



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

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**The University of Dublin**

**Quality Committee**

1 February 2022, 11am – 1pm

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**Draft Minutes**

**Present**

Professor Orla Sheils, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*  
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics  
Professor Brian O'Connell, 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  
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer  
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  
Professor David Shepard, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies  
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences  
Ms. Abhisweta Bhattacharjee, Vice-President Graduate Students' Union

**In attendance**

Prof. Michael Gill (Head of School of Medicine), Prof. John Harbison (Director of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate, School of Medicine) and Ms. Shannon Keegan (Quality, Accreditation and Rankings Manager, School of Medicine) for item *QC/21-22/010 Implementation Plan for IMC recommendations*

Dr. Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary to the Committee*

**Apologies**

Ms. Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary  
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services  
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics  
Ms. Orla Carmichael, Interim Chief Operating Officer

### **QC/21-22/015 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 9 November 2021**

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 9 November 2021 were approved.

### **QC/21-22/016 Matters arising**

#### *QC/21-22/010 Quality Reviews*

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) reported that the Progress report for Human Resources and the Progress report for IT Services were approved by Board at its meeting on the 1 December 2021 (BD/21-22/119).

#### *QC/21-22/011 Institutional Review*

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that an update on the Institutional Review is on the agenda.

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

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer advised the Committee that the reports on the 2020/21 National Student Surveys were approved by Council in November 2021 (CL/21-22/049).

### **QC/21-22/018 Update on Institutional Review**

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer invited the Quality Officer to update the Committee on the plans for the Institutional Review. Ms. Smith spoke to a power-point presentation outlining the confirmed format for the planning visit and the main review visit (MRV), initial feedback from the review team on the documentation and draft schedule of meetings, and plans to provide customized briefing sessions for participants prior to the MRV.

The VP/CAO thanked Ms. Smith, stating that she was pleased to see the employment prospects of young researchers being highlighted by the Reviewers as one of their areas of interest. The Senior Lecturer queried whether the panel's interest in international students concerned their experience of the admissions process or their experience as registered students at Trinity and the Quality Officer confirmed that it was the latter. With regard to the Reviewers' request for further information on the status of PhD students i.e. whether they are considered students or staff, the Dean of Graduate Studies asked where the information to inform this discussion would be sourced. The Quality Officer reported that the question had been raised by the student reviewer from Scotland and she suggested that research on the status of PhD students in Scotland could provide some useful information. She noted that Trinity has a *Policy on Supports for Student Parents, Student Carers and Students Experiencing Pregnancy* and that, during student focus groups convened to inform the development of the ISER, PGR students had requested to be viewed as staff and not students. The DGS reported that Scotland did not currently provide payment of maternity leave to research students, but that a stipend was paid and that the issue of payment of a stipend to Irish students was proving to be very challenging at a sectoral level. The Quality Officer suggested that the Irish reviewer, Professor Kersten Mey, President of the University of Limerick, would be able to provide the perspective of the Irish Universities on this issue.

In response to a query from the Director of IT Services, the Quality Officer advised that the

reviewers could seek information on a different set of topics following the planning visit. Commenting on the size of some of the meetings, Prof. Van Damme suggested that written introductions from participants could be provided to the review team for these meetings to free up time for discussion. He also queried whether fruitful discussions could be had with 10-12 people in a virtual panel, acknowledging that the intention was to be as inclusive as possible. On the issue of research productivity, he reported that there is considerable discussion in the Netherlands about this and that a shift from a numerical, bibliometric-based evaluation of researchers to a more inclusive method and its use as a criterion for promotion of researchers/academic staff would be familiar to the Chair of the review panel, Prof. Elmer Sterken. The Quality Officer stressed the need to make clear to the review team that we do not have a Research Excellence Framework (REF) in Ireland.

The Deputy Librarian welcomed the planned briefing sessions, noting that many of the attendees will never have previously been involved in an external review. The Dean of STEM highlighted the need to brief the Dean of Research on the fact that there would be a focus on research funding in the review. She also reported that support for research students taking maternity leave is now considered by funding bodies and that researcher evaluation now focuses more on evaluation of the researcher rather than the research.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and the closed the discussion.

### **QC/21-22/019 Quality Reviews**

#### *1. Implementation Plan for Academic Practice*

The Academic Secretary spoke to the Implementation Plan for Academic Practice circulated with the papers for the meeting. She reported that many of the recommendations will be considered in the wider context of a planned Academic Practice Strategy (2022 – 2025), which will be informed by College's strategic plan to develop a full spectrum digital learning strategy and a curriculum hub to support Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. She did, however, draw the Committee's attention to a number of recommendations arising from the review for consideration, as follows:

1. The completion period of the Special Purpose Certificate (SP Cert) be reduced from 5 years to 3 years for all new participants on the programme, starting in 2021/22 academic year.
2. The name of the Special Purpose Certificate (SP Cert) be changed to better reflect the nature of the curriculum. The options are (a) Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning, & Assessment (Higher Education) or (b) Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning, & Assessment for Academic Practice.
3. Participation in the Special Purpose Certificate be obligatory, particularly for new faculty.
4. CAPSL, as an entity, be formally stood down and Academic Practice be recognised as a standalone entity within Trinity Teaching and Learning.

