



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

**Trinity College Dublin  
The University of Dublin  
Minutes of the Quality Committee**

1 June 2016, 15.00 – 17.00, Boardroom House 1

**Present:**

Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary

Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer

Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science

Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer

Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Sheila Ryder, Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor David Lewis, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Professor Aonghus McNabola, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

Ms Sandra Kavanagh, Secretary's Office

Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IS Services

Education Officer Students' Union

Vice President Graduate Students' Union

**Apologies:**

Professor Linda Hogan, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer *Chair*

Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences

Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences

Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian

Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer

**In attendance:**

Professor Jeremy Jones, Head of School, Computer Science & Statistics

Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Student Services

Mr John Coman, Secretary to the College

Professor Juliette Hussey, Vice-President Global Relations

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The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, as acting Chair, opened the meeting.

**QC/15-16/055 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 12 May 2016**

There were no corrections to the minutes of the 12 May 2016, and they were approved.

### **QC/15-16/056 Matters arising**

The Chair reported that the revised Terms of Reference for Linked Providers' Governance Committees (QC/15-16/049), the revised procedure for approval of Quality Assurance procedures for Linked Providers (QC/15-16/050) and the Non-EU Collaborative and Transnational Education Partnerships Policy (QC/15-16/052) would be considered at the Council Meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> June. In response to a query, the Academic Secretary reported that work was on-going on the approval of academic policies, a number of which will be considered by Council on the 8 June. The academic policies website is live and policies will be uploaded as they are approved and a link will be sent to the College community.

### **QC/15-16/057 Annual Faculty Quality Report – Engineering, Mathematics & Science**

The Chair invited Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of FEMS, to speak to the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR) for FEMS. Professor Cahill reported that the review of undergraduate science education and associated courses, within the framework of the Trinity Education Project, will be a focal point for the Faculty in the immediate future. This it is also expected to address the student experience of students in FEMS as reported in the ISSE Faculty report that indicated that FEMS respondents are less engaged than those of the other two Faculties or Trinity overall.

The Dean reported that while there are a range of survey mechanisms in use across the Faculty, evidence suggests that paper-based surveys elicit a higher level of engagement than other evaluation mechanisms. Response rates were not reported uniformly by Schools although some Schools reports 50-70% response rates. In relation to benchmarking, he remarked that while there is no systematic benchmarking in place, the School review process brings implicit benchmarking in terms of an external evaluation, and the accreditation processes confers international and professional standards on accredited courses. He concluded by stating that he hoped that the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR) can serve as a vehicle for sharing best practice across Schools. The Dean provided feedback from the FEMS Faculty Quality Executive meeting that the new process with respect to External Examiner reports was found to be working and that recommendations were being escalated appropriately.

The Chair thanked Professor Cahill and invited comment from the Committee.

In relation to student evaluations, survey fatigue in relation to the large number of modules being evaluated (497) and the lack of a standardised administration process were highlighted as two possible reasons for low levels of engagement by students. It was suggested that dedicated class time for survey completion and simpler surveys might achieve better student engagement with the process. In response to a comment regarding the large number of undergraduate modules in the Faculty, the Dean reported that there is a case to be made for rationalising module offerings where there is evidence of duplication or over-specialisation. In response to a comment by a Committee member regarding the difficulty faced by Schools where External Examiners do not submit reports, The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that in response to the Senior Lecturers Annual Report data on return rates of external examiner reports, a process is currently underway to determine the reasons why 100% of reports are not being received. In relation to restricted borrowing rights for Postgraduate Diploma Engineering students, the Quality Officer reported that restricted access experienced by a range of student cohorts including online and linked provider students will be raised at the Library and Information Policy Committee by the Deputy Librarian. Feedback will be provided at the next meeting.

The Academic Secretary noted the excellent work of the Acting Faculty Administrator in compiling the data and the report, and the Dean concluded by thanking the Faculty Administrator for her work on the report.

In closing the discussion, the Chair reported that this is the third of the 2015/16 AFQRs to be received by the Quality Committee, the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) report having been approved by the Quality Committee on the 21 January 2016 and the report from Health Sciences on the 3 March 2016. A consolidated report arising from the three Faculty reports will be presented to Council in Michaelmas term.

