



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
11 April 2019, 3.00 – 5.00pm, Boardroom, House 1

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
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
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 Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Ms Aimee Connolly, Education Officer Students' Union
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms. Laura Conway-McAuley, IT Services
Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:

Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies
Dr Gogoal Falia, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union
Ms Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office.

In attendance:

Ms Agnes Gogan, HS Faculty Administrator for item QC/17-18/027 (i) HS Annual Faculty Quality Report
Ms Sandra Kavanagh, EMS Faculty Administrator, for item QC/17-18/027 (ii) EMS Annual Faculty Quality Report
Ms Valerie Smith, AHSS Faculty Administrator for item QC/17-18/027 (iii) AHSS Annual Faculty Quality Report

QC/18-19/025 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 1 February 2019

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 1 February 2019 were approved.

QC/18-19/026 Matters arising

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the Committee that Council had approved the review of Creative Arts on the 13 February 2019 (action QC/18-19/019.1) and the establishment of a Task Group to implement the recommendations (action QC/18-19/019.2). He reported that an initial

meeting of this Group had already taken place and that contact has been made with the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) with a view to exploring collaborative opportunities.

The Progress Report for Histories and Humanities (action QC/18-19/021.1) was approved by Council on the 13 February 2019 and the Head of School has confirmed that instructions to students and to visiting lecturers regarding the purpose of the seminar series have been reviewed (action QC/18-19/020.2i). Concerning the recalibration of part-time and full-time fees, the School has noted that the policy on fee structures is not set by the Academic Registry and that any recalibration of fees requires a business case to the Faculty Dean in consultation with the Faculty Finance Partner (action QC/18-19/020.2ii).

The Implementation Plan for Estates and Facilities was approved by Board on the 27 February 2019.

QC/18-19/027 Annual Faculty Quality Reports 2017/18

The VP/CAO welcomed the three Faculty Administrators to the meeting for the discussion of the Annual Faculty Quality Reports 2017/18. He noted that the reports had been discussed at the Quality Faculty Executive Meetings and that they presented a unique opportunity to compile quality assurance data from Disciplines and Schools.

(i) Health Sciences Annual Faculty Quality Report 2017/18

The Dean of Health Sciences (HS) presented the HS Faculty report, which was circulated with the papers. She began by thanking the Faculty Administrators (Ms Lena Doherty and Ms Agnes Gogan) for compiling the report, and praised the input from the individual Schools. She highlighted the Faculty's investment in space (D'Olier St., TBSI, St. James' Hospital, the Coombe) and inter-professional learning as key initiatives in 2017/18 and on progress with the 'whole faculty' Athena Swan Bronze application. She also reported on the challenges presented by the need to develop a future-proof strategy on digital technology in teaching and learning, and in responding to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the related Health Research Regulations 2018. She advised the Committee that the Dean's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Teaching in Professional Practice was launched in 2017/18 to recognise the significant contribution to teaching of professional staff who do not hold appointments with Trinity.

The lack of high-quality student placements is an on-going issue for the Faculty. In the context of the new national children's hospital, the Dean expressed concern regarding the lack of a clearly articulated focus on the educational and research mission of the hospital. She reported the establishment of a Children's Academic Strategy Group at Faculty level to underpin the need to inform the design and development of the hospital as a research and education facility. Other challenges for the Faculty include the on-going provision of suitable student learning spaces, communication with the Academic Registry, sourcing External Examiners (Pharmacy, Dental Science), and change management communication on system changes arising from the Trinity Education Project. She concluded by highlighting the need for a College-led response to policy changes required by the implementation of Athena Swan recommendations.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and queried whether the Faculty's concerns regarding clinical placements should be escalated. The Dean stated that work was underway with the Heads of Schools and the Chair of Paediatrics to develop a strategy to address this. In response to a query from the Academic Secretary as to whether the issue had been included on the College risk register, the Faculty Administrator reported that the most suitable mechanism for escalation of the risk was currently under consideration. The Director of Student Services reported that work was underway to make a case for additional resources in the Academic Registry to support Schools during peak work periods (e.g. during exams). The VP/CAO commended the improved communication between the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the Academic Registry which has been facilitated by the establishment of the Academic Registry Operation Group.