The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and opened the discussion to the floor. In response to a query regarding the impact of the shortening of the programme completion time on staff who, for various reasons, may have to defer portions of the programme, the

Academic Secretary confirmed that the requirement was for three years of contact time, and that any deferred period would not be considered as part of that contact time.

With regard to the title of the Special Purpose Certificate, the Dean of Graduate Studies suggested that for early-career staff thinking of moving between roles, the first title might be the more transparent. The Academic Secretary reported that there is not widespread understanding externally of the term 'Academic Practice' but that the use of 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment' in the title better reflects the purpose of the programme. She advised that the School of Education had voiced concern about the inclusion of 'Higher Education' in option (b) and that discussions in that regard were ongoing. The Dean of Health Sciences queried whether the objection to the use of the term 'Higher Education' was that it competed with the M.Ed. in Higher Education and the Academic Secretary confirmed that it was. She noted, however, that there is provision for those who complete the Special Purpose Certificate to put credits towards the M.Ed. She asked whether the Committee would be amenable to approving option (b) if the School of Education does not approve the use of option (a). The VP/CAO suggested that the decision would depend on what the School of Education was comfortable with.

The Academic Secretary invited discussion on the recommendation to '*Consider making participation [in the Programme] obligatory (and/or look at other ways of encouraging participation), particularly for new faculty*' reporting that when last mooted, there had been no appetite in College to make the Special Purpose Certificate obligatory. The Dean of STEM said that she understood how making the programme obligatory could be contentious and might dissuade staff from considering it and that, particularly for new Faculty taking up roles as Chairs, it would be a big ask in terms of the time commitment. The VP/CAO agreed and noted that many new staff have prior and experiential learning that make them suitable to a teaching role. The Deputy Librarian suggested that advertisements for new staff could include a teaching qualification as being desirable. She also noted that the word-of-mouth experience of those who had already completed that Certificate would encourage others to undertake it. The Dean of Health Sciences stated that he was against making it obligatory but proposed that it could be considered in the criteria for promotions. The Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) agreed and said that it might make a difference in a tight jobs market. Prof. Van Damme agreed that in recruiting new staff, the interview panel should assess teaching experience. The Dean of Graduate Studies stressed the need to consider how to promote the certificate more to staff and the VP/CAO agreed with the suggestion that it might be given recognition in the senior promotions process. A Committee member stressed the need to consider the impact of the reduced timeframe for completion of the programme on staff taking maternity leave if the programme was to be made compulsory.

The Academic Secretary advised that CAPSL, as an entity, no longer exists as its constituent parts (Student Learning, Student Evaluation and e-Learning) had migrated to other units. She recommended that CAPSL as an entity be stood down and that 'Academic Practice' be

recognized as a standalone entity. In response to a query from the Director of IT Services, she confirmed that, in practice, this would mean a re-labelling of CAPSL as Academic Practice (AP).

Noting the critical role played by AP staff during the pandemic, Ms. Callaghan concluded by reporting that the Reviewers had made a strong recommendation around the staffing of Academic Practice, as many of its staff are project-based or on contract. She reported that she will be seeking approval for a funding model and staffing plan to be considered within the context of the TT&L budget, the Digital Learning Strategy, the Curriculum Hub and the HEA.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer thanked Committee members for their input and closed the discussion. The Quality Committee recommended the following decisions to Council for approval:

**Action/Decision:**

**019 1(i):** The completion time of the Special Purpose Certificate be reduced from five years to three years, with allowance for a longer time to completion, but not exceeding five years, for participants who for professional or personal reasons cannot complete within the three-year period.

**019 1(ii):** The name of the Special Purpose Certificate be changed to the '*Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning, & Assessment for Academic Practice*'.

**019 1(iii):** That 'CAPSL' be replaced by 'Academic Practice' and that it be recognised as an entity in its own right.

**QC/21-22/019 Quality Reviews**

*2. Update on the Implementation of the Irish Medical Council report*

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Michael Gill, Head of the School of Medicine, Professor Joseph Harbison, Director of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate, and Ms. Shannon Keegan, Quality, Accreditation and Rankings Manager to the meeting to speak to a presentation on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Irish Medical Council accreditation review in 2018. Professor Gill spoke to the key points of the presentation, which included steps taken by the School to (i) improve communication with students; (ii) provide training to staff on the use of Blackboard and Panopto, (iii) facilitate the input of stakeholders to the curriculum review process, (iv) address issues regarding variation in the quality of placements, (v) re-evaluate the academic and pastoral supports available for students and (vii) fill a number of professional vacancies. He noted that while College assistance may help to address some problems (e.g. the pace of recruitment of new and replacement posts), others will require additional Health Service and Clinical Placement provider assistance, and some will require a National response as they relate to systemic financial problems within the Irish Medical Education system. He concluded by praising the resilience and professionalism of School staff and students during the pandemic. This sentiment was supported by Prof. Harbison.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Gill and expressed the hope that having more ownership of the recruitment process through the strategic staffing plan would speed up the recruitment process for Schools. In the ensuing discussion, Professor Harbison commented on the need to balance the input of the Medical Council to the undergraduate curriculum against Trinity's independence to teach its own curriculum, and the VP agreed that the unique Trinity education should be supported where possible. The Senior Lecturer congratulated everyone involved in responding to the recommendations, particularly in the midst of the pandemic, and praised the willingness of the Head of School and DUGTL to meet with students. Professor Gill acknowledged the work of the student reps in this regard.

