



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

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The University of Dublin**

**Quality Committee**

Draft Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the  
15 November 2018, 3.00 – 5.00pm, West Theatre  
Boardroom

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**Present:**

Professor Chris Morash, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)  
Professor Darryl Jones, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Mary McCarron, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science  
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ms Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer  
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (nominee of the Chief Operating Officer)  
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer  
Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Professor Mary Rogan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Jenny Berrill, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian  
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services  
Dr Gogoal Falia, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union  
  
Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

**Apologies:**

Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science  
Ms Aimee Connolly, Education Officer Students' Union  
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office.

**In attendance:**

Professor Kevin O' Kelly (Dean of Students) and Ms Amy Murray (Quality Office Administrator) for item QC/18-19/011 – Reports on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement 2017/18 (ISSE and ISSE PGR Pilot).

Professor Anne-Marie Brady (Head of School, Nursing and Midwifery) and Mr. Frank O'Rourke (School Manager, Nursing and Midwifery) for item QC/18-19/00 – Review of the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

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### **QC/18-19/009 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 4 October 2018**

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 4 October 2018 were approved.

### **QC/18-19/010 Matters arising**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that in relation to item QC/18-19/003 (Quality Reviews), the Implementation Plan for CRANN, the Progress report for the School of Dental Science and the Progress report for the Law Programmes had been noted by Council on the 17 October 2018.

With regard to the actions arising from the QC discussion on the Progress Report for the Law programmes, the VP/CAO read a short update from the Head of the Law School (Professor Mark Bell) on the training opportunities that the School makes available for adjunct staff (QC/18-19/003.4): they (i) currently inform Adjunct Professors about training opportunities provided by CAPSL and supports their participation in these; (ii) appoint mentors to new Adjunct Professors to provide peer review of teaching and marking; (iii) are drafting a new policy on the process for recruitment and induction of Adjunct Professors, (iv) will write to all existing Adjunct Professors to explore the possibilities for a dedicated teaching skills session; and (v) will invite Adjunct staff to any future teaching skills sessions organised for School academic staff. The VP/CAO welcomed the fact that the School provides multiple ways for adjunct staff to engage with training on teaching and learning skills. In relation to the recommendation to draft a Procedure for Quality Assurance of the year abroad (QC/18-19/003.3) the Academic Secretary advised that this would require some time to action and that it should be included on the call-over log.

The VP/CAO reported that the Revised Terms of Reference for the Quality Committee (QC/18-19/004) and the General Procedure for Quality Reviews (QC/18-19/005(ii)) would be considered by Board on the 21 November 2018. The actions arising from the Procedure for transfer to External Examiners of student assessed work (QC/18-19/005.1 and QC/18-19/005.2) would be considered later on the agenda under item A.4 *External Examiner enhancement project*.

In relation to the QQI Code of Practice for Research Degrees (QC/18-19/006), the VP/CAO reported that the draft document had not been endorsed at the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies and the IUA Quality Committee meetings on the 8 October 2018. The consensus amongst the groups was that the document was not fit-for-purpose for the university sector, and it was referred back to QQI for further work. He advised that the existing Trinity policies on research degrees will continue to apply in College and that the Committee would consider a revised version of the Code of Practice if and when it is re-issued. The Dean of Graduate Studies concurred, noting that the two-week timeframe for provision of feedback on the document to QQI had been too short. In conclusion, the VP/CAO clarified that in relation to action QC/18-19/006.1, no mapping of Trinity policies or procedures against the Code would take place until the document was revised to take the concerns of the universities into consideration.

#### **Decision/Action:**

**010.1** The Committee agreed that no mapping of Trinity policies or procedures against the QQI Code of Practice for Research Degrees would take place until the document is revised to take the concerns of the universities into consideration.

### **QC/18-19/011 Report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) 2017/18**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Kevin O' Kelly (Dean of Students) and Ms Amy Murray (Quality Office Administrator) to the meeting to report on the results of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) (UG and PGT) 2017/18 and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) Postgraduate Research Pilot Survey 2017/2018.

The Dean began by speaking to the results of the ISSE UG and PGT survey and noted a slight drop in the overall response rate since last year (22.6% vs 24.6%). He suggested that this could be attributed

to the Take Back Trinity campaign, which had coincided with the survey dates. Across the Faculties the lowest response rate was from Health Science (HS) students (18% compared to 30% for Engineering, Mathematics and Science (FEMS) and 52% for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS)). A comparison of the cohorts showed that the highest response rate was from 1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate students (30.6%) and the lowest from postgraduate taught students (15%).

