



**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  
9 June 2020, 2.00 – 4.00pm via ZOOM

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## **Quality Committee**

### **Present**

Professor Jürgen Barkhoff, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*  
Professor Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science  
Professor Orla Sheils, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services  
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer  
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian  
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science  
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Ms. Gisele Scanlon, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union

### *In attendance*

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary*  
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary

### **Apologies**

Ms Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office  
Ms. Geraldine Ruane, Chief Operating Officer  
Professor Mary Rogan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer  
Ms. Marie Gore, Interim Director, Project Management Officer  
Professor Ciara O' Hagan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Ms. Niamh McKay, Education Officer Students' Union

### **In attendance:**

Mr Peter Reynolds, Chief Finance Officer and Professor Linda Hogan, Pro-Provost for QC/19-20/041 Review of the Financial Services Division (FSD)  
Professor Paula Murphy, Pro-Registrar and Professor Brendan Tangney, Registrar for QC/19-20/043 Review of Marino Institute of Education (MIE) Quality Assurance procedures.  
Mr Henry Wallace, Interim Chief Risk Officer for QC/19-20/044 Quality Risk Register.

### **QC/19-20/039 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 20 May 2020**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer requested that the first line of page 5 (QC/19-20/034 – Health Sciences Annual Faculty Quality Report (AFQR)) be amended to read *'The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that the intention with the new academic year structure was to preserve research time for the summer period but suggested that this may be negatively impacted by Covid-19'*. He also requested that with regard to QC/19-20/035 (Quality Review of the School of Medicine), the last line of the discussion on page 7 should be amended to read *'The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Head of School and the Faculty Dean and recommended the report to Council, noting that implementation of the recommendations must have due regard for College structures.'* The Committee approved the suggested changes.

### **QC/19-20/040 Matters arising**

- (i) **QC/19-20/034 Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQR) 2018/19**  
Actions arising from the Annual Faculty Quality Reports are being pursued.
- (ii) **QC/19-20/027 Report on the National Student Survey PGR**  
The report on the National Student Survey PGR will be considered by Council on the 16 June 2020.
- (iii) **QC/19-20/035 Quality Review of the School of Medicine**  
The Quality Review of the School of Medicine will be considered by Council on the 16 June 2020.
- (iv) **QC/19-20/036 Quality Review of the MIE B.Sc. in Education Studies**  
The Quality Review of the MIE B.Sc. in Education Studies will be considered by Council on the 16 June 2020 through the minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the 20 May 2020.

### **QC/19-20/041 Update on the Institutional Review**

The Quality Officer reported that a request to QQI to defer the institutional review due to the impact of Covid-19 on the ability to engage the College-wide community had been approved. The review will now take place in Michaelmas Term 2021, on dates to be confirmed with QQI. She reported that while this would allow more time to prepare for the review, it was important that the momentum that had been generated through the Institutional Self-Evaluation Team (ISET) and subgroup not be lost. She highlighted that recommendations arising from the recent Audit Committee report and from the previous institutional review would need to be addressed, noting that the review team would be aware that we had been given an additional year to prepare.

The Dean of Engineering, Mathematics and Science queried whether the data set for the review would change as a consequence of the new review date. The Quality Officer reported that there may be a requirement to update the data set to reflect the 2019/20 academic year data, which would be available in January 2021. She noted that the Reviewers would be interested in the impact of Covid-19 on the use of College spaces and on the impact of the move to online and blended learning. She stressed the need to have a documented trail detailing how Trinity responded to Covid-19 and related changes to the quality assurance of teaching and learning procedures. She informed the Committee that a HEA project was planned for the Summer months to examine how policies and procedures of Irish universities were revised to accommodate the move to online teaching and learning, and to evaluate whether quality had been negatively impacted by the change.

### **QC/19-20/042 Review of the Financial Services Division (FSD)**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Pro-Provost, Professor Linda Hogan, and the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Mr Peter Reynolds to the meeting to speak to the quality review of the Financial Services Division. Professor Hogan outlined the Terms of Reference for the review, noting that the key objectives were to determine whether FSD's current structures were fit-for-purpose and to assess FSD's ability to provide robust and timely financial management information for decision-

making. She reported that the review had been positive, resulting in a number of commendations. She noted that even before the Covid-19 crises the College's Financial Strategy had been ambitious and suggested that FSD needed to be supported to enable this strategy, especially as the financial landscape had altered considerably. Professor Hogan concluded by thanking Professor Gerry Lacey who was Internal Facilitator for the review.

