of our education, research and related services. A cycle of reviews of Trinity Research Institutes has been agreed and the Committee's feedback is sought on the draft procedure.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the governance of Research Institutes extends beyond the role of the Institute Director and includes Executive Committees on which the Heads of the participating Schools and the relevant Faculty Dean play a key role. She suggested that the document be revised to reflect this to a greater extent.

In response to a query as to whether ISO 9000 is a quality standard that we would expect a TRI to have in place, the Quality Officer reported that many suppliers would look for evidence of external standards and accreditation as part of the service level agreement with individual TRIs and that this needs to be highlighted in the Self- Assessment Report (SAR). Finally, the Academic Secretary suggested that the strategic intention and importance of the TRI should be emphasized in the procedure. She advised that an amended version of the TRI review procedure will be brought to the next meeting for noting.

QC/14-15/041 Student Complaints Procedure

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Assistant College Secretary, Ms Victoria Butler to speak to a revised version of the Student Complaints Procedure which was initially discussed at the meeting of the 5 March (QC/14-15/023).

Ms Butler spoke to the changes that had been made to the document and drew the Committee's attention to a draft webpage which will support the procedure. She reported that the development of an on-line process will be delivered as part of wider project to replace the current student portal and will not be completed in the short term. In the interim, a paper-based process with manual tracking of submissions will be used.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Ms Butler and invited comment from the Committee. In the discussion which followed the following points were raised:

- Capturing the amount of traffic or number of 'hits' on the links to the informal complaints processes listed on the webpage would provide a useful indication of the types of issues which are of concern to students and highlight consistent problems around, for example, facilities or services which may need to be addressed;
- The change that was made to Section 5.1 to include the statement that the student complaints process applies to 'anyone directly affected by the services of the College' is too broad and should be narrowed to specify that the complaints procedure applies to students who are off-books, to those who are intending to register and to student representatives;
- Students should be advised to allow sufficient time for the local, informal complaints processes to run its course before a formal complaint is lodged. Additionally upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Complaints Officer should check that the local processes have been exhausted before a formal complaint is initiated.
- In relation to the timelines for data retention we should be guided by the College's general regulations on data retention and Freedom of Information;

- In relation to section 3.3, the locations for experiential learning should be broadened to include sites other than hospitals;
- The student charter should encourage students to engage with informal complaints processes in the first instance. The Dean of Students will include this proposed change to the Charter on the agenda for the next Student Life Committee;
- The format of the procedure should follow the same format as that of other quality assurance procedures.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and the Committee for their input and noted that the Committee approved the procedure with the discussed changes.

QC/14-14/042 International Student Barometer (ISB) 2014

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Global Officer Co-Ordinator, Dr Erika Doyle to speak to the results from the 2014 International Student Barometer (ISB). Dr Doyle reported that this was only the second year in which a breakdown of results by School was available and advised that data would be sent to the Faculty Deans and be presented to the Faculty Executive. She reported the following headline results:

- The TCD response rate increased to 31% of TCD's international (EU and Non-EU) student population, up from 28% last year;
- The overall satisfaction rate of TCD respondents was 88%, up 1% on last year;
- Students were asked questions in two categories (i) Pre-arrival and (ii) Student Experience;
- In relation to pre-arrival, the website continues to be the most influential source of information for students. Institutional reputation and course perception are key factors in the study decision, as is location in Dublin. Application to offer satisfaction is below that of the UK for undergraduate students but most aspects of arrival have improved in the last year, with registration up 11%.
- In terms of student experience, TCD continues to perform well in experience of lecturers, language support, class size and multicultural learning. The main areas below the international benchmark continue to be work experience, performance feedback, course organization, learning spaces, technology, VLE and the Library. Satisfaction in core learning areas varies by faculty by up to 30%. Areas of the living experience such as host culture and sports facilities continue to perform well but accommodation (both TCD and private), living cost, opportunities to earn money and visa advice continue to fall below the benchmark. The Student Counselling Service, clubs/societies and faith provision all scored 90+ satisfaction rates.
- 81% of respondents said that they would recommend TCD to other students, which is slightly below the UK ISB average of 86%. Postgraduate taught students are more likely to recommend (88%) than undergraduate students (81%) or postgraduate research students (73%), and recommendation scores across faculties vary from 73% to 85%.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr Doyle and opened the discussion. It was noted that we are losing students to other institutions as the application to offer timeframe is too long. It was noted that this is currently an area being addressed by GR and AR.

The Committee discussed whether it is appropriate to survey students so early in the academic year (November) when some students, for example postgraduate taught course students, have limited experience of the College. It was suggested that as the timing of the survey cannot be changed perhaps the questions should be amended to reflect the point in the academic year at which the survey is administered. In response to a query as to who owns the institutional ISB data, Dr Doyle reported that the data is private to each institution and is not published. Acknowledging that there is lower satisfaction among PGR respondents than PGT students (88% vs 73%), it was agreed that there is a gap in terms of a detailed analysis of the issues affecting research students. Dr Doyle reported that she is working to extract information on issues pertaining to PGR students from the data.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr Doyle and closed the discussion.

QC/14-15/043 Progress report for School of Social Work & Social Policy

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social sciences to speak to the progress report for the School of Social Work & Social Policy.

Professor Jones reported that all recommendations are being progressed. The School has worked hard to develop efficiencies both within and across the delivery and management of its educational programmes, by consolidating existing programmes and engaging with online initiatives. The requirement for additional staffing resources will be addressed in the short and long term staffing plans for the Faculty.

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

QC/14-15/044 Progress report for Comparative Medicine

The Chair welcomed the Director of the Comparative Medicine Unit (CMU) Professor Jose Sanchez-Morgado to the meeting to speak to the progress report for CMU.

Professor Sanchez-Morgado reported that all of the Reviewers' recommendations are being progressed, with many already completed. A clear organizational structure has been put in place and a Strategic Plan for 2015-2019 is being prepared. The name of the unit has been officially changed to TCD Comparative Medicine and an academic status review of the Director will take place before summer 2015. Research and teaching/training activities are in train and CMU personnel are now consulted during grant planning and writing to ensure that facility capabilities align with investigator requests. A re-organisation of the Unit's staff to improve efficiency has been carried out and a full costing recovery system has been implemented from the start of the 2014-2015 financial year.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Sanchez-Morgado and noted the work done to align the unit's activity with its strategic direction, and to build and maintain good working relationships with Principal Investigators.

QC/14-15/045 Revised Course Proposal template (UG & PG)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak to a revised version of the Course Proposal document which was initially discussed at the meeting of the 5 March (QC/14-15/032). Ms Smith reported that the requested changes to the document had been made, including the introduction of a word count, and it is hoped that the new course proposal template will help to streamline the process. The new template now needs to be disseminated to the Schools and it was acknowledged that a cultural change will be required in order to successfully implement the changes. The Academic Secretary stressed the importance of liaising with the appropriate TTL staff at the outset of a course proposal and suggested that it would be useful to see more innovation coming through at the course proposal stage, particularly at PG level as this is where most of the proposals emanate from.

The Committee approved the revised template and closed the discussion.

QC/14-15/046 Any other business

- The membership of the TR071 taskforce has been agreed and the group will meet this week;
- The composition of the LLCS taskforce has been discussed and it is hoped to have the membership confirmed for the next meeting of Council - awaiting the appointment of the incoming Head of School before work is initiated;
- The project team for the Sport & Recreation taskforce has had its first meeting. The team includes strong external membership and has identified five action items on which it must deliver. In response to a query, it was confirmed that the Implementation Plan for the Sports Strategy which will be developed by the project team will accompany the Reviewers' report to Board.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.