Trinity College Dublin,
The University of Dublin

Quality Committee

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the
14th November 2019, 2.00 – 4.00pm,
College Boardroom

Present:
Professor Jürgen 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 Ciara O' Hagan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
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
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary's Office
Professor Mary Rogan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary
Ms. Marie Gore, Interim Director, Project Management Office

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:
Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science

In attendance:

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research for QC/19-20/012: Review of the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI)

Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer and Mr. Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services for QC/19-20/015: Quality Review of IT Services, and Mr. Patrick Magee for QC/19-20/016: Development of a University-wide content management system.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) began by welcoming new members Ms. Marie Gore, Interim Director, Project Management Office and Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary to the meeting.

QC/19-20/010   Draft minutes of the meeting of the 9 October 2019

The Chair reported an inaccuracy in the list of attendees – the Dean of Engineering, Mathematics and Science was listed as Professor Sheila Ryder rather than Professor Sylvia Draper. The VP/CAO extended apologies to Professor Draper for the error.

With regard to QC/19-20/005, the Deputy Librarian requested that the following point be included in the minute of the discussion of the Implementation Plan for the School of Nursing & Midwifery.

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 queried whether similar requests had been made in respect of other Schools, acknowledging the need for an equitable approach to supports for all Schools in the Faculty, and the Deputy Librarian reported that they had not. The Dean advised the Committee that a revised Implementation Plan would be brought to the January meeting of the Committee by the Deputy Head of School, noting that the current Head was unwell. The meeting extended its best wishes to the Head of School for a full recovery and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer approved the addition to the minutes.

QC/19-20/011   Matters arising

(i)   **QC/19-20/003.1**: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review of Human Resources was considered by Council on the 13 November, and that the report would be forwarded to Board for consideration.

(ii)   **QC/19-20/004:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that an update on the Institutional Review from the Quality Officer was on the agenda.

(iii)   **QC/19-20/005.1:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that an updated Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery would be considered by the Committee at its January meeting.

(iv)   **QC/19-20/006.1:** The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the Progress Report for the Joint Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship was approved by Council on the 13 November with the Quality Committee minutes.

(v)   **QC/19-20/007.1**: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the Report on Studentsurvey.ie (UG and PGT) 2018/19 had been approved by Council on the 13 November and that it would be presented to the Heads of School Committee. Actions to address the issues raised would be pursued through the Undergraduate Studies Committee as outlined by the Senior Lecturer in the minutes.

QC/19-20/012   Update on the Institutional Review

The Quality Officer updated the Committee on planning for the Institutional Review. She reported that the review date was confirmed for the week of the 23rd November 2020 and that a preliminary discussion had taken place at Executive Officers Group (EOG) on the 12th November 2019 around the profile of the review team, the governance structures to lead the review (Institutional Self-Evaluation Team (ISET)) and the governance approval for review documentation prior to submission to QQI. She drew the Committee's attention to the 'Journey to the Institutional Review' timeline which had been updated to reflect the key milestones required to meet the confirmed review date. She reported that the next step is a preliminary visit to Trinity by QQI in December 2019 to meet the members of the ISET, and to confirm the Terms of Reference for the review and the preferred profile of the review team as per the outcome of the discussion at EOG. She stressed the importance of the review team reflected the profile of the

university, and the meeting agreed that nominees from cognate institutions such as LERU or Coimbra group universities would be a good fit.

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

QC/19-20/013   Quality Risk Register
The Chief Risk Officer spoke to the updated Quality Risk Register, circulated with the papers. She reported that the initial draft of the Register was considered by Quality Committee in May 2019 and approved on the basis that a future iteration would be brought to the Committee. She drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the overall number of risks remained unchanged from that presented at the May 2019 meeting (22) and that the risk profile remained unchanged (High -3; Medium -15 and Low-5).

