



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

**Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin**

Quality Committee

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the
9th October 2019, 2.30 – 4.30pm,
College Boardroom

Present:

Professor Juergen Barkhoff, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Chair)
Professor Orla Sheils, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
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 Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor Ciara O' Hagan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms Gisele Scanlon, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union
Ms Niamh McCay, Education Officer Students' Union
Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:

Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Professor Mary Rogan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary
Mr John O' Sullivan, Director, Project Management Office

In attendance:

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer and Ms. Antoinette Quinn, Director of Human Resources for QC/19-20/003: Quality Review of Human Resources.

Professor Anne-Marie Brady, Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery for QC/19-20/005: Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery.

Mr. Dan Rogers, Head of Education in Tangent and Mr. Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent for QC/19-20/006: Progress report for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

Professor Kevin O' Kelly, Dean of Students for QC/19-20/007: Report on Studentsurvey.ie 2018/19

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) began by welcoming new members to the Committee - the three new Faculty Deans, the new Students' Union representatives, the Director of the Programme Management Office (PMO) and the Assistant Academic Secretary.

QC/19-20/001 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 16 May 2019

The Dean of Graduate Studies drew the Committee's attention to action QC/18-19/036.1 - A survey of supervisors to be conducted to evaluate how their role has changed and developed over time, which he said did not accurately reflect the decision of the Committee. He stated that while a survey of research supervisors would be a useful exercise, such a survey would not be possible as a central College database of supervisors does not currently exist. He also reported that the planned publication by the League of European Research Universities (LERU) in March 2020 of guidelines for supervisors should inform any survey. On these grounds he requested that the action be removed from the minutes. The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and agreed that the action be removed from the minutes. He proposed that the development of such a survey be pursued in the light of the strategic reform of graduate education.

QC/19-20/002 Matters arising

- (i) **QC/18-19/027.4:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that a representative from IT services had been invited to attend the Quality Committee to present an update on the College's Content Management System (CMS) and its impact on the College website.
- (ii) **QC/18-19/035.1:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the progress report for the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) was approved by Council in May 2019.
- (iii) **QC/18-19/038.1:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that a revised Quality Legislation risk register would be submitted to the next meeting of the Quality Committee.
- (iv) **QC/18-19/037.1:** With regard to the presentation of an action plan to Council on the 2018 International Student Barometer (ISB) survey, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that Schools have been asked to respond to the ISB outcomes in the Annual Faculty Quality Report and that all Schools have received a School specific report on the ISB results for their individual school. Issues relating to student services/administrative areas are being addressed in action plans for individual service areas, and a Student Services response is being coordinated by the Director of Student Services. The Quality Officer will attend the Global Relations Committee meeting in April 2020 in relation to Schools' responses and actions for ISB, and the Director of Student Services will update the meeting on actions related to support and administrative areas.

QC/19-20/003 Review of Human Resources

The VP/CAO welcomed the Chief Operating Officer (COO) and the Director of Human Resources to the meeting to present the review of Human Resources. The COO began by thanking the review team and the various stakeholders for their participation in the review, noting that the review had produced helpful and insightful recommendations.

The Director of Human Resources reported that a considerable amount of work had been done to date to address the Reviewers' key recommendations but acknowledged that further work was required to effect the cultural change that would allow HR to reposition itself within College. She agreed with the Reviewers' finding that heretofore there has been significant under-investment in Learning and Organisational development, noting that while the University has spent €3 million on organisational development this has largely been drawn from local funds. Consequently, there is little transparency about how these funds contribute to the achievement of institutional priorities, how they provide information about the quality of and impact of provision, or what the return on the investment is. A budget to deliver a strategic and ambitious learning development programme is now required. She

reported that a new competency framework has been developed against which all new programmes will be reviewed and that there are plans to initiate a career framework for research staff. She highlighted recruitment as one of the key areas in which HR was failing to meet University requirements but reported that this has been addressed by stabilising the recruitment team, simplifying the recruitment processes and making changes to the recruitment policy.

The VP/CAO thanked the COO and the Director of Human Resources, and invited comments from the Committee. The Faculty Deans expressed unanimous concern regarding the recommendation to review the line management arrangements for HR partners, stressing the vital role of the HR partners on the 'Faculty Team' and as a key link to Heads of School. It was also noted that there is a low turnover rate of HR partners and that they are an important repository of knowledge at Faculty and School level regarding, for example, disciplinary cases. With regard to the recommendation to bulk advertise, the Dean of Health Sciences noted that the requirement for clinical posts in Health Sciences to be jointly advertised with the HSE would have to be considered in any new recruitment processes. The Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences supported the recommendation that Human Resources should be involved in strategic decision-making at the highest levels in College.

