Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin

Minutes of the Quality Committee

2 December 2015, 2.30pm, Boardroom, House 1

Present:
Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IS Services
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms Molly Kenny, Education Officer Students' Union
Dr Liz Donnellan, Secretary to the Committee

Apologies:
Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Ms Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms Gianna Hegarty, Vice President Graduate Students' Union

QC/15-16/009   Minutes of the meeting of the 15 October 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the 15 October 2015 were approved with minor changes.

QC/15-16/010   Matters arising

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the TCD response to the QQI White Paper on the Review of Higher Education Institutions, which was included as a section B item for noting.

She reported that the Implementation Plan for Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I) was presented to Council on the 18 November 2015, as an attachment to the minutes of the 15 October Quality Committee, and that the Implementation Plan for the Disability Service will be presented to Board on the 9 December 2015.

QC/15-16/011   Report on Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2015

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Students, Professor Kevin O'Kelly, to the meeting and invited him to speak to the report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2015. The Dean reported that this was the third year of the survey and that this allows for trend analyses which consolidates the role of the survey as a decision support tool for the College and facilitates input to strategic initiatives such as the Trinity Education Project.

Trinity achieved the highest participation rate across all ISSE universities in 2013/14 but has dropped to third place in 2014/15, with Dublin City University and the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) achieving response rates of 26% and 25.3% respectively. the overall response rate for TCD students had increased from 16.5% to 23.2% since last year, with the responses from 1st years increasing by 22%, final years by 53% and postgraduate taught students by 87% over 2013/14 levels. The work of the student unions in increasing the participation rate amongst postgraduate students, in particular, was acknowledged.

TCD scored above the ISSE University average for Academic Challenge, Enriching Educational Experiences and Higher Order Thinking. Scores were lagging behind the ISSE Universities, however, for Supportive Learning Environment and Overall Satisfaction, with scores for Staff Student Interactions the weakest performing index across all cohorts YR1, YRF and PGT in the 2014/15 survey findings. In 2014/15 ISSE has provided additional statistical analysis and Faculty-level data which has provided in Faculty-specific reports this year.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean of Students and noted that the ISSE data was a useful quality assurance tool which complimented the data from the International Student Barometer (ISB) and, internally, from module surveys and programme/school reviews.

In the discussion that followed, the following points were raised;

- The validity of the survey instrument is evaluated every year and is continually being reviewed to ensure that it remains fit-for-purpose.
- A number of incentives have been undertaken to encourage greater rates of student participation. Liaison with Irish ISSE universities who have managed to significantly increase their participation rates may be useful. A reduction in the length of the survey from 100 to 67 questions is planned for 2016, which will facilitate administration of the survey during class time and should impact the participation rate.
- Student involvement in the design of the survey is facilitated through USI representation on the working group, which has been tasked with implementing the agreed national survey design.
- The usefulness of modelling the Irish survey on European and Australian models was queried by the Committee. It was noted that the UK survey only has 20 questions and is used for ranking purposes.

The Irish survey is not currently used for Institutional ranking as it is not in the public domain, but this may change in the future if the survey results are publicised.

- The Faculty-specific issues raised in the survey should be addressed and considered in the light of other quality assurance processes and incorporated into the Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQR), which are considered by Council. The Quality Officer attends the annual quality Faculty Executive meetings at which the AFQRs are discussed.
- While student satisfaction with support services is captured in the 'supportive learning environment' index, the International Student Barometer (ISB) targets services and supports more directly. The ISB results are discussed at planning group, where the appropriate owners are tasked with reporting back on how issues pertaining to their particular area have been addressed.
- While comparative data over the three years shows that the trend for scores for some indices e.g. Academic Challenge is approaching the University mean, the real value is in the data and in the qualitative comments.
- It was acknowledged that some questions are more relevant to certain cohorts of students than others e.g. career readiness may not be relevant for some cohorts of 1st years. However, a breakdown of answers by cohort will allow specific issues with targeted cohorts to be identified. The Committee suggested that it would be helpful to have a report, by cohort, on the survey questions that were not completed.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean of Students and the Committee for their input and in closing the discussion she acknowledged that the challenge is to ensure that there is sufficient consideration of the data at an appropriate level in College.

QC/15-16/012   Update on Implementation Plan for Student Counselling Service and the College Health Service

The Chief Operating Officer (COO), Ms Geraldine Ruane requested that the Implementation Plans for the Student Counselling Service and the College Health Service, which were due to be considered by the Quality Committee in Michaelmas Term 2015, be deferred to Trinity Term 2016 when the new Director of Student Services will be in place. She reported that the Heads of the relevant Services were agreeable to the proposal, and that they had already met the new Director and would be working closely with her to bring forward the Implementation Plans. The Committee approved the request and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Ms Ruane for her update.

