



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

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The University of Dublin**

**Quality Committee**

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the  
5 October 2017, 3.00 – 5.00pm, Boardroom House 1

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**Present:**

Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)  
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Gillian Martin, Senior Lecturer  
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer  
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. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office  
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services  
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian  
Vice-President, Graduate Students' Union

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

**Apologies:**

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer  
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science  
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Professor Peter Crooks, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor John Walsh, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Catherine Darker, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Education Officer, Students' Union

**In attendance:**

Professor Paula Murphy, Registrar (for item QC/17-18/004)  
Dr Sarah O'Brien, Director, Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (for item QC/17-18/005)  
Professor Veronica Campbell, Bursar, (for item QC/17-18/006)

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**QC/17-18/001 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 18 May 2017**

The minutes of the meeting of the 18 May 2017 were approved with a minor change. Under *QC/16-17/052 Quality Review schedule*, pg 3 – 2<sup>nd</sup> para, 4<sup>th</sup> line – the Deputy Librarian requested that Deputy Librarian be replaced with ‘The Librarian and relevant team’.

**QC/17-18/002 Matters arising**

*QC/16-17/038 Virtual Learning Environment Policy (VLE)* – the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that this was approved by Council on 7 June 2017.

*QC/16-17/043 Update on review of Trinity’s Online Education provision* – the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review was completed in March and that discussions were on-going as to the implementation of its recommendations. The Assistant Secretary clarified that the review had coincided with the Dean of Online Education completing his term of office. The Chief Operating Officer has now been appointed as a Director on the Board of Trinity Online Education Services Ltd. and the Director of IT Services as the Chief Executive Officer.

The Dean of Health Sciences highlighted the provision of support for online education as an issue of concern for the Faculty. She reported that proposed curriculum changes in the School of Nursing & Midwifery due to come into effect in 2019/20 would involve 20% of the course being delivered on-line, and as yet it was unclear whether Trinity could provide adequate support for this on-line component.

The Committee requested more information on the status of online provision and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer recommended that the Chief Operating Officer be invited to speak to the Committee on this issue before the end of term.

The Quality Officer reported that a QQI White Paper on Quality Assurance of Blended Learning, which addresses on-line education, had been circulated to the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee for feedback and she agreed to send a copy to the Dean of Health Sciences for information.

**Actions:** The Chief Operating Officer to be invited to speak to the Committee on online provision before the end of Michaelmas term 2017.

*QC/16-17/046 Report from Tutorial Service Working Group* - the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that this had been approved by Council on 7 June 2017 and that implementation of the recommendations was underway.

*QC/16-17/047 Report on Student Module Evaluation* – the Academic Secretary reported that the report was approved by Council on 27 September 2017 and that the following have been chosen to pilot mid-module evaluations and staff:student liaison committees in 2017/18– The Schools of Psychology, English and Engineering, and the Undergraduate Science (TR071) programme.

*QC/16-17/26 & QC/16-17/035 Annual Faculty Quality Reports for AHSS, HS and EMS* - The Academic Secretary reported that a consolidated Annual Faculty Quality Report was approved by Council on the 27 September 2017. One of the areas of concern highlighted in the report was the low rate of return of postgraduate External Examiner reports in the Faculty of Health Sciences. She reported that the Dean of Health Sciences would be working with the Dean of Graduate Studies to address this.

### **QC/17-18/003 Implementation Plan for the School of Dental Science**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Health Sciences, Professor Mary McCarron, to the meeting to speak to the Implementation Plan for the School of Dental Science, which was reviewed in February 2017.

Professor McCarron advised that as most staff are employees of the Dental Hospital rather than the School, a unique academic staff workload model is required. The Dean reported that the School has reduced and consolidated its research portfolio, and developed a clear strategy to support research productivity of staff. With regard to Inter-Professional Learning (IPL), the Dean stated that there is already a high degree of co-teaching between the Dental Science, Dental Nursing, Dental Technology and Dental Hygiene programmes and the School plans to continue to develop this further. IPL sessions with the School of Medicine and the School of Pharmacy have been introduced, and the School will continue to work with the Faculty IPL Co-ordinator to introduce broader engagement with students from other Schools in the Faculty. However, issues regarding timetabling will need to be addressed to facilitate this.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and remarked that the appointment of a Director for Inter-Professional Learning has been beneficial in terms of increasing the number of students involved in inter-disciplinary initiatives.