Referring to the Faculty's ISSE results, the Senior Lecturer suggested that School-level results could be used to signpost areas for further investigation, as the low response rates could preclude the extraction of statistically significant data. In terms of Faculty downwards trends, the Dean identified timetabling, feedback and space as recurrent issues impacting on the student experience and this was reflected in ISSE outcomes. The Academic Secretary reported that the International Student Barometer (ISB) data had identified course organisation as an area of concern for students. She noted, however, that implementation of the College's handbook policy varied widely across College and asked the Dean how the policy had been received at Faculty level. The Dean reported that the course handbooks were a vital resource and the definitive source of information for students in her own School (Nursing and Midwifery).

The Dean called for a strategic approach to marketing and market research, as Schools in the Faculty are investing their own resources to market their programmes and a co-ordinated approach would be more cost effective.

In response to the discussion on student space, in particular space close to Trinity's teaching hospitals, the Director of Student Services reported that plans to develop the Iveagh Grounds may provide an opportunity to collaborate with the Faculty on the development of, for example, a sports injury facility.

The VP/CAO closed the discussion by thanking Professor McCarron for her years of service on the Committee, noting that her term as Faculty Dean was concluding, and the Committee acknowledged her contribution with a round of applause.

Decision

027.1: The Committee approved the HS AFQR.

027.2: The issue of clinical placements to be included on the Faculty Risk Register.

(ii) Engineering, Mathematics and Science (EMS) Annual Faculty Quality Report 2017/18

Professor Cahill spoke to the report for Engineering, Mathematics and Science (EMS) which was circulated with the papers. He acknowledged the work of colleagues who had inputted to the report, in particular the Faculty Administrator, Ms Sandra Kavanagh.

The Dean reported that the key successes in 2017/18 were the launch of the new undergraduate Science programme, the expansion of the Faculty's portfolio of postgraduate taught courses, the development of new international partnerships (including plans to partner with Columbia University) and the continuing upward trend in QS rankings for FEMS subjects.

With regard to the key challenges faced by Schools in the Faculty, Professor Cahill said that the drop in 1st year progression rates for some courses below the College target of 90% was an issue of concern. He suggested, however, that the redefinition of some of these courses within the new Science portfolio may help to increase retention by fostering in students a greater sense of identity with individual disciplines. In response to a query from the VP/CAO the Dean agreed that the decline in the progression rates for 1st year Engineering students could be connected to the entry points required for the course. He also noted that proficiency in maths amongst incoming students is an area of concern but reported that the nature of the maths programme will change under TEP, which may help to address the issue. Noting that space is an on-going issue of concern, the Dean reported significant health and safety issues with the continuing use of Goldsmith Hall for lectures and welcomed the commissioning of an architect to work with the Bursar on reviewing the facility. He highlighted the need to assign responsibility for the management of 'common' spaces i.e. spaces that are not affiliated to a particular School, across College.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Cahill, noting that the roll-out of the new science programme was a significant achievement. He acknowledged the Faculty's investment in resources to support Schools in

their Athena Swan applications and praised the E3 learning foundry, commenting that it was exciting to see an architectural solution to learning spaces. The Faculty Dean agreed that the E3 Learning foundry embodied a new way of educating students, where team learning, problem-solving and placements are embedded in the curriculum and in the design of the learning environment.

The Senior Lecturer commended the Faculty for simultaneously implementing the TEP and E3, and the new undergraduate Science programme and he stressed the importance of inviting feedback from students on how these initiatives are progressing, suggesting that the ISSE will be a useful tool in this regard. The Dean of FEMS agreed, noting however that ISSE responses can be difficult to interpret as the questions can be ambiguous. The Senior Lecturer emphasised the role of the ISSE as a starting point for dialogue with students about what works well and what needs to be changed. The VP/CAO agreed that students in the Faculty will have a different learning experience following the implementation of the new undergraduate science programme and when the E3 Foundry comes on stream, and that, hopefully, this will be reflected in the ISSE scores.

