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

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Quality Committee

16 September 2021, 11am – 1pm

Quality Committee

Present
Professor Orla Sheils, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics & Science
Professor Brian O' Connell, Acting Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor David Shepard, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

In attendance
Professor Neville Cox, Registrar, for item *QC/21-22/005 Linked Provider Policies and Procedures*
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary
Dr. Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary to the Committee*

Apologies
Ms. Bev Genocky, Education Officer Students' Union
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms. Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office
Ms. Abhisweta Bhattacharjee, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer began the meeting by welcoming new members to the Committee. In addition to Prof. Sheils as the new Chair of the Committee, new members are the Acting Dean of Health Sciences, Prof. Brian O' Connell; the Senior Lecturer, Prof. David Shepard; the Education Officer of the Students' Union, Ms. Bev Genockey and the CSD representative, Mr. Patrick Magee.

QC/21-22/001 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 16 May 2021
The draft minutes of the meeting of the 16 May 2021 were approved.

QC/21-22/002 Matters arising
QC/20-21/052: The Quality Review of Academic Practice will be considered by Council on the 22 September 2021. An Implementation Plan to address the recommendations arising from the review is currently being prepared.

QC/20-21/053: The QQI Accreditation Principles were approved by Council (2 June 2021) and Board (16 June 2021) via the relevant Quality Committee minutes. The list of Universities and Professional bodies to endorse the Accreditation Principles has been published on the QQI website.

QC/20-21/054: The IUA information request on placements was submitted to the IUA and to the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science. There is no further update at this point. The issue remains on the Quality and College Risk Registers.

QC/21-22/003 Institutional Review
(i) Draft Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)
The Academic Secretary spoke to a presentation on the draft Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), noting that the draft report had been circulated to members in July 2021 in addition to being included with the papers for this meeting. She reminded members that the Institutional Review is anticipated to be a face-to-face review and has been rescheduled to 7-11 March 2022 to allow for the new senior management team to establish itself following the appointment of the new Provost. Ms. Callaghan noted that the sectoral landscape had changed considerably since the last institutional review in 2012, particularly with regard to oversight of the universities. She emphasized the importance of the review to Trinity from a reputational perspective and with regard to international student recruitment and national and global partnerships.

Speaking about the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), the Academic Secretary advised that it was one of a number of documents that will be submitted to QQI to inform the institutional review. She stressed the importance of getting the correct balance in the document between description and critical reflection, and also the importance of demonstrating evidence of effectiveness, quality enhancement, implementation of policies and strategies, and compliance with relevant legislation. She thanked those who had already provided feedback on the document and invited comments from the Committee regarding the accuracy of the document and potential gaps in the information.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary, noting the considerable amount of work that had already been put into the document, and opened the discussion to the floor. She asked members to consider whether the document reflected their lived experiences of quality at local level and emphasized the importance of ensuring that the report contained accurate information. The Dean of Graduate Studies remarked that the PhD experience was not visible in the document, noting that postgraduate research students fall between the teaching and research groups, and she reported that there have been many changes to the processes supporting postgraduate education in the last five years. The VP/CAO agreed and highlighted the strategic importance of the postgraduate research experience, referencing the Postgraduate renewal project and the Trinity Strategic Plan. The Dean of Graduate Studies reported that she had provided feedback to the Academic Secretary regarding this aspect of the report and the Academic Secretary undertook to include it in the ISER.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and closed the discussion, noting that the Quality Committee will have a further opportunity to see the final ISER at the Joint QC/ISET Meeting on the 5 October 2021.

(ii) *'We Value your Opinion on Quality' compendium report*
The VP/CAO invited Professor Jan de Vries to speak to the report on the "We Value your Opinion in Quality" survey which was administered to College staff in November 2020. Prof. de Vries spoke to a presentation which outlined the process of developing the report and he thanked the Quality Officer,

members of the ISET communications subgroup and Dr. Mark Byrne for their hard work in that regard. He advised the Committee that a lengthy report on the survey outcomes had been considered by ISET in May 2021 at which time a more succinct report had been requested, as it was felt that the key messages in the report were being lost. The resulting compendium report, which is only 20 pages in length, will be submitted to the Institutional Review team as a supplement to the ISER.