The results were presented as (i) the overall TCD score vs the average ISSE University score, (ii) Faculty comparisons within Trinity, (iii) cohort comparisons within Trinity, and (iv) Faculty responses to each question. The Dean highlighted to the Committee that the nine ISSE indices, which are scored out of 60, are determined by 43 individual questions, and pointed to these questions as the richest source of data regarding student behaviour. He noted that while institutional comparisons were not particularly useful, Faculty comparisons could be used to identify and share good practice. The Dean stressed the value of the ISSE survey as an internal quality enhancement tool, noting in particular the important role that the survey will play in assessing the effectiveness of TEP initiatives.

Speaking to the key findings of the report, the Dean noted that while Trinity continues to perform above the ISSE average for Higher Order Learning (TCD **38.7/60** vs ISSE **38.1/60**), Reflective/Integrative Learning (TCD **33.3/60** vs ISSE **32.1/60**), and Quantitative Reasoning (TCD **20.9/60** vs ISSE **20.1/60**), scores for indices such as Quality of Interactions (TCD **35.6/60** vs ISSE **38.7/60**), Supportive Environment (TCD **27.2/60** vs ISSE **30.3/60**) and Student-Faculty Interaction (TCD **12.3/60** vs ISSE **12.9/60**) continue to perform below the ISSE average. A breakdown by Faculty, however, revealed that the strong scores for Higher Order Learning and Reflective/ Integrative Learning were driven primarily by high scores in AHSS (**40.4/60** and **35.7/60** respectively) and that the FEMS and HS scores for these indices were in fact below the ISSE average. Similarly, the Faculty score in Quantitative Reasoning was driven by a high score in FEMS (**27.8/60**), and masked lower scores in AHSS and HS than the ISSE average. The Dean highlighted the importance of interrogating the data beyond the Faculty average in order to differentiate between the student experiences in the three Faculties. He suggested that these results presented an opportunity to look in-house at Faculty-specific issues and to identify good practice that could be shared across the Faculties.

A cross-Faculty comparison of the cohorts revealed very low JF scores for Student-Faculty interaction (AHSS **8.2/60**, FEMS **6.3/60**, HS **9.1/60**) but by final year, these scores had doubled (AHSS **16.4/60**, FEMS **15.9/60**, HS **16.3/60**). The Dean suggested that this could be attributed to increased opportunities for students to engage with academics and small group teaching/capstone projects/dissertation supervision as they progress through their course and specialise in their chosen field of study. In contrast, the scores for Supportive Environment decreased significantly from first year to final year in FEMS (**28/60** to **22.5/60**) and in HS (**31/60** to **20.8/60**), and the Dean advised that this would require further investigation.

A breakdown of the indices by question revealed a number of areas for targeted response. In FEMS, 73-75% of students said they received very little or only some feedback on tests or assignments. In AHSS, 69.6% of students said they never or only sometimes asked another student for help with course work and 62% said they never or only sometimes collaborated with other students on projects/assignments. The ability to analyse numerical information emerged as an issue of concern across all three Faculties and in AHSS, the percentage of students who said that they never or only sometimes engaged in collaborative learning was highlighted as needing attention. The Dean speculated that in the Arts disciplines greater value is placed on individual work than on collaborative or group work, and that this might explain the low AHSS scores for this index. Further interrogation of the data would be required, however, to corroborate this theory.

In conclusion, the Dean proposed that the survey questions could be grouped to align with the TEP graduate attributes and curriculum principles in order to track the implementation of TEP on a longitudinal basis.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Operating Officer thanked the Dean and invited questions on the ISSE UG and PGT report.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies welcomed the report and suggested that addressing the provision of timely feedback to students would require creative solutions (e.g. peer-to-peer feedback). Noting the low score by AHSS and HS students in Quantitative Reasoning, he stressed the importance for students of acquiring this skill as most jobs now involve an element of quantitative reasoning. The meeting agreed that the development of the TEP graduate attributes, such as collaborative learning, was of critical importance for students regardless of the immediate relevance of the skill to their individual programme of study.