Ms. Carmichael spoke to the three risks categorized as 'high'. She noted that the first (the risk of an unfavourable outcome in the institutional review arising from the inability to co-ordinate effective oversight of QA at institutional level due to Trinity's devolved governance model) was also included as a 'high' risk on the College Risk Register. With regard to the second 'high' risk (the inability of Schools to effectively implement on-line programmes due to current University regulations and administrative processes), the Committee discussed the ownership of this risk, noting that there were both process and systems issues as well as academic elements impacting the risk. The Quality Officer advised that the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Policy had been updated to reflect the VP/CAO as the appropriate owner, on advice from the Director of IT Services. The VP/CAO reported that VLE was included in the review of On-line Learning, currently under discussion at Planning Group, and the Director of Student Services queried whether the control column had been updated to reflect this. The Quality Officer clarified that unless the controls are updated the residual risk remains the same and noted that there had been no communication to date on the outcome of the review of On-line education. The Chief Risk Officer reported that the Risk Register would be reviewed again in the light of the Committee discussion and to determine whether there were any changes that would impact on the residual risk rating of issues.

In relation to the third risk classified as 'high' (the risk of attracting penalties arising from a breach of the EU-GDPR relating to the transfer of students' assessed work to external examiners), the Chief Risk Officer stated that the core piece around this involved confirmation from external examiners that documentation received by them had been securely stored and disposed. The Quality Officer reported that examiners are asked to sign their annual report to confirm that they have 'safely disposed of or returned to the School for safe disposal hard copy documentation and/or delated electronic files provided to them to facilitate completion of external examination duties'. She suggested that a further control currently under consideration was the replacement of the standard letter of invitation to examiners with a simple contract informing examiners of their role as 3rd party data processors. This would provide a 'legal basis' to engage examiners in the event of a breach of the EU-GDPR. It was agreed that the risk should remain at 16 until the outcome of this proposal was known.

In relation to the risk of failure to address issues arising from student evaluations of the student experience (risk number 8) the Chief Operating Officer reported that although this remained a medium risk, the risk profile had increased from 9 to 15 due to the a negative comment in the The Sunday Times Good University Guide (Sunday 3rd November 2019) that used the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) as an overall indicator of 'student satisfaction'. In addition, the Institutional Review Team for the NUIG Institutional Review referenced the ISSE findings in the NUIG Institutional Review Report. An additional control is the inclusion of an action plan in the Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR) to address issues arising from the ISSE and ISB survey outcomes. The Quality Officer reported that a document on staff:student liaison committees under development was expected to inform a new policy on student evaluations.

The VP/CAO thanked the Chief Risk Officer and the Quality Officer and noted that many of the risks were linked to the Institutional Review. He queried whether the residual risk was always the same as the calculated risk, and if so, was this an indication that our controls were not working or that we do not have

confidence in them. The Chief Risk Officer agreed that the risk rating should be reduced if we believed that the controls were working. The VP/CAO suggested that while the presentation of the risk register to the Committee was a mechanism to highlight issues of concern, the owners of these issues should also be alerted. The Director of Student Services suggested that the actions required to manage or mitigate a risk should be assessed to determine whether they had been successful and that the risk owner was the most appropriate person to undertake this assessment. The Chief Risk Officer suggested that an early warning system was necessary to facilitate the escalation upward of an issue that might negatively or positively impact on a risk and suggested that the expertise to assess this sits with the risk owner. The Academic Secretary queried whether the risk owners were aware of their responsibility for particular risks and whether there had been any communication with them to that effect. The Quality Officer reported that owners had been alerted to the risks that they were responsible for but that some had followed up more assertively than others. She suggested that a process to monitor this needs to be put in place. The Academic Secretary pointed out that some risks will have the same owner or multiple owners and the Director of Student Services queried whether there should be a single owner to drive each risk. The Chief Risk Officer suggested that it would be important to get confirmation again from owners that they are aware of their responsibility for particular risks and to get their agreement that they will take ownership. The Director of Student Services suggested that risk owners be invited to present on their risks to the Quality Committee over the coming months and the Committee agreed with this suggestion.

A Committee member suggested that a cultural change in addition to a series of actions was required to address the risk of failure to implement on-line education. He noted that both students' attitudes to online content and staff reluctance to engage with new technology were barriers to mitigating this risk.

VP/CAO thanked the Committee, stressing the importance of regularly reviewing the Register, and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:
013.1: The Quality Officer agreed to liaise with risk owners to discuss controls and residual risks ratings and to bring forward to the next meeting of the Committee an agreed process as per suggestions by the Chief Risk Officer and the Director Student Services.
013.2: The Quality Committee recommended that risk owners be invited to the Quality Committee over the coming months to present on their risks and the actions in place to address them.