The Chief Finance Officer welcomed the report and the Reviewers' recommendations. He also welcomed the opportunity to get an external perspective on the Division, particularly as he is relatively new to the role. He noted that FSD was on a journey, moving from a traditional support function to a strategic support function and that the review provided an opportunity to plot out a roadmap and to focus on a number of key areas. He noted that a key function of FSD was to provide support for the 5-year strategic plan, which needed to be backed-up with timely management information. He welcomed the recommendation to increase the number of direct reports to the CFO, and the opportunity to put in place more strategic capability in the team. With regard to the recommendations concerning Planning Group, he acknowledged the need for a business planning unit, reporting that one had existed previously on an *ad hoc* basis. He concluded by stressing the need to formalise business planning as a key function.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Hogan and Mr Reynolds, noting that the report provided a clear pathway for FSD to move from having a primarily transactional role to one with a more strategic focus. He also noted that the recommendations relating to Planning Group [E 2 and 3] were identified as out of scope when the report was discussed at the Executive Officers Group (EOG).

The Dean of Health Sciences welcomed the report and stated that the Faculty would support a strategic role for FSD. She noted, however, that many operational tasks are currently devolved to the Faculty Finance Partners which results in them having less time for strategic planning. She stressed the need to strike a balance between the operational and strategic functions. With regard to the Reviewers' recommendation to review the role and reporting lines of the Faculty Finance Partners, she requested that the Faculty be included in the discussions on how this recommendation is implemented. The Dean expressed concern that the Reviewers had endorsed the recommendations of 2019 review of the Baseline Budgeting Model (BBM), noting that the financial landscape had changed considerably since then. She urged that emergency budgeting measures would not be conflated with the review of the BBM.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that the intention was to bring the transactional functions back to FSD, which would allow the Faculty Finance Partners more time for strategic planning, and the Dean of HS welcomed this. Mr Reynolds further clarified that the role of the Finance Partner may need to change in order ensure that it provides the skill set required to support the Faculty Deans from a strategic and commercial perspective. With regard to the review of the BBM, he reported that the emergency budgeting procedures will be in place for the next year and that the BBM review is on hold. He clarified that the BBM review had resulted in a broad set of recommendations which included alignment with strategic planning. The Dean of HS expressed concern that the recommendation to align with a Capital Expenditure (Capex) Strategy posed a risk to academic delivery. The Pro-Provost clarified that the aim was not to prioritise one project over another but to ensure that a 5-year plan to deliver on the College's strategy was delivered in an integrated and cohesive way. With regard to the recommendation to move to monthly reporting, the Dean of FEMS suggested that this would require improved processes, noting that currently there is a two-week turnaround time on processing invoices. She suggested that improved trend analysis and quarterly reporting was more important from a strategic point of view than monthly reporting. The CFO responded that the focus of improvements would be on getting faster and more timely information to support decision-making.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Hogan and Mr Reynolds, noting that EOG consideration of the report had resulted in a recommendation to establish a strategic planning unit under the Office of the VP/CAO. He closed the discussion by recommending the report to Board for approval.

**Action/Decision:**

**042.1:** The Quality Committee recommended the review of the Financial Services Division to Board for approval.

**QC/19-20/043 Response to Audit Committee report**

The Quality Officer spoke to the Audit Committee report and the management response to the report, which had been circulated with the papers. She reported that Trinity's Internal Audit Office had commenced an audit of Quality Compliance in July 2019 as part of its annual programme of work and that a report on the audit was produced in February 2020. The audit report and management response were considered by the Audit Committee in March 2020. The Quality Officer and the VP/CAO attended the Audit Committee in April 2020 to respond to the report and the management response to the recommendations.

The current status on the eleven recommendations is that action on three of the recommendations was deemed 'satisfactory' by the Audit Committee in May 2020. The Quality Officer voiced the need to ensure that the remaining recommendations be responded to at the time of the Institutional Review. The next reporting timeframe is in November 2020 and March 2021 and she outlined the recommendations to be addressed in November which require discussion by the Quality Committee as follows:

- (i) a review of the Terms of Reference of the Quality Committee to reflect the compliance function to Council and Board,
- (ii) the introduction of a method of effective University-wide oversight and monitoring of Quality,
- (iii) a recommendation that Quality Committee submit an Annual Report to Council and Board to include Academic and Non-Academic Areas,
- (iv) the Quality Committee to monitor the implementation of recommendations from quality reviews beyond the 18month period, that concludes with the submission of the Progress Report.

