



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

Quality Committee

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the
26 February 2020, 2.00 – 4.00pm,
Trinity 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. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor Ciara O’Hagan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Victoria Butler, Secretary’s Office
Professor Mary Rogan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office (Secretary)

Apologies:

Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Ms. Niamh McCay, Education Officer Students' Union
Ms. Marie Gore, Interim Director, Project Management Office
Ms. Gisele Scanlon, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary

In attendance:

Professor David Shepherd, Acting Head, School of Religions for QC/19-20/020: Progress Report for the School of Religions

Professor Catherine Comiskey, Acting Head, School of Nursing and Midwifery for QC/19-20/021: Implementation Plan for the School of Nursing and Midwifery

QC/19-20/018 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 14 November 2019

A Committee member suggested that the first line of the second paragraph on page 4 (QC/19-20/021 Quality Risk Register) should be amended to read ‘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.*’
The Committee approved the suggested change.

QC/19-20/019 Matters arising

(i) QC/19-20/013: Quality Risk Register

The Quality Officer reported that the revised Risk Register would come to the next meeting of the Committee on the 12th March.

(ii) QC/19-20/014: Review of the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review report for the Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI) had been approved by Council through the Quality Committee minutes.

(iii) QC/19-20/015: Review of IT Services

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the review of IT Services was approved by Board on the 29th January 2020 having previously been considered by Board on the 18th December and by Executive Officers Group (EOG) on the 21st January 2020. The Board approved a recommendation from the EOG that:

- IT Services be required to proceed with addressing the approved Quality Review recommendations and comments relating to the IT Services unit, where possible.
- The remaining recommendations in the report that reference elements of IT consolidation, establishment of new active governance arrangements, or on roles & authorities, should first be returned to Executive Officers for consideration in the context of the new University Strategic Plan and with reference to the Digital Strategy and any proposed further Digital Trinity programs of work.

QC/19-20/020 Progress Report on the School of Religions

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Acting Head of the School of Religion, Professor David Shepherd, to the meeting and invited the Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences to speak to the key recommendations in the report. Professor McElroy reported that the quality review had resulted in a restructuring of the School - from three separate units (the Department of Religions and Theology; the Irish School of Ecumenics (Dublin and Belfast); and the Loyola Institute) having three separate governance structures into a single School structure comprising two disciplines, Peace Studies and Religious Studies. A consequent restructuring of administrative staff has also been completed. The co-location of the School within the old Physiology building has been achieved and an amalgamation of the two competing undergraduate degrees into a new UG degree in Religion (Single and Joint Honors) based on the TEP architecture was approved by Council in April 2018, with the first cohort of students enrolled in Autumn 2019.

The Dean reported that a number of on-going challenges remain. These include (i) the development of fundraising streams for the School, (ii) improved marketing of the School and its offerings and (iii) consideration of how to better integrate staff and students based at the Belfast campus into the activities of the School. She informed the Committee that the School has responded to the need for additional research funding by establishing internal structures to enhance its external research grant income. The use of Skype to facilitate interaction between staff based in Dublin and Belfast has been increased since the review. Funds are not available, however, to support students travelling from Belfast to Dublin to take advantage of learning opportunities on the Trinity campus. While there are no funds for a dedicated marketing officer, the School hopes that the development of early exit points on its M.Phil. in Christian Theology and the development of a new UG Certificate (in collaboration with the Church of Ireland Theological Institute) will appeal to mature students, helping to raise the profile of the School. With regard to the name change for the School, the Dean reported some concern regarding the omission of Peace Studies from the title, suggesting that as a result it may now be more difficult to attract international students to study International Peace Studies in Trinity.

The VP/CAO invited comment from the Acting Head of School. Professor Shepherd emphasized the scale of the review and commended the work of the previous Head of School in achieving so much.

The VP/CAO opened the discussion to the floor. In response to a query from a Committee member as to whether Peace Studies was the smaller partner in the School, the Faculty Dean reported that while Peace Studies had fewer staff than Religious Studies it was offering a suite of very successful PGT programmes which attracted a large income stream to the School. The Acting Head of School noted that the location of a peace studies discipline within a School of Religion was unusual, but that this development had arisen from the religious dimension of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

With regard to the sense of isolation reported by students on the M.Phil. in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation, the Quality Officer informed the Committee that the Graduate Students' Union and the Student Counselling Service had visited the Belfast campus in an attempt to address this. The Director of Student Services emphasised that while it is necessary to ensure that Trinity students based in Belfast are provided with sufficient student supports, there are no additional resources to fund this. She highlighted this as an issue for all courses that are established in off-campus locations and stressed the importance of considering the student experience in this regard when new programmes are being proposed. Professor Shepherd agreed that there are challenges associated with the off-campus location of the programme but highlighted the importance of having a presence on the Belfast campus from a historical perspective. The VP/CAO noted that the M.Phil. had received considerable funds after the Belfast Agreement as it was an important element of the peace process, though this funding was no longer available.