Prof. de Vries reminded members that the survey was designed to elicit responses from staff in four areas - Care for Quality, QA systems, organizational culture and how they feed into effectiveness in terms of performance. He reported that 825 respondents started the online survey but that only 542 completed it and that while this provided large enough representation to make robust predictions about the College, it limited comparisons between the groups. More administrative than academic staff responded and slightly more females than males responded. A key finding of the survey was that 53% of respondents reported that they were 'confident' or 'highly confident' in their ability to improve quality in their role or work area. The results also show, however, that approximately one third of respondents rely on key individuals and positions to take responsibility for quality while a further third is unclear of where responsibility for quality lies. At an institutional level Trinity was deemed more effective at setting strategies and goals for quality of education, research and the student experience but less so in areas related to administration. The results point to the need to communicate more explicitly with all staff about the relevance of 'quality' and to place greater effort in monitoring quality and ensuring that relevant polices and processes are updated to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose. Of the statements that were provided in the open questions, 98 were positive and 138 were negative. With regard to IT systems, while some were not considered to be up to the required standard in terms of user interface (e.g. RSS, SITS), others (Email, Office 365) were considered effective in support of the activities of the College. Prof. de Vries reported that focus groups with IT staff had taken place to delve deeper into the findings and had informed the report. One of the lessons learned from the focus groups was the need to include a question on 'frequency of use' in the next iteration of the survey. In response to the question on Covid-19, Prof. de Vries noted that the response could indicate that the impact of Covid-19 on staff perception of quality as not as negative as anticipated.

The VP/CAO thanked Prof. de Vries and asked whether the response to the Covid-19 impact was influenced by 'temporal' factors. Prof. de Vries agreed that the survey provided a point-in-time response from staff, as the survey had been administered in November 2020. There were no comments from the Committee and, in closing the discussion, the VP/CAO thanked Prof. de Vries, the Quality Officer and the many others who had helped to complete this considerable piece of work.

Action/Decision
003(i): The Quality Committee noted the compendium report on the 'We Value your opinion of Quality' survey.

Item A.5 Quality Committee self-evaluation survey report 2020/21 was brought up the agenda and taken at this point.

QC/21-22/004 Quality Committee self-evaluation survey report 2020/21
The Quality Officer spoke to a report on the key issues arising from the Quality Committee self-evaluation survey 2020/21. She reported that ten responses to the survey had been received, representing a response rate of 67%. She noted that this was disappointing compared to last year's response rate of 87% and may reflect the continuing impact of the pandemic on the workload of Committee members. The Terms of Reference for the Committee remained unchanged since last year and Ms. Smith informed the

Committee that the appointment of an external member to the Committee is currently under consideration by the Provost. She briefly summarized the results of the survey, noting that the responses to the questions regarding the Committee's performance were largely positive. With regard to the tools used to evaluate quality assurance, feedback from the Committee suggests that more work needs to be done to embed the Risk Register, which is a relatively new tool. The Quality Officer undertook to work with the CRO to socialize the Risk Register and she reported that the Quality Risk Register will come to the November meeting of the Committee for consideration. She concluded by encouraging members to complete the 2021/22 survey. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Quality Officer and, noting that a member had commented in the survey that they don't use an iPad to access papers, suggested that anyone requiring an iPad should contact the Quality Office. With regard to comments on the volume of material that members are required to read and the overlap of members between the ISET and the QC, the VP/CAO suggested that ways of streamlining paperwork between these Committees should be considered. She thanked the Quality Officer and closed the discussion.

Action/Decision:
004: The Quality Committee approved the self-evaluation survey report 2020/21

Item A.4 Linked Provider Policies and Procedures was brought up the agenda and taken at this point. The Senior Lecturer left the meeting at this point.