The Quality Officer concluded by outlining the flow of information to Quality Committee, Academic Council and Board to provide oversight and monitoring of Quality and asked if one of the existing reports could be repurposed, e.g. Annual Institutional Quality Report to QCI as an annual report to University Council and College Board.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and stressed the need to respond to the report and the actions arising from it. A Committee member supported the review of the Terms of Reference and stated that an annual report would demonstrate the significant amount of work done by the Quality Office and the Quality Committee. The Academic Secretary, noting the far-reaching nature of the recommendations, queried whether the Quality Office had the capacity to undertake the additional work associated with the implementation of the Audit Committee recommendations. Additionally, the recommendations have resource implications for the Quality Office. She stated that she would not support the recommendation for an annual report and advised that we needed to look at what is meant by Quality, and how Trinity can achieve what is been asked for in a devolved model of governance. A Committee member queried whether there was a shift in the expectation of the role of the Quality Committee from advisory to policing. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stressed that the Committee had more than an advisory function and had a role in monitoring that our quality procedures are working. He agreed that the Audit Committee recommendations were far reaching and had resource implications. He noted that devolved governance poses challenges to the University and impacts the ability to monitor quality at an institutional level. He noted that the Quality Committee loses sight of the implementation of review recommendations once the progress report stage has been completed and he

highlighted the importance of instilling a quality culture and ensuring, as an institution, that recommendations are followed-up. In this regard, the Faculty Deans, the Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Graduate Studies had a role to play.

The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed with the Academic Secretary and noted his surprise that a Committee, rather than a Unit, would be required to submit a report. He stressed that defining quality as compliance only was impoverishing and suggested that quality should be considered in a more holistic manner. The Dean of FEMS suggested that quality should be included on the agenda of principal College Committees and the Academic Secretary agreed that using the existing governance structures would further develop a quality culture and provide an appropriate pathway by which issues arising from quality reviews could be followed-up beyond the Progress Report stage. The Academic Secretary advised members that the remit of the Quality Office had originally only extended to academic reviews and that the Office had been resourced accordingly. The Office was not resourced to take on the additional responsibility for follow-up and reporting on the implementation of non-academic/professional reviews recommended by the Audit Committee report. This was a function of the Secretary's Office. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that QQI is broadening the remit of quality and stressed the need to find the best way of accommodating this within the existing resource base and without reducing the role of the Quality Committee to that of a policing body.

A Committee member agreed that there is a capacity issue but suggested that the Committee should be agile enough to respond to the changing environment. Another member queried whether the submission of an Annual Report on non-academic areas was within the remit of the Committee, suggesting that an Annual Report on the work of the Committee would suffice. The Senior Lecturer suggested that the Quality Committee's good relationship with the academic community could be jeopardised if the Committee becomes an overseer of quality rather than a partner in quality. He noted that follow-up on quality reports already occurs in a number of different places outside of the Quality Committee, for example the review of the Financial Services Division was discussed at the Executive Officers Group (EOG). He suggested that if the findings of quality reviews are considered by Committees with oversight responsibility, then the feedback loop has been closed.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Committee and noting the variety of views in the Committee, stated that the recommendations of the Audit Committee report would be considered in the light of the Quality Committee discussion and would inform the response to be provided in November 2020. He also noted that the Terms of Reference of the Committee (TOR) would be reviewed over the Summer and that revised TOR would be submitted to the Committee at its first meeting in Michaelmas Term.

**Action/Decision:**

**043.1:** Revised Terms of Reference for the Quality Committee to be resubmitted to the first meeting of the Quality Committee in 2020/21.

**QC/19-20/044 Review of Marino Institute of Education (MIE) Quality Assurance Procedures**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the previous Registrar, Professor Paula Murphy, and the Registrar, Professor Brendan Tangney to the meeting for the discussion of the review of the MIE quality assurance procedures. He informed the Committee that the review had been overseen by Professor Murphy as Chair of the Linked Provider Working Group (LPWG). Professor Murphy reminded the Committee that this was a once-off process and that only new or substantially revised procedures would require approval by Trinity in future. She acknowledged the work of the Linked Provider Working Group and the Quality Office in the process, and advised that if the Committee approved the procedures, the next step would be submission to Council and Board for approval after which the procedures would be sent to QQI for publication. An effectiveness review would then follow to assess the implementation of the procedures. In light of the findings of the Linked Provider Working Group, Professor Murphy recommended approval of the MIE QA procedures.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Professor Murphy for the presentation and the work she undertook as chair of the group during her time as Registrar. Noting that there had been three rounds of policy submission and review, he queried why it had taken so long to bring the policies to the approval stage. Professor Murphy responded that after the second round of submissions, it was clear that MIE needed to target more resources to the quality process in order to bring the policies and procedures up to the standard required. MIE recruited external consultants to build the necessary capacity within MIE, which accounted for the delay in the third submission. The Quality Officer reported that the effectiveness review was essentially an institutional quality review, and would be coordinated by Trinity, who in regard to Linked Providers had a similar role to QQI.