Responding to the issue of the lack of diversity in the student population in some Masters programmes in the Faculty, the Deputy Librarian reported that the opposite was an issue of concern for the Library i.e. an increase in student diversity, particularly regarding students with a disability and international students. In response to a query from the Academic Secretary, the Dean reported that the presence of multiple sources of information on the Trinity website regarding the undergraduate science programme may be inhibiting recruitment of students, particularly non-EU students. He noted that many students source their information from the Academic Registry website but that these pages are not intended to market the courses. The Director of Student Services suggested that she would look at any improvements that could be made to the existing AR pages to improve the student experience.

Decision

027.3: The Committee approved the FEMS AFQR.

027.4: The Director of Student Services to review course information on the Academic Registry website.

(iii) Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) Annual Faculty Quality Report 2017/18

Professor Darryl Jones spoke to the report for AHSS which was circulated with the papers. He thanked the Faculty Administrator, Ms Valerie Smith, the Schools, the Faculty Executive and the Quality Officer for their input to the report.

He reported that the implementation of TEP is on-going and has provided Schools in the Faculty with the opportunity to review their curricula and assessment frameworks. The Dean reported that the refurbishment of the Arts Building had been positively received by academics and students but that wheelchair access in the building remains an issue. Other achievements included the restructuring of the School of Religions, and the establishment of a task-group to implement the recommendations of the quality review of the School of Creative Arts. The Dean reported that subject area rankings in AHSS remain positive, with Classics ranking 13th and Performing Arts ranking 42nd. He reported the new Columbia dual degree and the newly approved Art History programme as other positive developments, along with a steady retention rate of 96% and the appointment of Athena Swan champions in all schools in the Faculty.

An issue raised at the Faculty Quality Executive meeting is the inability to change a student's grade at a Court of Examiners without changing their actual mark and PIT code on SITS. A related issue, which will have greater significance following TEP, are Courts of Examiners not having access to results on modules which are assessed in a different school (e.g. Trinity Electives) and the Dean invited guidance on how to address both of these issues. Online module registration was also raised as an issue of concern as it has become a critical with the implementation of TEP.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and commended the Faculty on its retention rate, stating that 96% was full retention. The Senior Lecturer welcomed the retention figures, highlighting the difference

between retention and progression. He also welcomed the use of staff:student liaison committees in the Faculty to elicit student feedback and noted the importance of having baseline student feedback against which to monitor the impact of TEP. He reported that the issue of staffing plans to support new courses had been raised at Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) and a short discussion followed during which it was agreed that resourcing for new courses needed to be agreed before new courses are approved. The VP/CAO stressed the importance of ensure that smaller Schools are not precluded from developing new courses due to a lack of resources. The Dean of FEMS noted the staff:student ratios outlined in the AHSS Faculty Report and stated this was a key issue that needed to be addressed.

Following a query from the Academic Secretary as to why a ranking for Law hadn't been included, a Committee member from the School clarified that subjects are ranked in bands and that the School had come in just outside the band threshold due to an issue with its Scopus index. This was currently being investigated by the Office of the Dean of Research. With regard to the issuing of visas, the Quality Officer reported that a communication error by the Department of Justice and Equality had resulted in Trinity not receiving a call to update the international register for 2017/18, but that this had now been resolved.

The Faculty Administrator stressed the importance of College-level support for Athena Swan applications and the Dean of FEMS suggested that the availability of data in the correct format was the single biggest issue in this regard. The Director of Student Services reported that she was working with the Equality Officer to drive a standard set of data. The Dean of FEMS suggested that the focus on gender needs to be broadened and the Committee agreed that the scope of Athena Swan will widen in the future and that data sets would be required to facilitate this.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and closed the discussion.