In relation to the provision of video conferencing, the Academic Secretary noted that this recommendation had been made before the advent of the pandemic and wondered whether Covid had expedited its implementation. Professor Harbison confirmed that video conferencing had been introduced in response to the location of the School's students across different sites, and had worked well. The issue now would be trying to bring students back to in-person teaching and plans to address this include the increased use of small group teaching. In relation to the gathering of feedback from stakeholders on the curriculum, the Academic Secretary asked what the focus of the feedback was. Professor Gill stated that there would be a focus on the principles and background of the curriculum, and how assessment drives education. He stated that the School was in the early stages of looking at the bigger principles and the required level of small group vs other teaching. Professor Harbison expressed concern about the impact of increased contact hours and curriculum overload on vulnerable students. The Dean of Health Science congratulated the School on implementing the accreditation report whilst supporting the vaccination and testing programme, and the hospitals. The DTLUG concluded by stating that many of the issues outlined are systemic around funding of educational education.

With regard to the re-accreditation visit planned for February 2022, Professor Gill reported that the School had been asked to circulate a questionnaire to staff and students which, he felt, was not well designed. He expressed concern that negative student responses to what might be described a poorly-designed questionnaire could influence the reviewers' response. He concluded by thanking Ms. Shannon Keegan, Quality, Accreditation and Rankings Manager, for her work.

The VP/CAP thanked the representatives from the School, and closed the discussion.

### **QC/21-22/019 Quality Reviews**

#### *3. Updated Schedule of Quality Reviews 2022- 2028*

The Quality Officer spoke to an updated schedule of quality reviews circulated with the papers. She reported that the seven-year cycle of reviews had been disruption due to Covid-19 and that only one review, conducted virtually, had taken place in the last two years. She advised that the reviews scheduled for the remainder of the 2021/22 academic year were originally scheduled for March – May 2020, but had been cancelled. She noted that Trinity had agreed with QQI that the Trinity Education Programme (TEP) could be considered as a review of undergraduate education but that it was now time to re-engage with Schools,

Linked Providers, Transnational, Research and non-Academic units regarding the re-commenced review schedule. Ms. Smith advised that the Terms of Reference for a Thematic review of Health and Counselling would come to the next Quality Committee meeting for consideration and that a planned review of Linked Providers would be discussed under the next agenda item.

The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and noted that, in acknowledgement of the pressure that Schools have been under in the last two years, no academic reviews have been scheduled for 2022/23. The Dean of STEM, noting how resource intensive reviews are, observed that there were two STEM Schools being reviewed in 2024/25 and three in 2026/27, and she asked whether some of these could be spread into the 2027/28 year. The Quality Officer undertook to try to accommodate the request.

### **QC/21-22/019 Quality Reviews**

#### *4. Draft Procedures for Quality Reviews of Linked Providers*

The Quality Officer introduced draft *Procedures for Quality Reviews of Linked Providers*, developed to review the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance procedures of the Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) and Marino Institute of Education (MIE), in accordance with the QQI Act 2012. She reported that the Procedures would be considered by the February meeting of the relevant Associated College Degrees Committee (ACDC) and that the current focus of Linked Providers' attention is on implementing the Quality Assurance procedures approved by Trinity in 2020. She reported that the QQI Statement of Strategy 2022-2025 indicates that QQI will progress work on the International Education Mark (IEM) in 2022, with a view to implementing the assessment process against a revised *Code of Practice for the Provision of Programmes of Education and Training to International Learners (2015)* in 2023. Should Linked Providers wish to apply for the International Education Mark, it is a pre-requisite under the existing process that they have completed the review of effectiveness of quality assurance procedures prior to the application process. She reported that the QQI strategy has a planned implementation of the IEM in 2023 and that both Linked Providers intend to apply for it. Like all units undergoing the process for the first time, they will need additional support. The VP/CAO thanked the Quality Officer and requested that comments/feedback from Committee members be returned by the end of February. Feedback will inform a final version to be considered by the Quality Committee on the 14 April 2022, University Council on the 4 May 2022 and College Board on the 18 May 2022.

### **QC/21-22/020 Any other business**

There was no other business.

The Committee noted the following:

- B.1 Institutional Review.
  - (i) Revised Profiles of the External Review Team.
  - (ii) Draft schedule of meetings for the Main Review Visit.
- B.2 Updated School Review Procedures.
- B.3 Updated Trinity Research Institute (TRI) Review Procedures.