With regard to developing a transparent funding model between the Dublin Dental Hospital and Trinity, the Dean reported that a comprehensive and transparent model for the distribution of fees and core grant has now been agreed, and will be fully implemented in 17/18. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commended the Dean on this achievement, and the Academic Secretary noted that this is a good example of how an external quality review can bring about the resolution of an internal issue.

A Committee member queried whether the recommendation to align 'all' research projects to the School's Research Themes should, in practice, require that 'most' rather than 'all' projects are aligned. The Dean of Health Sciences agreed that this should be the case in order to facilitate academic freedom. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer clarified that the recommendation concerned having a coherent research strategy with key themes that were broad enough to include all research active staff rather than requiring all research staff to align to a particular research area.

**Action:** The Quality Committee recommended the Implementation Plan for Dental Sciences to Council for approval.

### **QC/17-18/004 Approval of Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Academic Secretary to speak to a memo on the approval of Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures and welcomed the Registrar, Professor Paula Murphy, who was attending for the item.

The Academic Secretary provided the context to the item and advised that during Trinity Term 2016-17, Trinity commenced proceedings under the Qualification & Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 in respect of Section 33 - Approval of Linked Providers' Draft Quality Assurance Procedures - with one of Trinity's two Linked Providers. However, in reviewing the procedures, concern was expressed about the extent of Trinity's responsibility and liability for the linked provider's finances, governance, estates, staffing, etc. Legal advice was sought from Mason, Hayes & Curran (a legal firm on Trinity's panel of Solicitors) on Trinity's responsibility and the extent of its liability in the implementation of the Act with respect to linked providers, which are separate legal entities.

The Academic Secretary reported that the legal advice received recommended that Trinity, as a Designated Awarding Body (DAB), should only assess policies and procedures in respect of academic programmes validated by Trinity College, and that with respect to all other areas relating to quality of education, training, research and related services, the linked provider should self-certify their policies by confirming (i) the specific policies which they have in place, (ii) that all policies have been approved by management in accordance with internal governance procedures, and (iii) a declaration that the linked provider is satisfied that the policies are fit for purpose and comply with all relevant legislation. Some form of check list and declaration could be included, and Trinity could reserve the right to audit any or all of the policies. In the event that a policy was identified by Trinity as being deficient, it could direct the linked provider to resubmit.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Academic Secretary and invited comment from the Registrar. Professor Murphy stated that she found the legal advice helpful in clarifying the extent of Trinity's obligations. In response to a question from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, she reported that both RIAM and MIE had been notified that Trinity has sought legal advice before proceeding any further with the process of approving their quality assurance procedures.

The Dean of Health Sciences queried whether Trinity is responsible for accrediting off-campus training sites and placements for its linked providers and the Quality Officer clarified that under the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance Guidelines, the responsibility lies with the linked provider to include mechanisms for this in its quality assurance procedures.

The Assistant Secretary welcomed this clarification of Trinity's legal position and agreed with the suggestion from the Academic Secretary that it would be useful to have assistance from the Secretary's Office in moving forward with the implementation of the recommendations.

A short discussion followed regarding the level of guidance that Trinity would be expected to provide to its linked providers in relation to self-certification of its policies. It was agreed that any guidance should be high-level, as Trinity would not be in a position to comment in detail on the appropriateness of policies that are particular to specific institutions. In response to a query as to how often linked providers would be expected to self-certify their policies, the Academic Secretary clarified that the initial process would only be undertaken once and that subsequently approval of quality assurance procedures would be included in the institutional quality assurance review cycle.

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

**Action:** The Quality Committee recommended the legal advice on the matter to Board for discussion and approval.

#### **QC/17-18/005 Representative from the Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (CELLT)**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Dr Sarah O'Brien, Director of the Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (CELLT), to speak to the Committee on the work of the Centre in supporting non-native English speaking students and postgraduate teaching assistants.