Concerning the revised Memoranda of Understanding between the College and the ISE and Loyola Trusts, the VP/CAO queried whether there was something additional to be negotiated beyond adapting the legal agreements to the new School. The Acting Head of School stated that there was not, and it was agreed to clarify this in the text of the progress report.

With regard to the links between the School and the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (NMES), a Committee member queried whether these links only pertained to language courses. The Acting Head of School clarified his hope that the historic language provision from NMES would continue and that a new appointment in Islamic studies would facilitate collaboration in this area. He stressed the commitment from NMES to Jewish Studies and stated that the School of Religions was open to further collaboration with the Department. The VP/CAO reported that College had received €5 million from the Al Maktoum Foundation to build a Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and hoped that the two Schools could collaborate in this area into the future.

In response to a comment from Professor McElroy that there was a lacuna in support for Asian World Religions, particularly Hinduism, the Acting Head of School concurred, noting that this subject area is currently only receiving adjunct support.

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the recommendation to review the new School structure and name in five years and queried if a further update on the Progress Report was desired by the Committee in the interim period. The Dean of AHSS and the VP/CAO agreed that a further update on the Progress Report was not necessary and that the review should take place in five years' time as planned. The Dean concluded by thanking the Head of School, the Acting Head of School and the previous Faculty Dean for their work on the review. The VP/CAO thanked the Dean and Professor Shepherd and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:

020.1: The Quality Committee recommended the Progress Report for the School of Religions to Council.

QC/19-20/021 Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Acting Head of School, Professor Catherine Comiskey, to the meeting to speak to the Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery.

He began by reminding the Committee that the School had been asked to review the Implementation Plan with regard to the optimum balance between undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers, and in

the light of the School's growth strategy, and to resubmit it to the Committee for consideration. He invited the Faculty Dean to speak to the report and Professor Sheils thanked the Committee for the opportunity to resubmit the document. Speaking to the key recommendations of the review, she reported that the School is working with the Academic Registry and Graduate Studies to establish a pipeline for new courses that can respond flexibly to external demand within the College's course approval processes. With regard to the Reviewers' recommendation to consider the balance between the School's undergraduate and postgraduate teaching mission '*following a period of rapid growth*', Professor Sheils suggested that the Reviewers may have misinterpreted the extent of the growth in student numbers. She reported that, overall, FTSEs had only increased by 1.6% in the 5 years to March 2018 and that undergraduate FTSEs had actually reduced between 2013/14 and 2017/18. The most significant growth was in PGT numbers (from 220 to 270 between 2013/14 and 2016/17), however further growth was limited by the move towards tendering of PGT courses by the HSE which requires the School to evaluate each new course before submitting a tender.

Regarding the Council minute (CL/18-19/089) referencing the optimum size of the School, the Dean reported that external factors have a significant influence on the composition of a professional School such as Nursing & Midwifery. Consequently, the School is reluctant to state an optimum size as it needs to be sufficiently flexible to respond to external demand whilst also balancing the practicalities of what can be delivered. She stressed that future offerings will be brought through the College systems in a timely manner.

Accommodation for the School is an ongoing issue of concern and the Dean reported that the School is working with the Bursar and the hospital partners to identify a single site on which the School can be located. The commitment to provide flexible delivery modes at UG and PGT level requires a commitment from College and Professor Sheils reported that the School is working with the Trinity Digital Project to enhance its online offerings and increase capacity in the School to engage in digital learning. The School is monitoring its research KPIs (e.g. grant applications and publications) and has undertaken a number of activities to help foster an interdisciplinarity. A number of new appointments have been instigated which will have a significant interdisciplinary component in their roles and the School Research Committee is currently working to rationalise the research themes in the School and align them to College themes.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Dean and invited the Acting Head of School to comment. Professor Comiskey concurred with the Dean's assessment of the extent of growth in student numbers in the School, noting that all recent increases in undergraduate student numbers had been in response to a request from the HEA and were approved by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer e.g. in 2017/18 the School accepted a small number of additional places on the Children and General Nursing course in response to the integration of the three Dublin children's hospitals into the new Children's Hospital. The increase in PGT numbers was in line with College's Strategy and international objectives, and the planned growth in PGR students addressed a global need for more Doctorally-prepared nurses and for future workforce planning. Senior appointments in Cancer and Mental Health Nursing are planned for the end of 2019/20.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Comiskey and asked the Committee whether it felt that its main concerns had been addressed in the revised IP. The Director of Student Services queried whether the College Strategic Plan had been taken into consideration in the development of the revised IP. Professor Sheils reported that the strategic growth in PG student numbers reported in the IP was aligned with the College's Strategic plan to move towards a 4th level Higher Education Institution with a stronger emphasis on postgraduate studies, microcredentialling and research.