The Dean of AHSS pointed to the low scores for Student-Faculty interaction in first year as an indication that more staff resources are required to cope with increasing first year student numbers. The Dean of FEMS commented that it would be interesting to know what high-ranking institutions like MIT score on some of the indices, highlighting the importance of managing student expectation. He stressed the need to actively engage with the survey results to determine the underlying issues behind the figures and reported that the small number of entry routes and consequent larger first year class sizes may also have contributed to the low feedback scores in FEMS. With regard to the low scores for Effective Teaching Practice, a committee member queried whether a College-level policy on supports for teaching staff exists. The Academic Secretary clarified that while teacher training is not mandatory, relevant training modules are available through CAPSL and the School of Education. The Dean of AHSS reported that his Faculty provided funding for staff who wished to undertake the Diploma/M.Ed in Higher Education.

Responding to a query from the Deputy Librarian, Ms Murray reported that customised reports are prepared for individual areas such as the Library and the Careers Service on area-specific issues that are raised in the open comments. In terms of providing feedback to students, the Dean of Students said that a number of College-level initiatives have been developed around student feedback (e.g. the Return of course-work policy) and student supports (e.g. the Transition to Trinity programme, Trinity in Twelve Weeks programme). He noted, however, that further work was needed to follow-up on School-level initiatives instigated in response to the survey.

The VP/CAO commented that there is now a wealth of data available to the College that shows a persistent pattern with respect to student dissatisfaction in some key areas; he proposed, and the meeting agreed, that the Academic Secretary consider these and bring a proposal to a future meeting on how the key issues identified in the report (e.g. feedback to students, interaction with staff, group learning etc.) could be addressed. The Academic Secretary also highlighted the need to encourage students to engage more with the survey and agreed to assess the issues raised, in consultation with the student representatives and staff, and revert to a future meeting of the Committee. She committed to working on this through the Student Partnership Policy.

*Dean of Health Sciences joined the meeting at this point.*

Turning to the ISSE Postgraduate Research Pilot Survey, the VP/CAO invited the Dean of Graduate Studies to provide his comments on the report at the outset, as he had indicated his intention to leave the meeting early. The Dean identified funding for postgraduate students as a key issue of concern, reporting that the Irish Research Council (IRC) grant often does not cover the totality of student fees. Schools are required to pay the difference and often ask research students to undertake some teaching duties in return. This can result in the perception of unfairness, however, as other institutions often waive the fee difference. Reporting on initiatives arising from the in-house Trinity PGR surveys conducted in 2016 and 2017, the Dean advised that the regulations for PhD progression were now culturally embedded. A new postgraduate research handbook has been developed which outlines all the generic modules available to PhD students. An outstanding issue is

induction and orientation for March entrants, but this is expected to be addressed next year by targeted communication to these students from the Directors of Teaching and Learning Postgraduate (DTLPG) and the Academic Registry. The VP/CAO thanked the Dean of Graduate Studies for his comments.

*The Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies left the meeting at this point.*

The Dean of Students then spoke to the results of the ISSE postgraduate research pilot survey. Noting that there had been a good response rate (26.5% of the eligible population) to the pilot survey, the Dean highlighted that the key issues emerging from the 11 question domains were funding, motivation, overall experience, differentiating features and future initiatives. The survey found that while access to funding was level across the Faculties (51%-56%), AHSS students were heavily reliant on self-funding (41%), FEMS students were heavily reliant on funding from research grants (41%) and HS students on employer funding (20%). The Dean noted that the source of a student's funding can impact their perception of available supports, as research grants or employer funding tends to include access to equipment and other resources whereas support money is lacking in the self-funded model. In this regard, he reported that AHSS students are more likely than other students to cite problems with computing resources and dedicated workspaces as issues of concern and that 27.1% of AHSS students compared to the ISSE average of 16.4% cited finance as one of the reasons for considering withdrawal.

The Dean reported that career prospects were a high motivating factor for students, but noted that interesting differences were observed between the Faculties. Improving their prospects for a career in academia was cited as a high motivating factor for AHSS students (50%) while improving prospects for a career outside academia was a high motivating factor for HS (32%) and FEMS (28%) students. Extrapolating from these results, the Dean suggested that students who are planning an academic career pathway will value training in written skills and publishing while students planning a career outside academia will value training in areas such as entrepreneurship. Cross-referencing these observations with the fact that self-funding students, who tend to be from AHSS, generally don't have additional resources for conference travel even though it would be of benefit for an academic career, the Dean stressed that an awareness of these different motivating factors should inform targeted initiatives to support the needs of the different student cohorts.

