



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

Minutes of the Quality Committee meeting of the  
11 February 2021, 2.00 – 4.00pm via ZOOM

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**Quality Committee**

**Present**

Professor Jürgen Barkhoff, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*  
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science  
Professor Orla Sheils, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences  
Professor Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences  
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary  
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer  
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science  
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences  
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian  
Mr. Henry Wallace, Interim Chief Risk Officer  
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Ms. Megan O' Connor, Education Officer Students' Union  
Ms. Abhisweta Bhattacharjee, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union  
Ms. Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office  
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

*In attendance*

Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary*

**Apologies**

Professor Kevin Mitchell, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Ms. Marie Gore, Interim Director, Project Management Officer  
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary

**QC/20-21/035 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 14 January 2021**

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 14 January 2021 were approved.

**QC/20-21/036 Matters arising**

1. *QC/20-21/029 Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20 to QQI*

The Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20 to QQI was approved by Council on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The VP/CAO reported that at the meeting, Council had been notified of the membership of the Institutional Review Team and that Provost had commented on the high calibre of the

reviewers. The Report will be considered by Board on the 24 February before being submitted to QQI on the 26<sup>th</sup> February.

2. *QC/20-21/032 Report on the School of Creative Arts review implementation*

The School of Creative Arts: Quality Review Implementation Plan was approved by Council on the 20 January 2021.

3. *QC/20-21/033 Implementation Plan for the School of Medicine review*

The Implementation Plan for the School of Medicine was approved by Council on the 10 February 2021. Council also approved that there be no change to the title of the Head of the School of Medicine.

### **Update on matters arising from previous Quality Committee meetings**

The review of the Trinity Business School (TBS) was not approved by Council in November 2020. Council deferred the decision to recognise the TBS' triple accreditation processes *in lieu* of an external quality review to its January meeting and subject to the TBS report being revised to properly represent the governance structure of the TBS within the university (CL/20-21/057). A revised report on the TBS review was submitted to Council in January and approved (CL/20-21/077.1). Council also approved a recommendation that a Quality Review of the TBS be undertaken in 2023/24, and that the TBS' triple accreditation processes not be recognised *in lieu* of an external quality review under the College School Quality Review Procedure (CL/20-21/077.3).

Council noted that the desktop review was conducted in line with the *Quality Policy Statement*, approved by Council (CL/18-19/063) and Board (BD/18-19/096), and identified the need for revisions to the *Quality Policy Statement* to clarify the role of the Faculty Dean and the circumstances in which the desktop process could be applied. A revised *Quality Policy Statement* is included on the agenda as item A.6, in addition to the minute of the November Council discussion of the TBS report, which the VP/CAO undertook at the last meeting to circulate to members.

### **QC/20-21/037 Update on the Institutional Review**

The Quality Officer reported that a summary report on the outcomes of the '*We Value Your Opinion of Quality in Trinity*' survey would be presented to the Quality Committee at its March meeting. She advised that survey respondents had provided feedback on IT systems such as SITS, RPAMS, CORE HR etc. and that focus groups were now being held with the owners/managers and users of these systems as it is envisaged that systems will be a cross-cutting theme of the review. The results of the survey and the focus groups will inform the systems sections of individual chapters in the ISER. The Quality Officer reported that she had been invited to a meeting with QQI on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February and although she hadn't yet received an agenda for the meeting, she surmised that it would concern Trinity's Institutional Review and CHARM-EU European Universities project. She undertook to provide an update at the next meeting. Finally, Ms. Smith informed the Committee that the report on the review of the University of Limerick, which was undertaken virtually in August 2020, had been published on the QQI website. The VP/CAO suggested that the main findings of the review be brought to the next ISET meeting.

### **Decision/Action:**

**037.01** The main findings of the virtual review of the University of Limerick to be brought to the next ISET meeting.

### **QC/20-21/038 QQI Thematic analysis of CINNTE Review Reports**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer opened the item by reporting that QQI had commissioned an independent analysis of the first seven CINNTE review reports to investigate the main themes arising across the reports. The review was conducted by Dr Achim Hopbach, a former Managing Director of AQ Austria and the German Accreditation Council, and former president of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Dr Hopbach is also a member of Trinity's Institutional Review Team. The report on the mid-cycle analysis was launched by QQI at an online event on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The Quality Officer thanked the VP/CAO and spoke to a Powerpoint presentation outlining the key challenges, commendations and improvement themes identified in the report. She concluded by stating that the fact that Dr Hopbach would be familiar with the Irish context, having reviewed the seven institutional reports, would be of benefit to Trinity in its review.

The Vice-Provost thanked Ms. Smith and invited comments from Committee members. The Director of Student Services suggested that the language used in the report made it difficult to understand and the VP/CAO agreed, reporting however that the launch event had provided clarity on the main points. Noting that the report had highlighted the quality assurance of research activities as one of the areas requiring more focus, a Committee member queried how Trinity could address this in its ISER. The VP/CAO stated that although Ireland doesn't have a national system for measuring research, peer review of published research, which is referred to in School Reviews, is a form of quality assurance. He also stated that many of Trinity's research institutes undergo either funding reviews or quality reviews and that these provide an indication of the quality of research in the absence of discipline-specific reviews as carried out in the UK under the Research Excellence Framework (REF). He cited the quality review of the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) as an example.