QC/19-20/014   Review of the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI)
The VP/CAO welcomed the Dean of Research to the meeting to present the review of the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI). The Dean welcomed the Reviewers' report, which highlighted the important work being undertaken by the Initiative in the sustainable development space, and outlined the key challenges facing TIDI, primarily related to its financial sustainability. She reported that TIDI does not fit within existing Trinity structures as it is a College-wide initiative involving all three Faculties whose mission is to provide an overarching structure to coordinate and promote International Development research and education at Trinity. As a consequence, there is no locus of responsibility for sustaining and financially supporting the Initiative. Start-up and additional funding from the Faculty Deans has now run out and research overheads from the many funded projects co-ordinated by TIDI do not flow to TIDI itself but rather to the home School of the individual researcher.

The reviewers recommend that TIDI should consider how it might structure itself as a Trinity Research Centre, and thereby fall within the remit of the Dean of Research. The Dean reported that restructuring as a Centre, however, will not address the funding issue as there are no central funds to support Research Centres. A recognisable structure could potentially provide a clearer basis for developing principles on how overheads from research income connected to that Centre might flow. She suggested that locating TIDI within a newly developed Trinity Sustainability Hub proposed in the College Strategic Plan (2020 – 2025) might provide a longer-term solution. She concluded by noting that the important work of TIDI has been recognised by national and international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) sector.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean of Research. He noted the high esteem in which

TIDI is held by the NGO sector and, highlighting the reputational risk to Trinity of allowing TIDI to close down, stressed the importance of communicating Trinity's commitment to TIDI to the NGO sector.

The Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences complimented the work of TIDI and the commitment of its staff but noted that within her Faculty there are more than 20 research centres, many of these having resourcing issues. She advised that the Faculty had provided bailout money to TIDI in 2017 on the understanding that the governance and structural issues would be addressed but that, to date, they had not. Citing the funding model for the Trinity Impact Evaluation Unit (TIME), based in the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, as an example she advised that the governance arrangements for TIDI, the role of its Director and how its research funding is distributed need to be clarified.

The Dean of Health Sciences agreed that the lack of a housing agreement for TIDI has contributed to its current difficulties. She stressed that the Faculty funding provided to TIDI in 2017 was done so with the expectation that there would be some demonstration that the initiative had tried to become more sustainable, but that no such demonstration had been forthcoming.

A Committee member queried whether there were opportunities for TIDI to pair with industry, for example in relation to working in Africa. The Dean advised that TIDI is reliant on the charity and aid sector to fund its activities but noted that there is increased interest from companies in the northern hemisphere in Sustainable Development Goals which may provide opportunities for collaboration in the future. In response to a query from the Vice-President of the Graduate Students Union, the Dean advised that the PGT programmes currently run under the auspices of TIDI will continue, as they are driven by individual Schools. Postgraduate students will continue to have access to academics, researchers, NGOs and activists across international development issues through the Development Studies Association of Ireland (DSAI) postgraduate network, now based in NUIM.

The Academic Secretary queried the current status of TIDI and expressed concern that the proposed timeline for re-structuring the initiative would not facilitate the retention of key staff, leading to the loss of institutional knowledge. The Dean of Research reported that as the initiative had lost its administrative supports, its broader education and publication programme would not continue but that TIDI researchers will continue their work as they are funded by individual research projects.

The VP/CAO stated that while there is a clear commitment in the Strategic Plan to establishing a sustainability hub, the funding source for this has yet to be determined. He stressed the need to communicate to stakeholders in the meantime that TIDI is still functioning and suggested that defining TIDI as a research centre in the short-term would provide a holding position for the initiative while its structure and its location within the new sustainability hub was clarified. He thanked the Dean of Research and referred the report to Council.

Decision/Action:
014.1: The Quality Committee recommended the review of the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI) to Council.

QC/19-20/015   Quality Review of IT Services
The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Mr. Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services, and Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer to the meeting to present the review of IT Services.