QC/21-22/005 Linked Provider Policies and Procedures
The VP/CAO welcomed the Registrar, Professor Neville Cox, to the meeting to speak to a report on recent submissions of new and amended policies and procedures from Trinity's Linked Providers (Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM)) under section 9 of Trinity's Approval of Linked Providers Quality Assurance Procedures. Professor Cox acknowledged the role of the previous Registrar in bringing these procedures and policies through the MIE and RIAM Linked Provider Working Groups in June and August 2021. He noted that MIE had submitted 14 policies to Trinity, four of which were academic in nature and ten of which had a statutory basis, and that RIAM had submitted four statutory policies. He advised that the statutory policies had been submitted with evidence of third-party approval and self-certification by MIE and therefore required noting rather than approval by Trinity. The four MIE academic policies required approval and had been submitted to relevant Trinity experts for review prior to consideration and approval by the Linked Provider Working Group. He concluded by asking the Committee to support the recommendation of the Linked Provider Working Groups that the four MIE academic policies be approved.

The VP/CAO thanked the Registrar and invited comments from Committee members. The Acting Dean of HS queried whether the wording of the MIE Attendance Procedure should be amended to allow for situations where students could not attend classes due to Covid-19. The Registrar agreed and further suggested that this could apply beyond the context of Covid-19. Prof. O' Connell clarified that he was happy to approve the policy as it stood but suggested that the experience of Covid-19 should inform the development of future policies. The Quality Officer suggested that this issue was covered in the content of the *MIE Student Code of Conduct with regard to Covid-19.* In response to a query from the Academic Secretary, Dr. Donnellan clarified that third-party approval was provided by relevant statutory bodies or legal representatives such as IBEC, TUSLA and the Linked Providers' solicitors. The VP/CAO thanked the Registrar and the closed the discussion.

Action/Decision:
005(i): The Quality Committee recommended the four MIE academic policies to Council for approval.

005(ii): The Quality Committee recommended the ten MIE and four RIAM statutory policies to Council for noting.

The report on the 'Big Chat' student focus groups was taken at this point.

QC/21-22/003 Institutional Review
(iii) Report on the 'Big Chat' student focus groups

The VP/CAO welcomed the Director of Student Services to the meeting to present the report on the 'Big Chat' focus groups on behalf of the Dean of Students. Ms. Walls spoke to a presentation outlining the key findings of the focus groups in which a total of 56 students participated, noting that some of the issues that arose in the focus groups are not new. These included the fact that students find Trinity too bureaucratic and disorganized and that they want better communication. Students were generally positive about student supports and the sense of community in Trinity, and with IT generally. In terms of specific areas for improvement, resourcing of Academic Registry (AR) was seen as negatively impacting on the student experience in terms of response-times, and long waiting times for Student Counselling Services and reduced accommodation options, particularly for international students, were also highlighted as issues of concern. PGR students were interested in greater recognition and an increase in funding of stipends to address preparatory work and follow-up work by demonstrators and teaching assistants. Connectedness was deemed as vital for the first-year experience as was positive engagement in teaching and learning situations. The Director of Student Services suggested that some of these issues may relate specifically to students' experiences during the pandemic and that this needed to be kept in mind.

The VP/CAO thanked the Director of Student Services. She noted that many of the issues raised by students are not new and wondered why they are still coming up if Trinity is already aware of them. The Director reported that it can take several years to make noticeable changes. The VP/CAO offered to work with Ms. Walls to itemize the key recurrent issues and to outline a plan to address them one at a time, and Ms. Walls welcomed this. With regard to comments on the Academic Registry, Ms. Walls reported that 95% of what happens in AR works well and consequently does not attract notice. The remaining 5% that is of issue impacts a large number of students and consequently attracts a lot of attention. The Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences asked the Director what she would address if money was no object, noting that CMIS and SITS seemed to have scored most poorly in the '*We Value Your Opinion of Quality in Trinity* 'survey. The Director suggested that there was no perfect system solution, even with resources. She reported that issues around postgraduate education and mobility, and finance have been escalated to IT Services but that these are competing for resources with strategic projects such as the Human Capital Initiative (HCI), Micro-credentialling and TEP and thus do not get to the top of the list at key decision-making Committees such as Finance Committee and Executive Officer's Group (EOG). Ms. Walls reported that a considerable amount of change has already taken place in AR but that more change is required as systems evolve. The appointment of six extra FTEs to AR has made a significant difference and the approval of three Faculty liaison roles will be of enormous benefit in the provision of and advocacy for support at local level.