The Director of Student Services remarked that staff development had been highlighted in the report and that this should be drawn out in Trinity's ISER. Referring to the challenge identified in the report of ensuring that "quality policies are implemented consistently across the institution", the VP/CAO stressed the importance of focusing in the ISER on how Trinity is implementing its policies and identifying whether we have the right tools to do this effectively. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion, noting that the Institutional Self-Evaluation Team would pay close attention to the report.

### **QC/20-21/039 Case Studies in Quality**

The Quality Officer spoke to an updated version of the *Case Studies in Quality* document, reporting that an additional eight case studies had been added since the document was last considered by the Committee. Four new case studies had been included under Objective 2, two under Objective 4 and two under Objective 5. She also advised that an Appendix had been added, listing evidence-based practice resources cited in the individual case studies. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and noted that the case studies reflected the considerable amount of enhancement activity that had taken place since the last institutional review, citing the development of the Global Room as an example. He remarked, however, that it was not always clear who the owner of a case study was and recommended that this should be more systematically addressed. He also suggested that where the subject or theme of a case study was a pilot project, that this and any further planned roll-out should be highlighted. With regard to case study 2.9 *Academic Policy Development, Implementation and Monitoring*, he pointed out that the Strategic Plan 2014 – 2019 was Trinity's third strategic plan and not its first, as stated.

He invited comments from Committee members. The Vice-President of the Graduate Students' Union reported that, with regard to the free hot water scheme referenced in Case Study 5.9 *Reading Room Spaces During Covid-19*, the GSU had secured a commitment that free hot water would be part of the tenancy agreement for all new food outlets on campus. She thanked the Director of Student Services for her help in this regard.

The Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) suggested that staff recruitment and accreditation were two 'big ticket' items that were not represented in the case studies and she queried whether these areas could be bolstered in the ISER. She further suggested the inclusion of a case study on academic promotion and progression, reporting that there had been considerable enhancements to the process in recent years. The Academic Secretary asked if a case study on the Trinity Access Programmes (TAP) was considered. She recommended that a case study on College systems be included, stressing that systems will be a key focus of the review. It would provide an opportunity to track the trajectory of systems in Trinity and referenced a recent presentation by the Director of IT Services as providing a good overview. The Quality Officer responded that focus groups were underway with system owners/managers and users following feedback on systems in the *We Value Your Opinion of Quality in Trinity* survey. The systems issues identified will be included in the relevant chapters of the ISER e.g. feedback on RPAMS and RSS will be included in the Research Chapter. Access (TAP) will be addressed in the ISER document.

The Dean of Health Sciences highlighted the need to link the *Mind, Body, Boost* case study to the *Healthy Trinity* case study, as the former had been commissioned as a research project by the Healthy Trinity initiative. She reported that the data arising from the *Mind, Body, Boost* project will be used to lobby for funding to mainstream the project. The VP/CAO welcomed the clarification and stressed that where a case study is part of a research project, this should be clearly stated.

The Director of Student Services queried whether a case study on TEP would be included and the Academic Secretary reported that TEP would be central to the Education Chapter of the ISER. The VP/CAO remarked that the assessment tool outlined in case study 1.7 *An Effective Management Workload System for Students and Academics* was, in fact, a TEP element. He noted that the case study did not provide a timeline for the implementation of the assessment tool and suggested that this be included, along with some indication of the usability of the tool. The Dean of Graduate Studies stated that the title of the case study was misleading and should be amended to avoid confusion with a College-wide workload management system currently under development.

The VP/CAO thanked the Committee for its useful contributions and closed the discussion. The Committee approved the *Case Studies in Quality* document pending the inclusion of the suggestions from the Committee.

#### **Action/Decision:**

**039.01** The Quality Committee approved the *Case Studies in Quality* document pending inclusion of the Committee members' feedback. The final version will be submitted to Council and Board for approval in March.

#### **QC/20-21/040 Updated Quality Policy Statement**

The Quality Officer advised that the Quality Policy Statement had been updated to reflect feedback from the Council discussion of the desktop review of the Trinity Business School (CL/20-21/077.1). The revisions to the Policy clarify the circumstances under which a desktop review is applicable and the role of the Faculty Dean in the process.

Ms. Smith reported that the revised Policy specifies that a desktop review can only be considered *in lieu* of a full quality review in situations where the area under review is subject to multiple statutory accreditations. The decision to pursue a desktop review will only be made in consultation with the Faculty Dean, who, following the outcome of a desktop review will determine whether to recommend the outcomes of the process to Quality Committee. The Quality Committee will then consider the recommendation and forward it to Council for approval or will reject it, in which case a full Quality review will be required.