#### **QC/15-16/058 Implementation Plan for the School of Chemistry (Appendix 1)**

The Dean of FEMS, Professor Vinny Cahill, spoke to the Implementation Plan for the School of Chemistry which was circulated with papers for the meeting. The School was reviewed from the 16-18 November 2015 and the Dean reported that since then work has been on-going to address all of the recommendations.

The development of a School strategic plan to include an integrated staffing plan and a space plan, was a key recommendation arising from the review. The Dean reported that thanks to the work of the Head of School, a completed plan will be signed-off by the end of the current academic year. The recommendation to find a home for the School, which is currently dispersed over eight locations, is being addressed which will explore options and build a case for a single location.

The Chair thanked Professor Cahill and invited comment from the Committee. In response to a query as to whether the review of undergraduate science education will address the Royal Chemistry Society (RCS) requirement for 300 laboratory hours, the Dean reported that the School is working with the RCS to explore ways in which their requirements can be delivered within the curriculum, given the current resource constraints. With regard to the relationship between the School and its associated Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs), the Dean stressed that the relationship is a symbiotic one and that on-going discussion is required in an appropriate forum and within an agreed framework for engagement. A Committee member queried whether there is an aspiration for a standard workload model across College, and one which would take account of research. The Dean reported that College has developed a framework for commonality from which Schools can develop specific models, but that monitoring whether the framework is adhered to can be difficult. He reported that the equitable integration of research into workload models is also difficult to achieve. Following a request for clarification as to whether a standard model exists for allocation of research overheads between a School and a TRI where the funding recipient has affiliation to both, Professor Cahill remarked that no such agreement exists and that this would be useful to avoid the necessity to negotiate distribution of funding on a case by case basis.

The Chair thanked Professor Cahill, and the Committee approved the Implementation Plan.

#### **QC/15-16/059 Review of the School of Computer Science and Statistics**

The Chair welcomed the Head of the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Professor Jeremy Jones, to the meeting to speak to the review of the School which took place from the 15-17 February 2016. This is the third quality review of the School of Computer Science & Statistics, the previous reviews having been conducted in 2008 and 2001.

The Head of School addressed the Reviewers' key concerns i.e. the lack of a clear intellectual vision in the strategic planning process, the fragmentation and lack of coherent thinking around the development of the School's undergraduate and postgraduate courses and the financial opacity in

which the School operates. He reported that the view that an intellectual vision is insufficiently articulated in the Strategic Plan does not equate to the lack of a School vision. The process of developing the Strategic Plan over 18 months had resulted in reviewing programmes to teach to the research strengths of School academics, particularly in postgraduate programmes. At undergraduate level, the School is reducing the number of Year 5 modules and sharing them across its MCS, MAI and PGT programmes. It will continue to deliver its flagship Computer Science programme together with the MSISS and the popular Computer “and” degree programmes. The Reviewers reported that student representatives on the ‘and’ degrees expressed more dissatisfaction with their degrees (including high failure rates), and were particularly concerned about the failure/dropout rates on the CS+ language course. The School agrees that year 1 progression rates for the Computer Science and Business (CSB) and CS+ Language (CSL) programmes are low compared within sector norms, and these rates will be monitored closely. Student surveys have been successfully introduced at programme level and will be rolled out to module level next year using a new online survey system. A financial model for the School has been developed in conjunction with the Faculty Office which is now being used for planning purposes, but the “financial haze” referred to by the reviewers still exists as the actual budget allocation to the School does not follow this model.

The Faculty Dean declared that he was a member of the School of Computer Science & Statistics. He welcomed the Reviewers’ endorsement of the School’s Strategic Plan, which he reported was the product of 18 months engagement with all staff across the School. He expressed satisfaction that the extensive consultation process undertaken had resulted in an overarching intellectual and strategic vision for the School aligned to College’s strategic direction and initiatives. He noted that the School’s strategy planning has been accepted at Faculty level but has not as yet received College approval. With regard to the lack of financial clarity, he agreed that in the current climate where budgets are allocated on a year-to-year basis it is difficult for Schools to develop any long-term financial plan. He supported the Reviewers’ recommendation to develop a coherent marketing strategy for recruiting non-EU students and undertook to work with the School in this respect.