The Director of Human Resources assured the Deans that there were no plans to remove the HR Partners from the Faculty and clarified that the recommendation to review their line management arrangement was not a reflection of the performance of the role. The need for a direct reporting line to the central HR function was necessary in order to ensure that the HR Partners received their professional direction from HR. The Chief Operating Officer agreed, stressing that HR has a duty of care to ensure that professional standards of its staff are maintained, and to ensure consistency in the function and responsibilities of the role across the University.

The Chief Risk Officer welcomed the report, noting that there is a need for a more efficient recruitment process in order to address the risk that College will be unable to keep pace with the current and planned growth in staff numbers. She also stressed the need to address the high staff turnover in HR and the inability of the HR function in its current incarnation to provide the level of service required by the University in terms of learning and organisational development. She welcomed the planned strategy to address this. The Academic Secretary, remarking that many of the review recommendations require College-level systems and process changes as well as a shift in College mind-set to implement, queried how HR could be expected to undertake these changes alone. She noted that in other instances a taskforce would be established to support HR in delivering these recommendations and praised the area for continuing to provide a level of service despite significant underinvestment. The Deputy Librarian stressed the importance of communication with stakeholders, noting the willingness of areas/divisions to support HR in its role.

The Director of Human Resources agreed that a significant cultural change would be required to address what the Reviewers termed a 'two-tiered' University and stressed that to support the academic mission of the University, Trinity needs to invest in the professionalisation of staff within the professional and support functions. She noted that the top ten universities are now adopting the human resources practices used in large companies.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer acknowledged the support expressed by the Faculty Deans for their HR Partners and for the current reporting line arrangement, and he suggested that the implementation plan would tease out what the proposed changes to this arrangement would look like. He welcomed the report as an opportunity to support HR in addressing a number of key issues, crucially the requirement for a cultural change to address the current 'organisation of two-worlds' identified by the review. In closing the discussion, he thanked the Director of Human Resources and the Chief Operating Officer and recommended the report and development of a task-force to support HR in the implementation of the recommendations to Council and Board for approval.

Decision/Action:

003.1: The Quality Committee recommended to Council and Board for approval (i) the review of Human Resources and (ii) the establishment of a Task Force to support the implementation of the review.

QC/19-20/004 Institutional Review Plan

The Quality Officer reported that Trinity is scheduled for its next Institutional Review in Hilary Term 2021. She noted that it will be the first review of Trinity under the auspices of QQI, the new legislative framework for quality in higher education in Ireland, introduced in 2012. She noted that the scope of this review was broader than previous institutional reviews, its impact will be college-wide and to facilitate this the review has been created as a non-capital project in the Project Management Office project management system.

The Quality Office has mapped the data and evidence requirements to support the Terms of Reference for the review and consultation is occurring with key function areas to determine availability of 2018/19 data to populate (i) the Institutional Profile due to QQI nine months before the Main Review Visit and (ii) the ISER due twelve weeks before the Main Review Visit. Ms Smith noted that DCU, NUIM and NUIG had already completed their institutional reviews and that there were lessons to be learned from each of these reviews. The Quality Officer concluded by reporting that formal governance structures for the review need to be established and approved in order to progress the planning for the institutional review and she undertook to bring an update to the November meeting.

The Senior Lecturer queried whether the quality of research and teaching was included in the scope of the review. The Quality Officer clarified that the scope of the review, as per the QQI Act 2012, includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of procedures to assure the quality of the institution's education, training, research and related services, including governance and the student experience. The quality of research and/or teaching *per-se* will not be reviewed but the structures, facilities, resources and QA mechanisms to assure the quality of research and teaching will. In response to a query from the Deputy Librarian regarding the best way to capture information provision from the Library, the Quality Officer suggested that the Library would be included under Teaching & Learning but undertook to enquire with the other Universities as to the approach that they had taken in this regard.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion.

QC/19-20/005 Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery to the meeting for the item. He reminded members that the Implementation Plan had initially been presented to the Quality Committee in February 2019, following Council consideration of the review at its meeting on the 16 January 2019. The action arising from the QC discussion was that *'the School update the Implementation Plan (IP) in the light of the Council discussion of the 16 January 2019 and in the context of the School's research and general strategy (in development). The updated IP should consider the optimum balance of undergraduate and postgraduate students and the recruitment of Professors in the context of the School's overarching strategy'*.