In response to a query from the Dean of Health Sciences, the Quality Officer clarified that the desktop process would only be considered where the accreditations in question were statutory in nature e.g. professional accreditation/registration bodies. The Dean expressed concern that some accreditation reviews would fall between two stools, noting that there is often only a subtle distinction between statutory reviews and other professional body reviews. The Quality Officer suggested that the new wording would ensure that the Faculty Dean is involved at the earliest stages of the discussion and would have the final say as to whether an application to conduct a desktop review qualified under the Policy. In response to a query from the Dean of Graduate Studies, Ms. Smith reported that Trinity was involved with approximately 22 accreditation/professional bodies and that there was a master list on the Quality Office website that could be linked to in the Policy. The Dean of Graduate Studies queried why the word 'statutory' was included in quotation marks and the Academic Secretary agreed that the quotation marks should be removed.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the Committee approved the Policy subject to changes being made to reflect the points raised by Committee members.

**Action/Decision:**

**040.01** The Committee recommended the revised Quality Policy Statement to Council and Board for approval subject to changes being made to reflect the points raised by Committee members.

**QC/20-21/041 Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20**

The VP/CAO introduced the item by reporting that the Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20 had been approved by Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> February (CL/20-21/111.1). The Quality Officer advised that the final report needed to be approved by the Quality Committee as it was an institutional review document and its approval by QC had been mandated by the Audit Compliance report. She outlined the key changes to the document since it had last been presented to the Committee and how it complemented the other institutional review documentation i.e. the Institutional Profile, the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) etc. She reported that the primary audience for the AQR this year is the institutional review team, but that a summary of all AQRs, highlighting good practice, is published by QQI each year. She concluded by stating that all Schools undergoing accreditation reviews are given a copy of the most recent AQR as this provides much of the information requirement in terms of QA policies and procedures thereby reducing the burden of effort for Schools.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the Committee approved the AQR.

**Action/Decision:**

**041.01** The Committee approved the Annual Quality Report 2019/20 and referred it to the Board meeting of the 24<sup>th</sup> February.

### **QC/20-21/042 Quality Risk Register**

The Quality Officer spoke to a presentation on the updated Quality Risk Register which was circulated with the papers for the meeting. She reminded the Committee that the Register had been presented to the Committee on the 13<sup>th</sup> January and that concerns had been raised at that meeting regarding the wording of Risk 1.<sup>1</sup> The wording of the risk was amended<sup>2</sup> and the Register was considered by the ISET on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February. Some further discussion of the Risk took place at the ISET, including whether it was the devolved structures or the processes that support the devolved structures that were at issue. An action arising from the meeting was to liaise with the Chief Risk Officer regarding the wording prior to discussion and final approval at Quality Committee.

The Quality Officer invited the Chief Risk Officer to join the discussion at this point. Mr Wallace stated that Trinity's devolved structures were not the issue but rather the absence of a framework around those structures that allows full oversight and ensures that quality standards are always being met. He informed the Committee that the wording of the Risk had been amended<sup>3</sup> to reflect this. With regard to the Risk's high rating, he stressed that while the current controls are outlined in the Register, there was not enough detailed actions sitting behind them. Regarding the future steps, he stated that these were light touch and did not sufficiently tackle the issues head-on. As a consequence, he felt that the Risk was not being kept artificially high and should remain high until the outcome of the institutional review is known.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the Chief Risk Officer and welcomed the rewording of the Risk. He opened the discussion to committee members.

With regard to quality assurance of non-academic functions, the Deputy Librarian reported that the Library Annual Report is considered by Council and that a report from the Library and Information Policy Committee (LIPC) is considered by Board. She noted that IT Services also provides an annual report to Board. The Director of Student Services queried whether the Audit function should be listed as a control and the Chief Risk Officer clarified that the Audit Office does not have a control function. The Quality Officer agreed, reporting that the Audit function operates under the Audit Act and employs an 'audit' methodology, whereas Quality is governed by the QQI Act 2012 and Universities Act 1997 and employs quality assurance methodologies. The VP/CAO thanked the Committee for the useful discussion and summarized the discussion by saying that Risk 1 merits its 'high' risk rating and will remain as such on both the Quality Risk Register and the College Risk Register. The Quality Officer clarified that the amended Register will be submitted to the CRO and would inform the development of the College Risk Register, which would be presented to the Risk Management Group meeting, prior to submission to EOG and College Board.

### **Action/Decision:**

**042.02** The Committee approved the revised Quality Risk Register subject to feedback by Committee members on current controls and future steps being incorporated.

### **QC/20-21/043 Any other business**

There was no other business and the meeting closed.

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<sup>1</sup> Risk of an unfavourable outcome from the Institutional Review in October 2021 due to lack of ability to co-ordinate effective oversight of Quality Assurance at institutional level resulting from Trinity's model of devolved governance to units and schools.

<sup>2</sup> Risk of ineffective oversight of quality assurance system at institutional level due to Trinity's model of devolved governance to schools and units and lack of integrated system monitoring and reporting.

<sup>3</sup> Risk of inability to provide assurance of meeting required quality standards at institutional level due to lack of integrated system monitoring, reporting and oversight at all levels of the institution.