The Chair thanked the Dean and opened the discussion to Committee members. In response to a query regarding the existence of a College-level student exit survey for students who do not progress and whether information garnered by same could be used to determine the reasons for low progression rates on some courses, the Senior Lecturer reported that a College withdrawal form exists, but that there is no requirement for students to complete it. The difference between the School-based mentoring programme and that run by College was queried. The Dean reported that places on the College-run programme were limited by the number of available mentors, and additionally that the School-based programme is designed to address issues specific to the School. Following a request for clarity as to how undergraduate modules are shared across PG programmes, the Head of School pointed out that this refers to the 5-year integrated masters programmes, where year 5 modules are shared with 1 year taught PG programmes. Other issues discussed include the following:

- The Reviewers’ recommendation for a two supervisor system is currently under consideration by the relevant School Committees;
- The School has a relationship with IT Services with regard to the front end of its website, but back-end and support activities are undertaken by in-School technical and IT staff, who will be offered the opportunity to broaden their skills-base to meet the needs of the School.
- Lower first year progression rates on the CS+ courses may be attributed to students having differing expectations about what linguistics entails, and/or having to compete with students taking computers science as a single subject degree. The Trinity Education Project may address some of these issues.
- Teaching only positions are being considered at College level and a teaching fellow grade already exists in College.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies thanked the Head of School and the Faculty Dean, and the Committee noted and recommended the review report to Council. In closing the discussion the Chair noted that the report and responses will be forwarded to the meeting of Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> June for consideration and that the next step is the development of an implementation plan to address the recommendations, which will come before the QC for consideration at the start of the next academic year.

#### **QC/15-16/060 Study Abroad Provider Policy**

The Vice-President for Global Relations, Professor Juliette Hussey, spoke to the Study Abroad Providers Policy which was circulated with papers and taken as read. The policy was discussed at Undergraduate Studies Committee on the 24 May 2016.

Professor Hussey reported that the Global Relations Office and Trinity Teaching and Learning have embarked on the development of a range of policy and guidelines in support of Trinity's globalisation agenda. This policy is intended to clarify Trinity's relationship with its Study Abroad Providers, whose role is to provide advice to potential students, most coming from the US on a short-term basis, on the range of Trinity courses available to them. Global Relations engage with the Providers to facilitate these enrollments. Professor Hussey reported that Trinity's relationship with Providers is evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they have the most up-to-date information on entry criteria, new courses, student supports etc. In response to a query, she clarified that student traffic through Study Abroad Providers is one-way into the College.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Graduate Studies thanked Professor Hussey and remarked that it was useful to have such a policy in place that clarified the situation for the student in respect of Trinity regulations and the regulations of the provider and of the home institution. The Committee recommended the policy for approval by Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

#### **QC/15-16/061 Implementation Plan for the Chaplaincy**

The Chair welcomed the Secretary to the College, Mr John Coman, to speak to the Implementation Plan for the Chaplaincy. Mr Coman began by reporting that the Chaplains had found the review process to be a worthwhile exercise, which had revealed a very positive attitude to the Chaplaincy across College. The Chaplains were heartened to know that their role is valued, particularly by other student services professionals. The review emphasised the fact that the Chaplains occupy a unique position in College as they are not appointed or paid by College.

In relation to the Reviewers' recommendation regarding the use of the Chapel, the Secretary reported that a Chapel Use Policy will be developed and will help to put a framework on priory usage of the building, recognising that the primary use of the space is for prayer. While there is the potential to generate spinoff revenue from the building, Mr Coman stressed that the oratory is a designated sacred space and that any proposals which would involve a "change of use" of this oratory would not be acceptable. The Reviewers recommended changes to the current management structure involving either the designation of a 'senior chaplain' with executive authority or the extension of the tenure of the chairperson together with the introduction of a 'casting vote'. The Chaplains feel that while this may be applicable to a chaplaincy service provided by a single denomination, it would not be appropriate for an ecumenical chaplaincy which operates on a voluntary basis. The Chaplains have undertaken to develop a strategic planning process that will consider the mission and direction of the Chaplaincy. Work has also begun to address the Reviewers' recommendations in relation to communication, budget, defining the role of the Chaplain, student participation and recognition of the need for a more diverse provision to address the needs of international students.