Dr O'Brien began by outlining that the Centre's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme is offered in two formats – (i) the pre-sessional programme which runs throughout the Summer and is aimed at students who have been conditionally or unconditionally offered a place and (ii) the in-sessional programme which is available free of charge to registered students during Michaelmas Term and Hilary Term, is discipline and skill-specific and is not credit-bearing.

She reported a significant imbalance in terms of student uptake across the different Faculties in 2016/17, with the majority of students coming from Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences for both the pre-sessional and in-sessional programmes. A breakdown of EAP uptake by subject revealed a significant under-representation from the School of Medicine. Dr O'Brien highlighted the importance of the pre-sessional programme in the assessment of academic literacy and reported that Trinity has developed its own assessment standards and criteria which are discipline and technically focussed, and

supplement the IELTS exam which is less stringent and more general. The results of these in-house assessments have been accepted by Schools as an indication of English proficiency and it is hoped to formally implement a strategy regarding the application of these standards across College by the Summer of 2018. Dr O'Brien concluded by summarizing that her key findings and suggestions were as follows:

- (i) raise awareness of CELLT's Language provisions.
- (ii) formalise the in-house language assessment strategies currently in place to supplement IELTS.
- (iii) prioritise supports for PG placements in the pre-sessional programmes.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director and invited comment from the Committee. With regard to raising awareness of the Centre and its programmes, the Vice-President of the Graduate Student's Union suggested that the in-sessional programmes could be marketed to postgraduate students during the upcoming postgraduate week in February 2018. The Quality Officer noted that difficulties with technical language in a clinical setting had arisen as an issue of concern for non-national students in the 2016 Health Sciences Annual Faculty Quality Report and welcomed the proposal to prioritise supports for these students. A Committee member suggested that the under-representation of students from FEMS and HS on EAP Programmes may be attributable to these students (many of whom are from Asia) having better English than other non-national students. Another member queried why Chinese students are anecdotally slower to improve their English than others, and Dr O'Brien reported that these students learn best by linguistic and cultural immersion, where language can be modelled to them by other students. The Senior Lecturer agreed, noting the importance of integrating Chinese students in their course of study and in their accommodation, as they tend to primarily remain with their cohort.

The Deputy Librarian noted some overlap with supports provided by the Library and undertook to ask a colleague to liaise with Dr O'Brien regarding the Library's HITs skills support programme.

The Quality Officer noted that the QQI Code of Practice for Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners seeks to ensure that teaching strategies are in place to facilitate integration of international students.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Dr O'Brien for her interesting presentation and closed the discussion.

#### **QC/17-18/006 Estates and Facilities Strategy**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Bursar, Professor Veronica Campbell, to the meeting to present an update on the Estates and Facilities Strategy. He reminded the Committee that space has been a recurrent issue in quality review reports across all three Faculties over recent years.

The Bursar began by noting that Trinity's unique and beautiful campus is recognized world-wide, and stressed the importance of managing the development of the campus by linking forecasted need and strategic academic planning. She reported that the implementation of a strategy to manage the estate is underway, and that the initial focus is on gathering data with regard to building occupancy, condition and suitability.

Using the HEA the categorisation of building condition which ranges from A (as new) to D (replacement required) the Bursar reported that most space in Trinity falls into category C (requires modernization) or C\* (needs more capital investment). A suitability assessment has revealed that many Schools are located over multiple sites with inaccessible facilities, lack social spaces and have inadequate office and laboratory space. This has a knock-on effect on recruitment of staff and students.

The Bursar advised that as not all teaching rooms are on CMIS, space is not being used optimally as it is impossible to align class size and room size. The fixed timetable planned in TEP will require a transparent and accurate view of rooms. The Bursar reported that a conditional assessment of non-academic spaces has revealed that the majority of non-academic space required improvement, and that

some required replacement. She concluded by reporting that the next steps will include a suitability assessment of non-academic spaces.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Bursar and noted with concern that all of the space occupied by FIS and IT Services requires modernization or replacement, presenting a substantial operational risk for the University. In response to a query from the Academic Secretary as to whether teaching spaces in St James' Hospital, Tallaght Hospital and CAPSL are included in CMIS, the Bursar responded that they are. She reported however that CMIS is not necessarily a good indication of usage as rooms are often block booked and then not used, or booked locally without going through CMIS. The Quality Officer noted that feedback on learning space is also received via External Examiner reports

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer concluded the discussion by thanking the Bursar and noting that the proportion of space on campus requiring modernisation is a quality issue.