The Dean of Graduate Studies agreed that it is difficult to get conversations on these issues raised at the most appropriate fora but stressed the need to attack the slow creep on this. With regard to the postgraduate piece, she suggested that the report should put in context the sector-wide issue of whether PG students are categorized as staff or students, reporting that the sector has not made a decision on this. Ms. Walls undertook to add a note to the paper in this regard before it is circulated further. The

Acting Dean of Health Sciences stressed the importance of ensuring that recurrent issues are raised to the top of the priority list and that the basic things are done well, which has a big impact on the student experience. He also suggested that Trinity should let students know what is being done to address these issues and that there are projects in the pipeline. The Chief Risk Officer suggested that the Risk Register and the list of controls that have been put in place to address AR issues that are 'high risk' provides an indication of the significant work that has been done in recent years. She stressed the need to make sure that emerging issues are captured on the Risk Register and, in that regard, she recommended that Ms. Walls review the most recent Register approved by Board.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked the Director of Student Services and closed the discussion.

Action/Decision:
003(ii): The Quality Committee approved the report on the 'Big Chat' student focus groups for inclusion in the documentation for the Institutional Review subject to the inclusion by the Director of Student Services of a note regarding the categorization of postgraduate students in Trinity

003(iii): The VP/CAO to work with the Director of Student Services to itemize the key recurrent issues of concern in the Academic Registry and to outline a plan to address them.

003(iv): The Director of Student Services to review the risks included on the College Risk Register to ensure that key issues related to AR appropriately reflected.

QC/21-22/006 Consolidated Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20
The VP/CAO invited the Quality Office Administrative Officer, Dr. Liz Donnellan, to present the Consolidated Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20. Dr. Donnellan reported that the three Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQRs) for 2019/20 were considered by the Quality Committee (QC) in April 2021. Arising from the discussion was a suggestion that the Consolidated report, normally only presented to Council, should also be presented to the QC. This aligns with a recommendation from the Audit Committee report (February 2020) for an Annual Report to University Council or College Board from the Quality Committee. The Quality Committee also recommended that some of the language in the AFQRs be amended prior to circulation to Council and Dr. Donnellan reported that these amendments have been made, approved by the Faculty Deans, the VP/CAO and the relevant Heads of School. The Committee recommended that Quality be added as a standing item to Faculty Executive meetings and that the requirement for an annual Faculty Executive meeting dedicated to Quality be adhered to. Finally, the Committee recommended that the Academic Registry present its Annual Report to the Heads of School Committee every year. A number of issues were highlighted by the Faculties for escalation to Council, including the lack of availability of high-quality placements, resources, staffing, space, the impact of Covid-19 regulations on professional and academic autonomy and the absence of a College-wide standard for online teaching and assessment.

The VP/CAO thanked Dr. Donnellan and stressed the importance of outlining a pathway for escalation of the recommendations arising from the reports. The Dean of STEM suggested for next year that the three Faculty Deans collectively look at the reports to identify common issues and consolidate ideas across the Faculties. The Dean of AHSS welcomed this suggestion.

Action/Decision:
006(i): The Quality Committee recommended the Consolidated Annual Quality Report (AQR) to Council for approval.

006(ii): A pathway for escalation of recommendations arising from the 2019/20 AFQRs to be identified.

006(iii): The Faculty Deans to look collectively at the 2020/21 reports to identify common issues and consolidate ideas across the Faculties.

QC/21-22/007 Any Other Business
There was no other business and the meeting closed.