The Head of School, taking the document as read, highlighted the key issues arising from the review and the actions that have been taken to address them. She reported that the School is continuing to engage with the Bursar regarding additional space requirements for teaching and to progress the co-location of the School. An external review of the School's postgraduate suite of courses has identified that Trinity is not the preferred provider for PG programmes, having been scored down against UCC, UCD and NUIG in the tender process due to the lack of flexible entry and exit routes, and structures to facilitate modular payment. A programme of recruitment is underway to fill two vacant Chairs and the School has developed a plan to increase nurse and midwife PhD students via a bursary scheme, which will entail a

€1M investment from strategic reserves. With 2020 designated as the year of the nurse, it is hoped that this will bring positive attention to the School.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Head of School and invited comment from Committee members. The Dean of Graduate Studies reported that while improvements in the model for course approval had been achieved it was not yet possible to offer modular payment, and he cautioned against any suggestion to external bodies that this could be facilitated. The Head of School reported that the curriculum had already been modularised and stressed that, as the highest-ranking nursing school in the country, greater flexibility in the model for student registration and payment was needed in order for Trinity to remain competitive. She cited Trinity's advanced nursing practitioner course and five-year delayed progression Masters programme as examples of where Trinity is leading in the field but warned that Trinity's inability to offer these in a flexible format will hinder our competitiveness. The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed that greater flexibility in our current systems was required but cautioned against offering opportunities for flexible pathways and delayed progression routes which our current systems cannot support.

The Academic Secretary queried whether the School had considered how it might calibrate undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers, noting that the Implementation Plan had not addressed this. The Head of School stressed that undergraduate student numbers are determined by the requirements of the HSE and that the ability to grow postgraduate student numbers (taught and research) is limited by space and a lack of flexible structures. Acknowledging the difficulties imposed by these external factors, the Academic Secretary expressed concern that strategic issues around the growth in student numbers and the optimum size of the School had not been addressed in the Implementation Plan. She recommended that the IP should not be progressed to Council until these issues are adequately addressed. The VP/CAO agreed, stating that a revised Implementation Plan was required to address Council recommendations in more detail, and specifically to address the School's strategy to address its growth and alignment with College strategies, and on revised processes for the recruitment of professors with leadership experience. The Deputy Librarian reported that the growth in the School of Nursing & Midwifery, especially in the numbers of post-graduates, PhDs and PIs has implications for the Library and the need for additional resources and supports to meet the Teaching & Research needs of this cohort.

The Dean of Health Sciences noted the tremendous amount of work that was being done by the School in terms of undergraduate and postgraduate education and offered the facilities of the Faculty Office to bring an amended version of the report to the Quality Committee at the earliest opportunity.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Head of School and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:

005.1: The Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery should be re-worked to specifically address the Council recommendations, including (i) the strategic growth of the School and alignment of this growth with College strategies, (ii) the optimum size of the School and the balance between the undergraduate and postgraduate provision, and (iii) the strategic recruitment of professors with leadership experience to support the School's research strategy.

The Director of Student Services left the meeting at this point.

QC/19-20/006 Progress report for the Joint Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Mr. Dan Rogers, Head of Education in Tangent and Mr. Jake Byrne, Academic Director of Tangent to the meeting to present the Progress Report for the Joint Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Mr Rogers provided the Committee with a brief overview of the programme and its history, and an update on implementation of the key recommendations of the review.

He reported that the original Memorandum of Association (MoA) between UCD, TCD and QUB was extended to August 2019, to allow students who were already enrolled on the programme to graduate,

and that a new MoA has been negotiated between TCD and QUB as an interim measure to cover students from February 2019 to August 2020. A future relationship has yet to be negotiated. The financial sustainability of the programme remains an issue as Trinity students can take the modules or the entire certificate programme without charge. Fees from QUB students are currently sustaining the programme but this may be up for negotiation in any future MOA, as QUB wishes to be a more equal partner.

The Academic Secretary, noting that funding for the programme remains uncertain, queried what the current funding strategy is. Mr Rogers reported that the programme was currently funded until February 2020 after which time it is hoped that cross-border funding will become available and that there will be opportunities to exploit Horizon 2020 funds. In addition, Mr Rogers expressed a wish to revisit the possibility of establishing a Faculty bursary that would equate to the overall to the costs involved in the delivery of the Certificate programme.

In response to a query from the VP/CAO, Mr Rogers reported that typically 22 students take the Innovation and Entrepreneurship module as part of their structured PhD, and that of those that go on to take the full Certificate, 15% graduate. He noted, however, that students who go on to complete the certificate must rescind the 10 ECTS that they are awarded as part of their structured PhD and must then obtain the 10 ECTS from another source. This can act as a disincentive to completing the full certificate.