The Chair thanked the Secretary and in the discussion that followed the difficulty in addressing accessibility to House 27, as a listed building, was raised. A Committee member suggested that this issue can only be addressed by a transfer to ground floor premises, but that this is not easily achieved as other services located on the ground floor of House 27 also require universal access. The Chair agreed that this should be noted and brought to the attention of the Bursar. In response to a query as to whether it was envisaged that the Chapel could be used for non-Christian services, it was agreed that this would need discussion and that the issue was more about extending the provision rather than the location of that provision.

The Chair thanked the Secretary and reported that the Implementation plan would now go to Board for consideration.

#### **QC/15-16/062 Implementation Plan for the College Health Service**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Student Services, Dr Alison Oldam, to the meeting to speak to the Implementation Plan for the College Health Service. Dr Oldam reminded the Committee that the College Health Service had undergone a quality review in October 2014 and that some of the Reviewers' key recommendations had already been achieved – the clinical care issues have been addressed and plans to move to Oisin house is in-train. Dr Oldam reported that the Service is currently under-resourced and that a working group has been set up in order to explore alternative methods of funding for Student Services as a whole as outlined in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Administration – Service Funding work stream. The following possibilities will be explored, in order – (i) funding from Philanthropic or Alumni sources (ii) a commercial sponsorship or partnership model and (iii) student contribution.

The Chair thanked the Director and opened the discussion. In response to a query as to the level of health care that the College should be providing to its students, Dr Oldam stressed the need to be realistic and advised that College should be aiming to ensure that core services are provided well and that any additional developments are appropriate from a strategic point of view. The possibility of a staff contribution to the Service was raised, and Dr Oldam reported that this may be explored in the future. In the short-term, the provision of an external waiting area will be addressed as a priority.

The Chair thanked Dr Oldam and noted that the report will now progress to Board for consideration.

#### **QC/15-16/063 Implementation Plan for the Student Counselling Service**

Dr Oldam presented the Implementation Plan for the Student Counselling Service to the Committee. She reported that full implementation of the Reviewers' recommendations would require significant investment and was therefore not feasible. However, some of the Reviewer's recommendations have been addressed, including the filling of a Counselling vacancy with responsibility for oversight of a trainee and volunteer programme. She stressed the importance of recruiting trainee counsellors and reported increased competition for training places among trainee Counsellors.

In relation to the recommendation to provide specialist alcohol and drug abuse therapists, Dr Oldam remarked that this is not a priority area and that such specialist services are more appropriately referred out. She reported that the S2S service requires additional resources as it is currently providing training programmes for 800 students with two staff. A Committee member queried whether the introduction of a health and counselling levy would be considered to address the shortfall in funding, and Dr Oldam reported that would be considered in the context of the exploration of a funding model for Student Services generally.

The Chair thanked the Director and reported that the Implementation Plan will be forwarded to Board for consideration.

#### **QC/15-16/064 Terms of Reference for Quality Committee (Appendix 2)**

The Quality Officer spoke to a revised Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Quality Committee, which had been circulated to members. She reported that the Quality Committee conducts an annual review of its TOR and that the proposed amendments reflect changes in the external regulatory environment due to the publication by QQI of quality assurance guidelines, particularly with respect to arrangements with Trinity's linked providers.

A short discussion of the revised Terms of Reference ensued in which it was clarified that SFI or other externally funded Research Centres are not covered by the College's Quality review process, but are reviewed separately by the relevant funding bodies. In response to a query from a Committee member as to the role of the Committee in overseeing the development of policies, it was clarified that the Committee's role is to recommend policies for approval by Council and Board and to oversee the development of processes to ensure quality provision. The Quality Officer thanked the Committee and undertook to make the relevant change. The amended document will be circulated to the Committee for noting at its next meeting and forwarded to Council for approval. The Committee approved the revised Terms of Reference.

#### **QC/15-16/065 Any other business**

There was no other business, and in closing the meeting the Chair thanked the two student representatives, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, all of whom are finishing their term of office at the end of this academic year.