Decision

027.5: The Committee approved the AHSS AFQR

QC/18-19/028 Approval of Linked Provider Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures

The Quality Officer spoke to the approval of the Linked Provider Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures. She reminded the Committee that Trinity, as a Designated Awarding Body, is required under the QQI (Education & Training) Act 2012 to approve the quality assurance procedures of its Linked Providers - Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM).

She reported that, in line with Trinity's Policy on the Approval of Linked Provider Quality Assurance Procedures (June 2018), MIE submitted its draft quality assurance procedures on 12th February 2019. The documentation was reviewed by the Linked Provider Quality Assurance Working Group comprising the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Quality Officer, the Registrar, subject/area experts from Trinity Teaching & Learning, other professional areas across College and the academic community. The outcome of the assessment process, which included commentary and detailed feedback on MIE QA Policies and Procedures, the MIE Governance Statement and QA Handbook, and MIE Programme handbooks was communicated to MIE on the 9th April with a request to resubmit a number of the draft procedures to address the working group recommendations.

With regard to RIAM, the Quality Officer informed the Committee that RIAM had submitted its draft quality assurance policies and procedures on the 12th March 2019. Following a provisional review of the documentation, additional information has been requested and Trinity is awaiting its submission. An update will be provided to the Committee for the meeting of the 16th May 2019. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and reported that the Board of MIE appreciated the feedback received from Trinity on their draft policies.

QC/18-19/029 Revised Focus Group Procedures

The Quality Officer spoke to the revised Focus Group Procedures, which were circulated with the papers. She reminded members that the Procedure was considered by the Quality Committee in May 2018 (QC/17-18/054) and had been approved subject to a number of changes that emerged during the Committee discussion. She drew the meetings attention to a memo which detailed the requested changes and she reported that the procedure had been amended accordingly. She also advised that a facilitation and notetaking skills workshop had taken place on the 27th February and was attended by eight PhD candidates, all of whom met the requirements to be included on a panel of facilitators and note-takers to be maintained by the Quality Office. The availability of the facilitator panel was promoted at Faculty Quality Executive Meetings in March/April and a communication promoting the facilitation panel was sent to School Administrative Managers and Directors of Teaching & Learning (UG and PGT) in March 2019.

The Quality Officer noted that the development of the procedures had arisen from a request from the Dean of Health Science for more guidance and greater transparency around the conduct of focus groups. She also noted that the involvement of students in the process enhances engagement with the student partnership policy, and that students are paid €20 an hour. In response to a query from a Committee member, it was confirmed that the focus groups would not be recorded but that notes would be taken that would be retained in line with the College's records management policy. A member queried whether staff who have not undergone the training and are not included on the register could act as facilitators. The Quality Officer confirmed that they could, but expressed the hope that as awareness of the training increases facilitators would ideally be sourced from the register. A Committee member queried whether blanket ethics approval could be obtained to allow focus groups findings to be used for the purposes of research. Following discussion, it was agreed that the member would liaise directly with the Academic Secretary on this.

Decision:

029.1: The Committee approved the revised Focus Group Procedures.

QC/18-19/030 Revisions to Quality Review Procedures

The Quality Officer advised Committee members that generic Terms of Reference (ToR) had been introduced for reviews of Schools and Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs) in 2016/17, and had since expanded to include reviews of Administrative Units, Programme and Collaborative Reviews. The Quality Office has also moved away from providing report templates for review teams and instead directs review teams to the TOR to frame their review report. Units under review have also been encouraged to align their Self-Assessment Reports (SAR) with the TOR. The Quality Officer invited the Committee to consider a proposal to amend the procedures for quality reviews to reflect the role of the TOR in the documentation of the SAR.

In response to a query, the Quality Officer confirmed that the TOR are customized to the requirements of individual units, thereby providing direction for the review. The VP/CAO clarified that the TOR are agreed following a process of dialogue with the unit under review at the outset of the process. He thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion.

Decision:

The Committee approved the revisions to the Quality Review Procedures.

QC/18-19/031 Any other business

There was no other business.

QC/18-19/032 For noting

The Quality Officer reported that the Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) was submitted to QQI on the 19 February and would be available on the Quality Office website once approved by QQI.