The Academic Secretary queried how confident Trinity should be in the MIE policies and procedures given the number of revisions that were required to approve them. Professor Murphy responded that the effectiveness review would determine whether the implementation of the policies and procedures as approved, was robust. She reported that an interim Quality Officer had been appointed by MIE to manage the final submission in response to feedback from Trinity. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer highlighted the need to monitor the implementation of the approved policies, noting that the development of a quality culture is a journey. In response to a query from a Committee member, the Quality Officer reported that following the final approval of MIE's quality assurance procedures by University Council an effectiveness review is expected to occur within 12-18 months, allowing sufficient period for implementation of new procedures, and thereafter every five to seven years. She stressed that the Terms of Reference for the effectiveness review would be important. The Academic Secretary suggested that the Committee had an important role in ensuring that MIE quality assurance policies and procedures were fit-for-purpose as Trinity validates MIE's degrees, and that there was a need to closely monitor the implementation of these policies. The Committee agreed to recommend the approval of MIE QA policies to University Council and the VP/CAO, as Chair of the Committee, undertook to communicate the outcome of the discussion and the concerns of the Committee to MIE.

**Action/Decision:**

**044.1:** The Quality Committee recommended the MIE Quality Assurance Procedures to Council for approval.

**044.2:** The VP/CAO will communicate the outcome of the discussion and the Committee's concerns to MIE.

**QC/19-20/045 Quality Risk Register**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to speak to the updated Risk Register. The Quality Officer advised that the current register had been submitted to the Chief Risk Officer in April 2020, but that further updates had been added as of June 2020. She reported that the risk to academic quality and standards in assessment and examination due to the transition to an online model for delivery and assessment, as a result of the COVID-19 virus, was a new risk. A survey to review the emergency transition to online and a needs assessment for 2020/21 will be conducted by the Academic Secretary in the summer of 2020. She reported that Risk 4, the risk of an unfavourable outcome to the Institutional Review due to compressed timeframe, could be reduced as the review date had now been deferred to Michaelmas 2021. She advised that, overall, the movement of recommendations from high risk to low risk was welcome. She noted that the Audit Committee report had recommended inclusion of the risks from all quality reviews on the risk register and that this had been reflected for some but not all risks.

At this point the interim Chief Risk Officer, Mr Henry Wallace, joined the meeting. Mr Wallace welcomed the reduction in the risk of an unfavourable Institutional Review resulting from the postponement of the review to 2021 and noted that several lower risk items were related to the review. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the interim CRO. He noted that the register was a 'live' document and would be further amended in light of changing circumstances. He welcomed the movement of risks from 'high' to 'medium' or 'low'. The Quality Committee approved the Risk Register on the understanding that an updated document would be presented to the Committee after the Summer.

**Action/Decision:**

**045.1:** The Quality Committee approved the Risk Register on the understanding that a revised register would be submitted to the Committee in Michaelmas Term 2020.

**QC/19-20/046 Any other business**

The Quality Officer advised that the annual self-evaluation of the Quality Committee would be administered during the week of the 8<sup>th</sup> June and she asked members to respond, as the low response rate to last years' survey had been highlighted in the Audit report. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the members of the Committee who had completed their term of office– Professor Neville Cox (Dean of Graduate Studies), Dr Ciara O' Hagan (AHSS representative), Ms. Gisele Scanlon (Vice-President of the GSU) and Ms. Niamh McKay (Education Officer of the SU). He also thanked two members who had left College to start their maternity leave, Ms. Julia Carmichael (Chief Risk Officer) and Dr. Mary Rogan (AHSS representative). The Committee members thanked Professor Neville Cox for his work in support of postgraduate students, and the meeting closed.

**Section B**

The single item on the call-over log, the Quality Risk Register, was noted as having been addressed.