



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

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The University of Dublin

Quality Committee

Draft minutes of the meeting of the 9 November 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
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
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Ms. Bev Genocky, Education Officer Students' Union
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Ms. Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office
Professor Dirk Van Damme, External Member
Mr. Patrick Magee, CSD representative

In attendance

Ms. Antoinette Quinn, Director of Human Resources, for item *QC/21-22/010 Progress Report for Human Resources*.
Ms. Amy Murray, Quality Office, for item *QC/21-22/013 Reports on the National Student Survey Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught (UG/PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR)*.
Dr. Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary to the Committee*

Apologies

Ms. Abhisweta Bhattacharjee, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union
Professor David Shepard, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer began by welcoming the new external member of the Committee, Professor Dirk Van Damme, to the meeting, and invited him to provide a short

introduction of his background and expertise in Quality to Committee members.

QC/21-22/008 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 16 September 2021

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 16 September 2021 were approved with two minor changes. The Dean of Graduate Studies requested that, in the second sentence of the last paragraph at the end of page 5, the word “Trinity” should be replaced with “the sector”. Prof. de Vries requested that, in the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 3, the phrase “*it did not allow for comparisons*” should read “*it limited comparisons*”. The Committee Secretary undertook to make these changes.

QC/21-22/009 Matters arising

QC/21-22/003 (i) Draft Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER)

The VP/CAO noted that a verbal update on the approval of the ISER at Council and Board was on the agenda

QC/21-22/003 (ii) Report on the ‘Big Chat’ student focus groups.

003 (iii) The VP/CAO reported that she is engaging 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 confirmed that she has reviewed the risks included on the College Risk Register to ensure that key issues related to AR are appropriately reflected.

QC/21-22/005 Linked Provider Policies and Procedures

The VP/CAP reported that:

- (i) the four MIE academic policies were approved by Council on the 20th October and by Board on the 3rd November 2021.
- (ii) the ten MIE and four RIAM statutory policies were noted by Council on the 20th October and by Board on the 3rd November 2021.

QC/21-22/006 Consolidated Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2019/20

The VP/CAO reported that the AQR was presented to Council on the 22 September 2021 with proposed pathways for escalation of quality-related issues (access to placements, response rates to online surveys, absence of guidelines on College-wide standards for online courses and assessment) and resource-related issues (space, staff recruitment, declining numbers of PhD students in some Faculties, rates of pay for postgraduate demonstrators and teaching assistants). Council approved the report and, arising from the Council discussion, a recommendation to include equipment and infrastructure as an area for exploration in subsequent reports (CL/21-22/006.1).

QC/21-22/010 Quality Reviews

(i) Progress report for Human Resources

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Ms. Antoinette Quinn, Director of Human Resources, to the meeting to present the progress report on the implementation of recommendations arising from the HR review in 2018. Ms. Quinn spoke to a presentation on the high-level issues arising from the review and how they had been addressed to date.

The VP/CAO thanked Ms. Quinn and, noting the budgetary constraints outlined in the presentation, asked whether it was possible to reduce spend in some areas to facilitate delivery of imperatives. Ms. Quinn reported that money is being spent locally on training and development, but that Human Resources is not consulted on how and where this money is being spent, resulting in missed opportunities for streamlining of resources and improved synergies. She suggested that

negotiation with Schools and Units on funneling a percentage of their staff development spend through HR would help in this regard. The VP/CAO suggested that this would require strategic engagement with the Faculty Deans, and Ms. Quinn agreed. The Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, expressing support for the proposal, asked (i) what HR would be able to deliver for its internal and external stakeholders with the additional resources, (ii) how would we know that this approach had worked and (iii) what was the vision for HR? Ms. Quinn reported that the Draft Learning and Organisational Development Strategy outlined the inputs required and what the outputs would be, and that the Strategy was awaiting approval from the new College management. She stressed that investment in its staff would have an enormous impact on Trinity by improving morale and, thereby, function. She noted, in particular, the importance of providing training for managers and those in leadership positions.

The Academic Secretary praised HR for the way in which it has responded to the review, citing it as a good example of how the output of quality assurance processes can benefit the Institution. She reminded the Committee that a recommendation arising from the last institutional review was the need for Trinity to invest in its people. Reporting on the discussion of the ISER at Board on the 3 November (see QC/21-22/011 below), Ms. Callaghan reported that criticism had been raised by some Board members regarding the staff recruitment process, the under-development of staff, the lack of communication on the locus of HR decisions, inequity of promotion opportunities and the delay in implementing an all-staff survey. She stressed the need to support HR in implementing the recommendations arising from its quality review and agreed that a budget would be required for this. She noted that there is no budget line for staff development and suggested that Schools and Units should liaise with HR to identify ways of pooling resources.