QC/15-16/013   Recommendations arising from the 2014/2015 quality reviews

The Quality Officer spoke to a report on progress in addressing the recurrent College-level issues that arose from quality reviews in 2014/15. The report provides an opportunity to close the loop in terms of addressing College-level recommendations and, as such, is an important element of the quality assurance follow-up process.

Recommendations relating to HR and staffing were amongst the most frequent, with issues relating to location, accessibility and quality of facilities frequently occurring too. IT supports, client relationship management and records/data management were also recurrent. Ms Smith reported that that these issues had been raised with the heads of the relevant areas and that an update on progress in addressing them was included, where possible, in the report.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and reported that work has been on-going over the last year to address the casualisation issue and the filling of key strategic posts, responsibility for which lies with the Faculty Deans and other relevant College Officers. She invited comment from the Committee and in the short discussion that followed, the importance of demonstrating that College-level recommendations were being addressed was emphasised. Identifying the most efficient pathways for communicating this information to Schools and Administrative Units is crucial to maintaining confidence in the review process. Issues of commonality across all reviews should be systematically identified and a co-ordinated approach to addressing them devised. The Quality Officer reported that common issues arising from school reviews in the past had been important drivers for the Trinity Education Project.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer closed the discussion and in thanking the Quality Officer for her report, suggested that it might be useful for the document to be circulated to the Faculties for consideration in their Annual Faculty Quality Reports.

QC/115-16/014 Framework for Quality Assurance in Trinity College Dublin

The Quality Officer spoke to a diagrammatic representation of the framework for quality assurance in Trinity, which was circulated with papers for the meeting. The framework document outlines Trinity's internal and external quality assurance processes and tools, and the national and European standards with which they must be aligned.

In relation to the accreditation process, the conduit of information from the process upwards needs improvement, and Ms Smith suggested that the Annual Faculty Quality Report would be the best vehicle for doing this. She reported that the proposed Postgraduate Research Survey, which arose from last year's Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR), was awaiting approval from the Graduate Studies Committee and would be administered annually thereafter.

In terms of the data gathered from the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the International Student Baramoter (ISB), we will need to demonstrate how we are acting on this information as part of the Institutional Review Process. Our priorities going forward in this respect will include ensuring that we are aligned with published QQI policies, to work on developing a set of Institutional-level benchmarks which a can be effectively communicated and to raise awareness of what benchmarking activity is currently taking place.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer closed the discussion by suggesting that a useful addition to the diagram would be to show how local quality assurance activities are reported into Council through the Quality Committee. The Quality Officer undertook to outline those linkages in the diagram.

QC/15-16/015 European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF)

The Quality Officer provided a brief report to the Committee on the 10th European Quality Assurance Forum (EQAF) which was held in London from the 19 – 21 November 2015. She reported that the Forum was an opportunity to engage with quality assurance activity and developments at a European level and to identifying good practice in other universities that could inform practice across Trinity. She circulated a resource from Maastricht University.

QC/15-16/016 Implementation Plan for the School of Education

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Acting Head of the School of Education, Professor Michael Shevlin, who spoke to the Implementation Plan for the School of Education. He reported that the School review had been very positive and that the School had set out a framework to address all of the recommendations. The review has served to highlight that the focus of the School's activities has shifted from primarily undergraduate to primarily postgraduate. A review of the M.Ed is underway to assess whether the existing strands of the course are meeting current needs and to determine the relationship with the new two-year Professional Master of Education (PME). The School is currently reviewing its use of casual staff with a view to planning future staff needs to support strategic and growth initiatives. The School will participate in the planned Academy for Teaching & Learning, building on existing work undertaken with CAPSL to develop the new Certificate in Academic Practice. Preparatory work has already been undertaken in relation to plans to gain accreditation for the Certificate in Contemporary Living (CCL) and it is hoped to have a re-conceptualised CCL programme accredited on the national framework of qualifications for 2016/17. The School has begun the process of developing its Research Strategy for the next 5-7 year period, within the context of the School's Strategic Plan, and a new research officer has been appointed. The future strategic direction of the School will focus on collaborative PME, Continued Professional Development in identified areas of initial teacher training and research collaboration in the area of teacher education.

The Chair thanked Professor Shevlin for his report and noted that the School is currently working in an uncertain environment impacted by changes in teacher training and the relationships with the Associated Colleges, directives from the Education Council, and government policy in relation to clusters. A brief discussion followed in which it was suggested that lessons might be learnt from the integrated masters programmes recently introduced in the Schools of Computer Science and Engineering, as the broad challenges in implementing these programmes are the same.

The report will be forwarded to Council for approval.

QC/15-16/017   Any other business

The Quality Officer reported that the Postgraduate Research Survey would be considered by the Graduate Studies Committee at its meeting on the 3 December.

She drew the Committee's attention the Analysis of Quality Committee attendance 2014/15. In relation to attendance levels, the Chair proposed that from 2016/17 attendance records for the Committee be published. This was approved by the Committee.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.