Mr. Magee welcomed the report and spoke to the Reviewers' high-level recommendations which included (i) a review of the organisational structure, roles and reporting lines of IT Services with a view to centralising all IT activities within IT Services and establishing clear roles and accountabilities, (ii) the establishment of a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) role at executive level to provide oversight and strategic partnership across all the IT landscape in Trinity, (iii) the establishment of a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) role to own, scope and lead the digital strategy at a senior level for Trinity, and (iv) implementation of a centralised licensing register to manage all of the licenses for the College thereby ensuring compliance and addressing total cost of ownership.

The Chief Operating Officer welcomed the report. She expressed the hope that many of the recommendations could be implemented and that the resulting cost savings could be channeled back to College.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of IT Services and the Chief Operating Officer and remarked that the recommendation concerned a centralized digital strategy aligns with the commitment in the College Strategic Plan to make the Digital Strategy a priority in the next five years.

The Dean of Engineering, Mathematics and Science queried whether it was envisaged that the new CIO and CDO would act as academic champions. Mr. Magee clarified that while there was a definite need for an academic champion, these roles would not fulfil that function. The Dean of Health Sciences enquired whether the proposed roles were newly funded positions or would be funded through the streamlining and consolidation of existing posts. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that she would be seeking approval for the funding of two new posts. The Director expressed the hope that cost efficiencies would result from the establishment of these new positions as they would enable a College-level assessment of how IT resources are spent. The Chief Risk Officer suggested that the reviewers' recommendations should be added to the IT Services Risk Register and cross-referenced to other risk registers to identify interdependencies.

A Committee member queried whether the recommendation that all technology spend be centralized under IT Services included the purchase of research software. Mr. Magee pointed to the lack of an overall IT Strategy for the College and governance arrangements for the introduction of new technologies into the portfolio as something that needs to be addressed. He reported that the 2019/20 workplan includes the purchase of asset management software and the development of a central register. This was welcomed by the member, who stressed the need for equity across the Schools in terms of access to and quality of technologies.

The Academic Secretary queried the proposal to prioritise the appointment of the CIO over the CDO, stressing that Trinity is lagging behind in the digital space. She also noted that the report made little reference to the larger digital issues that College should be addressing. The Director of IT Services highlighted the challenge in getting approval for two new roles at College Officer level. He suggested that it might be easier to secure approval for the CIO role as it may be perceived as having a longer lifespan than that of the CDO, which could be viewed as a short-term appointment supporting the digital transformation 'project'. He undertook, however, to reflect on this.

The VP/CAO stressed the need for an overarching vison for E-learning and new learning technologies and queried which of the new posts would incorporate this into its remit. Mr. Magee informed the VP/CAO that E-learning would be a subsection of the CDO's area of responsibility. The VP/CAO thanked the Director of IT Services and the Chief Operating Officer and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:
015.1: The Quality Committee recommended the review of IT Services to Board.

QC/19-20/016   Development of a University-wide content management system
The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Director of IT Services to update the Committee on the project to develop a University-wide content management system, noting that College had committed to this in the Strategic Plan. Mr. Magee reported that this was also a recommendation from the review of IT Services and remarked on the importance of the website as a shop window for potential students and their parents. He stressed that the current approach to the website and the technology on which it is based is high risk, and that with 460 web authors there is a real danger of conflicting information being presented.

To address these issues, the Director of Public Affairs and Communications proposed a new content management system in 2018 which will offer better management control and protection of the College website. The new system has gone to tender for a technology and implementation partner. The tender

process is due to close in December and it is hoped that a decision on a partner will be made by February 2020 with a view to implementing the system in 2020 and 2021.

The VP/CAO thanked the Director of IT Services and asked what the key differences to the current system would be. Mr. Magee reported that ease of updating and maintaining web content will be a key benefit, and a reduction in risk. The Chief Risk Officer queried what controls were in place to manage the risk to the College website in the interim. Mr. Magee reported that while it is not possible to prevent web developers from making a mistake, an alert mechanism was in place that would allow IT Services to revert to the last saved copy of a particular page. The Deputy Librarian asked whether the new system would include an archiving function and the Director reported that this was currently under consideration by the web governance group. He noted, however, that some content is on the website for historic reasons (e.g. teaching materials) and that engagement would be required on a unit-by-unit basis to manage data and determine what information could be moved from the web to Sharepoint, Onedrive or the VLE.

QC/19-20/017   Any other business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.