The Dean of STEM welcomed the report and acknowledged the work that has been undertaken to date. She noted that there is no Faculty leadership development budget in STEM but reported that two staff had undertaken an IUA development course. She also highlighted the opportunities provided by the Aurora leadership programme, stating however that she was not clear on the selection process. Observing that there is little training for Heads of School and School Managers, and that Heads of School appointed since the pandemic have not yet had any safety training, she suggested that Trinity should focus on joining the dots on these internal training pieces. The Chief Risk Officer praised HR for its work on implementing the review and on the way in which it rose to the challenges presented by the pandemic. She noted that a number of risks have emerged due to Covid and reported that in this regard, people are a high-risk area. She stressed that ongoing leadership and development training needs to be part of the Strategic plan.

The HR Director reiterated that investment in management and people is vital. She emphasized that while there isn't a budget line for staff training and development, money is being spent on this at local level and, consequently, there is a need for joined-up thinking to link the individual spends. She stated that she is happy to work with the Faculty Deans and the VP/CAO to identify ways in which local spending on training and development can be aligned and streamlined, and that approval of the learning strategy would allow identification of need.

The VP/CAO thanked the Director of HR for her work on implementing the review and undertook to work with her to find a way through the issues raised.

Action/Decision:

010(i): The Quality Committee recommended the progress report for Human Resources to Board for approval.

010(ii): The Director of HR to work with the VP/CAO and the Faculty Deans to identify ways in which local spending on training and development can be aligned and streamlined.

(ii) Progress report for IT Services

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed Mr. Patrick Magee, Director of IT Services, to the meeting to present the progress report on the implementation of recommendations arising from the IT Services review in 2019. Mr. Magee spoke to a presentation on the high-level issues arising from the review and how they had been addressed to date.

The VP/CAO thanked Mr. Magee for his presentation and asked for clarification as to whether EOG had approved the appointment of a Chief Information Officer. Mr. Magee clarified that the role had not yet been approved by EOG and that, consequently, the planned College IT Strategy, to be developed under the new CIO, had not yet been initiated. The Academic Secretary suggested that even though the decision on the appointment of a CIO had been stalled, a College-level IT strategy was still required and enquired as to the plan for generating one. Mr. Magee reported that IT Services had a strategy that was based on the technology and systems that it had responsibility for and that a broader College-level IT strategy would encompass areas such as governance compliance in the selection of systems and the University-wide digital experience. Ms. Callaghan queried how this recommendation would be implemented if there is no identified 'owner' for it, noting that this can be a problem in Quality Reviews. The Director of IT Services suggested that these recommendations should be absorbed into the successor to the Digital Trinity programme, which would reflect new priorities and the implementation of relevant aspects of the College Strategy. In the absence of a CIO, he suggested that the approval pathway is via EOG to Board.

The VP/CAO thanked the Director of IT Services, noting the unfailing ability of the Service to provide solutions. She noted that much work had already been done but that more remained to do strategically.

Action/Decision:

010(iii): The Quality Committee recommended the progress report for IT Services to Board for approval.

QC/21-22/011 Institutional Review

(i) Update from Council and Board re ISER approval

The Academic Secretary reported that there had been extensive consultation with College staff on the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), with resulting feedback and comments being incorporated into the final draft that went to Council on the 20th October 2021 and to Board on the 3rd November 2021. She reported that while Council had approved the report, observing that it was an honest document, the report was not approved by Board. Issues raised primarily concerned the HR Chapter and included criticism of the promotions process, the tenure track system, the working conditions of fixed-term researchers, and the use of role grading of professional staff *in lieu* of a promotions process for these staff. The Academic Secretary noted that all of these issues had been raised in the HR self-assessment document. She reported that she had given an undertaking at Board to work with the relevant Board members to address their concerns with the way these issues were addressed in the ISER. Following a meeting with them on the 5th November, it was agreed that she would accept written comments from them for consideration by close of business today, with a view to submitting a revised ISER to the VP/CAO and Provost prior to circulation to Board for electronic approval.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and suggested that the ISER would be richer for the

inclusion of amendments to address the concerns raised.

(ii) Approach to the schedule of meetings for the Institutional Review

The Academic Secretary spoke to a presentation outlining the proposed approach to the schedule of meetings for the Institutional Review which, she reported, had been approved by Board on the 3rd November. The presentation included an outline of the format of meetings and the proposed approach to the selection of participants. She noted that the draft schedule would be sent to the review team in advance of the site visit, who would either approve it or propose changes. She stressed the importance of ensuring that participants are familiar with the ISER and with Trinity's quality assurance and enhancement processes.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and invited comments from the Committee. In response to a query from the Director of IT Services regarding the length of meetings, the Quality Officer advised that meetings would be of approx. 45 minutes in duration. As there is limited time for meetings, she advised that it would not be possible for the review team to meet everyone and that participants would have to be carefully selected. The Deputy Librarian suggested that, as many staff members hold more than one role or are members of more than one Committee, it might be useful to consider which participants could represent more than one area as a way of maximising efficiency.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and closed the discussion.

Action/Decision:

011(i): The Committee approved the proposed approach to the schedule of meetings for the Institutional Review.