#### **QC/17-18/007 Implementation Plan for the Law Programmes**

The Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences spoke to the Implementation Plan (IP) for the review of the Law Programmes. He reported that the review had focused specifically on the School's undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, which the School had found more useful than the standard School review.

The Dean reported that the Reviewers had made a number of recommendations regarding the long-term sustainability of the Law and French and Law and German programmes. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer advised that these programmes would be considered as part of the Review of TSM and other two-subject entry routes, the outcome of which would impact decisions regarding the implementation of the Law programme review recommendations. The Senior Lecturer reported that a Law and Languages subcommittee had been established in the meantime, with plans to meet during MT.

The Reviewers recommended that certain cross-disciplinary modules be considered as approved modules in TEP. As this issue must await approval in TEP, the Dean relayed a request from the School that the approval of the Implementation Plan be delayed pending resolution of this issue. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that although discussions on approved modules were ongoing, it was envisaged that approved modules would not come on-stream until 2020. The Senior Lecturer advised that the issue would be raised in the TEP subgroup on 'Trinity Electives and Approved Modules', and that feedback would be provided to the School. The Committee noted the School's position, but felt that implementation of the other recommendations could not be deferred, particularly as the Head of School and Faculty Dean had already signed-off on the IP.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the recommendation to establish more formal quality review procedures for the year abroad, noting that that study abroad is encouraged under TEP and that there are quality issues associated with this that need to be addressed. The Quality Officer reported that the QQI Core Statutory Quality Assurance guidelines specify that off campus learning must be quality assured, and advised that a new Trinity internship policy currently in development would address issues around risk and insurance. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and closed the discussion.

**Action:** The Quality Committee recommended the Implementation Plan to Council for approval.

#### **QC/17-18/008 Revised Procedures for Review of Administrative Units**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak to revised Procedures for Review of Administrative Units, which had been circulated with the papers.

The Quality Officer reported that the procedures had been updated to reflect (i) the QQI Core Statutory QA guidelines, (ii) the updated European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), the HEA Gender Report and (iv) the Trinity Strategy for Diversity and Inclusion. In addition, general information on the quality review process had been included, and the guidance on the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

provided in Appendix 3 was amended to be less prescriptive and more high-level. She advised that Estates and Facilities would be the first unit to be reviewed using these revised procedures, and that the Director of Diversity and Inclusion was working with the Academic Registry to devise a data set that would be provided to units for use in Quality reviews.

*Dean of AHSS arrived.*

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and invited comment from the Committee.

During the ensuing discussion the following suggestions were made:

- That reference to the TEP be included (section 3.1).
- That reference should be made to the fact that reviews can be standard, strategic or thematic, and that if a non-standard review is selected, the nomination and selection process for the External Review Team should reflect this (section 3.2).
- That benchmarking data should be provided by the unit on its staffing resources compared to national and international comparator institutions (page 12).
- That regulatory compliance should be within the remit of the unit (Chapter 6, Pg 13).

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and welcomed the change of direction reflected in the revised procedures. In relation to the HEA Gender report, he advised that the gender equality process must become business as usual within College.

**Action:** The Committee approved the Revised Procedures for Review of Administrative Units based on the agreed amendments.

#### **QC/17-18/009 Boardpad for Quality Committee**

The Quality Officer advised the Committee that, on instruction from the Secretary's Office, all College Committees were now required to use BoardPad for circulation of Committee papers. Four Quality Committee members do not have access to an iPad through their membership of other College Committees or through their home School, and they were furnished with a Quality Committee iPad which must be returned to the Committee Secretary the end of their term of office.

The Quality Officer reported that from November 2017, the Agenda and Papers for Quality Committee meetings will be available to Committee members on BoardPad as well as being circulated by email. In advance of this meeting, the Committee Secretary will be in contact with relevant members to assist with initial set-up, if required.

#### **QC/17-18/010 Any other business**

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the revised date for the June Quality Committee.