Supervision emerged as a key differentiating factor between Trinity research degree programmes and those in other ISSE institutions. The survey revealed that the single-supervisor model is the dominant one in Trinity with 69% of respondents reporting this arrangement. The Dean suggested that this finding may be linked to responses on Research Culture, where less than half of respondents reported opportunities to be involved with the wider research community. He noted that they also support the findings of the Trinity PGR surveys of 2016 and 2017 where learning opportunities that integrate students into the research community and activities that address the sense of isolation felt by some PGR students were raised.

The Dean of Students concluded by outlining the initiatives that have been developed in response to the Trinity PGR surveys of 2016 and 2017 (student workspaces, addressing Library issues regarding borrowing rights and access to online journals, and induction for postgraduate research students) and those that are in development (early engagement with careers to tailor training, provision of funding for workspaces and laptops, research seminars and opportunities to collaborate). He invited comments from the Committee and welcomed feedback on the pilot survey.

Speaking to the different funding models, the Dean of Health Sciences clarified that employer funding covers fees only and does not provide an allowance for travel or equipment. Similarly, funding from the Health Research Board (HRB) does not fund equipment. The Academic Secretary noted that there are many similarities between the results of this survey and that of the in-house PGR surveys conducted in 2017 and 2016. She suggested that there is a good baseline of information

now available that can be used to inform the strategic direction in key areas identified by the survey (e.g. supporting research culture and environment for students) and to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives such as on-line training modules for TAs in advance of the institutional review.

The Director of Student Services queried whether the ISSE PGR results would inform a league table of universities and the Quality Officer clarified that it would not. Concern was expressed regarding the data presented in Figure 11 on students' awareness of the development opportunities available to them, particularly in relation to receiving advice on career options, and the Academic Secretary suggested that this would require further interrogation to identify the underlying cause and to put a plan of action in place to address this. The Dean of Students reported that the Student Life Committee and the Graduate Students' Union were undertaking some work on the PG student experience and that it was hoped to pick up on some of the areas of low satisfaction identified in the ISSE report. The VP/CAO invited the Dean of Students to bring back the results of this initiative to the Committee for consideration at a later date. The Quality Officer reported that the timing of the School-specific reports had been brought forward to ensure that Schools had sufficient time to consider the results and report on plans to address any issues raised via the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR). The Dean of Students concluded by thanking the Quality Officer and Ms Amy Murray for the detailed analysis of the data. The VP/CAO closed the discussion.

**Decision/Action:**

**011.1:** The Committee recommended the ISSE reports to Council.

**011.2:** The Academic Secretary to bring a proposal to a future meeting on how the key areas of concern highlighted in the ISSE reports can be addressed.

**011.3:** The Dean of Students to present the work of the Student Life Committee and the Graduate Student's Union on the PG student experience to a future meeting.

**QC/18-19/012 External Examiner enhancement project**

The Quality Officer spoke to a memo circulated with the papers outlining the key elements of a project initiated by the Quality Office in response to a request from Council to ensure that reliable procedures are in place to support the External Examiner process (CL/17-18/026(iv) - 054(i).1)).

She advised the Committee that the key elements of the External Examiner enhancement project were (i) the introduction of a single External Examiner email address for all incoming undergraduate and postgraduate taught reports, (ii) the creation of a Centralised Storage Folder for each School providing secure electronic access to the External Examiner reports pertaining to that School and (iii) the launch of a new External Examiner website providing a single point of access to information on external examining in Trinity. Ms Smith reported that extensive consultation with Schools had taken place throughout the design and implementation phases of the project and that a series of actions have been agreed with Schools to ensure that External Examiners are aware of and adopt the process changes. In addition, a number of key milestones have been identified to assess the success of the project in terms of adoption of the new processes and demonstrable benefits arising from its implementation.

Ms Smith advised members that actions arising from the Committee's consideration of the *Procedure for electronic transfer to External Examiners of students' exam scripts and coursework* (QC/18-19/005(i)) had also been completed. All information on the External Examiner website has been updated to reflect the GDPR. The External Examiner report template has been amended to require written confirmation that Examiners have securely disposed of electronic and hardcopy print outs of scripts and/or coursework. The Advisory Guidelines on European General Data Protection Regulation have been updated to reflect that where secure disposal of hardcopy documents by external examiners incurs a fee, then the reimbursement of this will need to be negotiated by the School if it is to be reimbursed by College, as part of the Examiners expenses claim. Alternatively the Examiner may be requested to return documents to the School for safe disposal.

The Dean of Health Sciences welcomed the enhancements to the process and the VP/CAO remarked that it was helpful to have all the information pertaining to the external examination process in one place. The VP/VAO thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion.