The VP/CAO queried the amount of funding required to sustain the programme and Mr Rogers estimated that €35,000 was required, approximately €550 per student. The Chief Risk Officer wondered what the likelihood was of the various funding possibilities succeeding and expressed concern that there was a reputational risk to Tangent if the programme was discontinued. In this regard, the urgency for funding needs to be clearly articulated. Mr Rogers reported that there is a significant will from QUB to continue the joint arrangement and therefore there may be opportunities for joint funding.

The VP/CAO thanked the Head of Tangent and the Academic Director of Tangent and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:

006.1: The Quality Committee recommended the Progress Report for the Joint Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship to Council for approval.

The Dean of Graduate Studies left the meeting at this point.

QC/19-20/007 Report on Studentsurvey.ie (UG and PGT)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Dean of Students to the meeting to present the report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement – Studentsurvey.ie. (UG & PGT). The Dean reported that the survey provides a point-in-time snapshot of the student experience as well as facilitating longitudinal studies, cohort analyses and an assessment of the success of the TEP initiatives. He noted that the results are presented as (i) the overall TCD index score versus the average Irish university score (ISSE average), (ii) Faculty comparisons within Trinity and against the ISSE average, and most usefully, (iii) school-based and programme-specific reports. He cited the responses to individual questions as providing the richest source of data, facilitating a focus on specific initiatives at school and programme level and informing discussions at staff:student liaison committees.

The Dean spoke to an analysis of trends in the institutional-level data from 2017 – 2019 and suggested that the results could be used to investigate how well Trinity differentiates itself from other universities. A breakdown of the results by Faculty revealed that students in the different Faculties have very different experiences and the Dean suggested that there were opportunities for cross-Faculty learning and sharing of good practice arising from these results. Areas where Faculties score lower than the

Trinity and ISSE University average warrant further investigation and areas where the scores are higher than the Trinity and ISSE University average should be highlighted as good practice for the other Faculties.

When asked 'If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?' 17.6% of Trinity students who responded in 2019 said that they probably would not, and the Dean reported that this figure has steadily increased since 2016 (when 12.8% of students indicated that they would not). He queried whether the cause of this increase was financial, personal, or employment-related, and suggested that it would be useful to investigate this further with a view to improving student retention. An analysis of the results for specific questions by cohort revealed interesting trends that were not immediately obvious when the same data was presented by Faculty. The Dean reported that the Quality Office had identified focussed actions arising from responses to specific index questions, for example on effective teaching practice, and highlighted the need to relate the results to the graduate attributes.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The Dean of FEMS queried the demographic breakdown of the respondents, noting the importance of understanding the background of the respondents to interpreting the results. The Quality Officer reported that the results could be broken down by gender, mode of study, nationality, EU/NEU and reported that 26% of respondents were international students. It was noted that more of the respondents were female than male and the Dean of Students advised that while this reflected the gender breakdown of students in College, every effort is made to publicise the survey to under-represented student groups. The Chief Risk Officer queried whether significance testing of the results had been undertaken and the Dean of Students reported that significance testing had been conducted on the data by Dr Myra O' Regan from the Department of Statistics. He acknowledged that the statistical significance of the results decreased with smaller cohorts but stressed the importance of the survey to inform improvement strategies at School level and to assess the implementation of College policies at local level.

In response to a query from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer as to how widely the results are discussed at School level, the Dean of Students reported that School-level reports are prepared and that work is underway with the Senior Lecturer on a reporting structure upwards from Schools on actions taken to address the results. The Senior Lecturer clarified that work is underway through USC to encourage Schools to implement plans to address issues raised in the survey. He noted that changes arising from TEP will address some of the issues raised by students without imposing additional work on Schools.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean of Students and recommended the report to Council for consideration. He suggested that the slide presentation to Council address a request from members for PGT results to be separated from the UG results.

Decision/Action:

007.1 The Quality Committee recommended the report on the Irish Survey of Student Engagement – Studentsurvey.ie (UG & PGT) to Council for approval.

QC/19-20/008 For noting

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to item B.1, the Schedule of Quality Reviews 2019/20 – 2023/24. With regard to item B2, the report on the Quality Committee self-evaluation 2018/19, she stressed the need to improve the response rate from members.

The Quality Officer reported that a hardcopy of item B.3, the QQI Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes, had been circulated at the Graduate Studies Committee and was

available on the QQI website. The document has been signed-off by the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies and a workplan will be developed to address gaps in advance of the institutional review.

Speaking to the updated Programme review procedures, item B.4, the Quality Officer reported that they had been updated to reflect a Council decision in relation to the Capstone Project and the QA of international programmes.

QC/19-20/009 Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.