The VP/CAO welcomed the School's commitment to look at the balance of UG and PG student numbers but noted that there was no detail provided in the IP as to how this would be done. The Head of School informed the Committee that any increase in UG student numbers was constrained by HEA requirements and that College would need to engage with the HEA regarding any proposed change to student numbers. In response to a query from the VP/CAO as to why the Reviewers' misinterpretation of the growth in student numbers had not been addressed in the factual accuracy corrections to the draft report, Professor Sheils clarified that the increase was only at PGT level and suggested that the Reviewers were referring to

the growth from the inception of the School rather than growth during the review period. With regard to plans to develop more flexible modes of delivery, the VP/CAO noted that the ability of College systems to facilitate flexible payment and delivery methods had been raised at College level in the development of the College Strategic Plan and the Human Capital Initiative (HCI). The Faculty Dean highlighted the importance of facilitating modular payment of fees by employers as a valuable source of income for the School.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer queried the use of the term 'teaching fellow track positions' in relation to the recruitment of academic positions, noting that we do not currently have a teaching track. The Dean clarified that the term referred to a mechanism to allow clinical tutors to continue teaching whilst starting to pursue research and that it was more akin to a clinical tutor fellowship, or a teaching fellow position with protected research time. The Head of School agreed that the term 'teaching track fellows' was misleading and should be replaced by 'teaching fellows' before the document is circulated to Council.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean of Health Sciences and the Acting Head of School. The Committee approved the Implementation Plan for consideration by Council, pending the correction of the term 'teaching fellow track position'.

Decision/Action:

021.1: The Quality Committee recommended the Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery to Council.

QC/19-20/022 Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR)

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed that Committee that submission of an Annual Institutional Quality Report (AIQR) is a requirement of Trinity's relationship with QQI and that this year the AIQR will be submitted as part of the documentation for the Institutional review.

The Quality Officer reported that in previous years the AIQR had been brought to the Committee as a section B item for noting. However, following an internal audit report in 2019 that queried this practice, the report will be included as a Section A item from now on. She informed the Committee that the document incorporates feedback from the Institutional Self-Evaluation team (ISET), Global Relations, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Part 1 of the AIQR is recognised under section 29 of the QQI Act as Trinity's quality assurance policies and procedures. It includes data on Trinity's cycle of internal quality reviews, engagement with Professional & Statutory Accreditation Bodies, Education Partnerships resulting in dual, joint and collaborative awards, articulation arrangements and details on Trinity's linked providers. Parts 2-6 provide details on effectiveness and impact of Trinity's quality assurance procedures, plans for the forthcoming year and preparations for the Institutional Review. She drew the Committee's attention to the case study on Global Relations, noting that in previous years QQI have showcased best practice in their annual report but that this year they had formally requested a case study as part of the AIQR. The Global Relations journey was selected as a good example of the development and maturity of a strategy and policies and procedures to support strategy implementation.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and invited comments from the Committee. The Assistant Academic Secretary queried why only some and not all of the projects funded through the National Forum had been highlighted and the Quality Officer responded that they were included as they sat under the programme delivery and assessment piece. She undertook, however, to include others if a suitable location could be identified for them in the document. The Assistant College Secretary highlighted a number of typographical errors and suggested an alternative link to the one included for the data protection officer on page 27. A Committee member suggested the inclusion on page 2 of some context to the development of the policies listed. The VP/CAO invited comment from the Faculty Deans, who agreed that the document was comprehensive. The Quality Officer advised that the document is promoted for use

by Schools going through the accreditation process as it provides a comprehensive account of quality processes in Trinity. She highlighted the fact that the document maps to the QQI core documents and standards and that feedback from the IUA Quality Officer's group suggests that this is appreciated by the Reviewers. In response to a query from the Director of Student Services as to the availability of a data set for each School that would be of use to the Quality Committee, the Quality Officer clarified that data can be included in the central quality folder for use by Schools.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer.

Decision/Action:

022.1: The Quality Committee approved the AIQR.

QC/19-20/023 Presentation on the Institutional review

The Quality Officer provided an update on preparations for the Institutional Review. She reported that the Institutional Profile (IP) will come to the Quality Committee meeting of the 12th March for approval before circulation to the Institutional Self-Evaluation Team (ISET) meeting on the 18th March and submission to QQI on the 23rd April. The Quality Officer is gathering data from work-package owners and working with them on the completion of their stakeholder engagement matrices. The briefing to key Committees will commence with the AHSS Faculty Executive on the 27th February followed by the School Administrative Forum on the 5th March and the Heads of School Committee on the 13th March. The Quality Office is working on the consultation process with the Communications Office, and the Quality Officer stressed the need to create a narrative in the months before the review. The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and the review schedule are not yet commenced.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and noted that the development of the ISER is a large piece of work that will require input from the Faculties, the members of the ISET, and the Quality Office amongst others. The Quality Officer reported that the CHARM-EU project will present challenges in terms of identifying the most appropriate types of quality assurance processes and procedures to be used, and she stressed the need for our internal processes to be effective.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer.

QC/19-20/024 Any other business

The Quality Officer reported that a planned review of the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), the first review of transnational education, had been postponed due to the Covid-19 virus. She stressed the importance of the review going ahead in advance of the institutional review to demonstrate our ability to conduct QA in a global context.

The VP/CAO noted that the Implementation Plan for Nursing and Midwifery had been addressed and could be removed from the call-over log and noted that the Quality Risk Plan should be included.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.