(iii) Annual Quality Report (AQR) 2020/21 to QQI

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited Dr Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, to speak to the Annual Quality Report 2020/21 to QQI. Dr Donnellan advised members that Trinity is required to submit an Annual Quality Report (AQR) to QQI, which informs Trinity's Strategic Dialogue with QQI. The AQR is published on the QQI website and QQI publishes an annual summary of all AQRs in which it highlights good practice across HEIs. The report is in two parts, with Part A outlining the policies and procedures that Trinity has in place to assure the quality of its teaching, learning, research and support services and Part B focusing on enhancement, impact, and monitoring. A Case Study on the development of an Admissions Matrix will also be submitted with the AQR. Dr Donnellan informed the Committee that the AQR has additional significance this year as it also forms part of the documentation for the Institutional Review in March 2022 and will be submitted to the review team for consideration along with the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) and the 'Case Studies in Quality' document. She concluded by thanking everyone who had provided feedback on relevant sections of the report and noted that, if approved by the Quality Committee, the AQR will be considered by Council on the 17th November and by Board on the 1st December prior to submission to QQI on the 15th December.

Action/Decision:

011(ii): The Quality Committee recommended the Annual Quality Report 2020/21 to Council, prior to its submission to QQI.

QC/21-22/012 Quality Risk Register

The Quality Officer spoke to the Quality Risk Register, which was circulated with the papers for the meeting. She reported that the Quality Risk Register was submitted as part of the

College Risk Register Process and that it would also be submitted as part of the Institutional Review. She reminded Committee members that the most recent version of the Register was reviewed by Quality Committee in Jan 2021 and that Risk 1 was reviewed and amended in Feb 2021, with agreement that it should remain 'High' in both the Quality and College Risk Registers until outcomes of the Institutional Review are known (QC/20-21/042). She reported that a new template for the Register had been introduced in October 2021 and that Quality would be part of a pilot project for a new online Risk Register process to commence in 2022.

Providing an overview of the status of current risks, Ms. Smith reported that there were 17 risks on the Register in total, with one high risk. There are two new risks – the first is the potentially adverse impact on Trinity's Institutional Review of a virtual review as the nature of engagement with staff and students online is different than in a face-to-face environment. Ms. Smith reported that the new Technological University Dublin (TUD) had undergone a virtual review in October 2021 and that representation of students in the review was very light. The second new risk relates to the risk to individual students of non-completion of placements due to Covid and/or long-Covid. Ms. Smith concluded with a slide showing the open risks carried over, by date.

The Chief Risk Officer noted that, in relation to the open risks, the Risk team would be following up to ensure that remediation plans around these risks were in place to ensure that there were being addressed. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the Chief Risk Officer and agreed that where risks have been addressed, they should be removed from the Register.

Action/Decision:

012(i): The Quality Committee approved the Quality Risk Register.

QC/21-22/013 Reports on the National Student Survey Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught (UG/PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR).

The VP/CAO welcomed Ms. Amy Murray, Quality Office to the meeting to present the reports on the National Student Survey UG/PGT and PGR. Ms. Murray spoke to a presentation on the key findings of both surveys, which had been circulated with the papers. She reported that the fieldwork for both surveys occurred over a three-week period in February/March 2021 and that a key addition to both surveys in 2020/21 was the inclusion of Covid-19-specific questions across all cohort groups. The overall response rate for the UG/PGT survey was 33% and that for the PGR survey was 32%, with more female than male students responding in both cases (UG/PGT 32% male vs 68% female; PGR 38% male vs 62% female).

The VP/CAO thanked Ms. Murray and invited comments from the Committee. Responding to a query, Ms. Murray stressed the importance of interpreting the data correctly and drew the Committee's attention to the fact that the scores are out of 60 rather than 100. The VP/CAO asked whether it was possible to normalize the data so that the scores were out of 100 and the Quality Officer responded that it was not, as it was a national survey that had been agreed across the sector, and this would limit the ability to compare across the sector. The VP/CAO queried how Trinity might improve its scores and suggested that the data for this year might be anomalous given the impact of Covid-19 on the results, and this needed to be taken into consideration. Ms. Murray reported that while there may be a Covid-effect this year, there are recurrent themes identified across several years that continue to warrant attention. The Academic Secretary stressed the importance of ensuring that definitive statements around this year's data are not made, as the impact of Covid may have influenced the results. This impact won't be there in future years so there is a need to normalize any Covid-effect. The Dean of STEM queried what was meant by student faculty interaction and Ms.

Murray clarified that this referred to student interaction with academic staff, which tends to score poorly.

The VP/CAO thanked Ms. Murray for her work on the reports and noted the valid point regarding tempering data in the context of the pandemic.

Action/Decision:

013(i): The Quality Committee recommended the reports on the National Student Survey 2020/21 UG/PGT and PGR to Council for approval.

QC/21-22/014 Any Other Business

There was no other business and the meeting closed.