**Decision/Action:**

**012.1** The Committee noted the revisions to the *Procedure for electronic transfer to External Examiners of students' exam scripts and coursework* and approved it for publication.

**QC/18-19/013 Quality Review of the School of Nursing and Midwifery**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Professor Anne-Marie Brady (Head of School, Nursing and Midwifery) and Mr Frank O'Rourke (School of Nursing and Midwifery Manager) to the Committee to present the review of the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Professor Brady began by noting that the review process had been a very positive experience and had provided an opportunity for the School to reflect on its activities. She reported that the Reviewers had emphasised the importance of growing nurse education and on increasing international research activity. The provision of space to facilitate this planned growth remains an issue however. Professor Brady advised that the School's next strategic plan will align with its international research activity and will focus on the overall mission of the School and not solely on non-EU recruitment. A more strategic approach will be taken to the future direction of the School, including the establishment of four research themes and a corresponding Chair for each. There has been an increase of 163% in research grants won by the School and it is hoped to continue this growth. A key issue will be determining the growth point in the School while maintaining the balance between the undergraduate and postgraduate mission.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Brady and, noting the rapid growth of the School, queried what the optimum size of the School should be. The Dean of Health Sciences agreed that this is a fundamental question for the School as there are currently 300 postgraduate students, 60 PhD students, and 1000 undergraduates based in the premises on D'Olier St which was designed for a much smaller cohort of students. She outlined that retaining the School's subject ranking of 25 will be a challenge, and that ideally the School should be looking to move its ranking position closer to 20. She reported interest at a recent LERU meeting as to how the School has managed to grow in numbers in such a short space of time. She reported that the next level of development must consider the development of postdoctoral programmes in a competitive market, and that the School would need to think strategically about new programmes and to focus on areas that will push it up through the rankings.

The Head of School reported increased demand for taught postgraduate courses with a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) option, which would require the School to grow its Masters programmes in a flexible way to facilitate working students. She reported that considerable work had been done with the Academic Registry since the review to facilitate a more flexible enrolment model for the School. The School Manager confirmed that under the new baseline budgeting model the School was taking a more strategic rather than a reactive approach to new course development. In response to a query regarding the importance of online and e-learning courses to the School, Professor Brady reported that a high level of technical sophistication is required to pursue online students successfully and that a return on the investment is not always forthcoming in terms of attaining the global numbers required to make the course sustainable. There needs to be scalability in order for online to be worth the investment.

The Chief Risk Officer, noting that the School is a flagship for success, highlighted the risks involved in failing to support the strategy of the School and to address the issues that may present barriers to the successful implementation of the School strategy.

The VP/CAO commended the School on a very positive review and asked if the School had instigated any initiatives in response to the report. The Head of School reported that the School had become

more data driven since the review and had earmarked academic governance of the clinical experience as a key area for improvement, with plans to assume responsibility for assessing the clinical experience.

The Academic Secretary queried whether the School was aware of the work being done through the Student Partnership Policy on evaluation of clinical placements and Professor Brady confirmed that the School was linking in with this project. She reported that a toolkit for evaluating the clinical experience, developed initially for the B.Sc. in Midwifery in 2016, would be rolled out across the entire suite of the School's programmes. In addition, a training day for clinical staff will be held on the 14 December 2018.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Brady and commended the initiatives being developed by the School to support the quality of their clinical placements. He noted that considerable work had been done with the Academic Registry since the review to support a more flexible enrolment model for students in the School. He thanked the Head of School and the School Manager, and closed the discussion.

**Decision/Action:**

**013.1** The Quality Committee recommended the review of the School of Nursing & Midwifery to Council.

**QC/18-19/014 Quality Policy Statement**

The Quality Officer spoke to a draft Quality Policy Statement that had been circulated with the papers. She reported that the policy had been developed as good practice and in response to Standard 1.1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) which states that '*Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management*'. She advised the Committee that the high-level policy is designed as a public statement of Trinity's commitment to quality in all of its activities. The next step is to communicate the policy to College and incorporate any resulting feedback in advance of the institutional review.

The VP/CAO remarked that the policy statement linked effectively with the other policies and procedures currently in place to support quality in Trinity and thanked the Quality Officer for her work on the document. The Committee endorsed the Quality Policy Statement.

**Decision/Action:**

**014.1** The Quality Committee recommended the Quality Policy Statement to the Council and Board.

**QC/18-19/015 Any other business**

There was no other business

**QC/18-19/016 For noting**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that all items on the call-over log were being addressed.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.