



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

**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Quality Committee

26th September 2022, 11.00am – 13.00pm

Minutes

Present

Professor Orla Sheils, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer, *Chair*
Professor Sylvia Draper, Dean of Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)
Professor Brian O'Connell, Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences (HS)
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor David Shepherd, Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Ms. Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary
Ms. Roisin Smith, Quality Officer
Ms. Orla Cunningham, Interim Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Ms. Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
Professor Dirk Van Damme, External Member
Ms. Zöe Cummins, Education Officer Students' Union

Apologies

Professor Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS)
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences representative
Mr. Patrick Magee, Corporate Services Division (CSD) representative

In attendance

- Professor John Gormley (Programme Director - TCD), Professor Colin Doherty (Head of School of Medicine), Professor Emma Stokes (VP Global Engagement), Associate Professor Tan Bhing Leet (Director of Programmes, Health and Social Sciences Cluster - SIT), Dr Ong Peck Hoon (Programme Leader - SIT) for *QC/22-23/002 Quality Review of the joint B. Sc. (Hons) in Physiotherapy, Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD)*.
- Professor Jane Farrar (Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology) and Professor Derek Nolan (Head of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology) for *QC/22-23/004 Quality Review of the School of Genetics and Microbiology and the School of Biochemistry and Immunology*.
- Professor Nicola Marchetti (School of Engineering) and Professor Goetz Botterweck (School of Computer Science) for *QC/22-23/004 Engineers Ireland - Accreditation Reports*.
- Dr. Liz Donnellan, Quality Office, *Secretary to the Committee*

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) welcomed members to the meeting. In particular, she welcomed the external member Professor Dirk van Damme, joining the meeting online, and Ms. Zöe Cummins (Education Officer of the Students Union), attending her first Quality Committee meeting. Referencing the email that had been circulated to the College community regarding the participation of the Graduate Students Union (GSU) in College committees, the VP/CAO advised members that there was currently no GSU representative on the Committee.

QC/22-23/001 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 14th April 2022

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 14th April 2022 were approved.

QC/22-23/002 Quality Review of the joint award B. Sc. (Hons) in Physiotherapy, Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD)

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor John Gormley (Programme Director, TCD), Professor Colin Doherty (Head of the School of Medicine, TCD) and Professor Emma Stokes (VP Global Engagement, TCD) to the meeting. She also welcomed the attendees joining the meeting remotely from the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) - Associate Professor Tan Bing Leet (Director of Programmes, Health & Social Sciences Cluster, SIT) and Dr Ong Peck Hoon (Programme Leader, SIT)

The VP/CAO invited Professor Gormley to begin the discussion and he gave a short overview of the history of Trinity's partnership with SIT. He reported that the four-year joint degree in Physiotherapy commenced in September 2016, with Trinity providing teaching on 25% of the credit value of the programme and SIT providing 75% of the credit value. Professor Gormley advised that one-year degree conversion programmes for SIT diploma holders in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Radiation Therapy and Diagnostic Radiography had been developed by Trinity in 2012 and 2014, and that the decision to develop a joint degree had built on the success of these. The programme is due to terminate in 2024.

Professor Gormley welcomed the reviewers' report, noting that the reviewers commended the quality of the programme and the academic performance of the students. They made recommendations in four main areas: (i) the curriculum, (ii) the students' preparedness for clinical placements, (iii) the rollout of the research component and (iv) assessment. Professor Gormley welcomed the recommendation to place Year 1 students in the clinical environment but noted the logistical difficulties of implementing this. He reported that the programme currently offers students early exposure to the clinical setting through service-learning components embedded within modules. Working with clinical partners, the programme also offers volunteering and work exposure opportunities for interested students.

Concerning assessment, Professor Gormley reported that the academic partners are committed to reviewing the assessments in years 3 and 4 to reduce over-assessment and to ensure that assessments reflect the objectives of the modules. He noted that, with less than two academic years remaining of the programme, it will be challenging to implement all of the recommendations. Those that will not be implemented before the end date of the programme will, however, provide SIT with useful issues to explore in their own standalone B.Sc. in Physiotherapy, the first intake of which commenced in 2021. He stated that the partnership has been beneficial to both institutions at undergraduate level but that unfortunately there have been no developments in the area of postgraduate education or at research level. He concluded by noting that students of the programme leave with good degrees and are able to fast track into the Australian employment market, where very high standards are required.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Gormley and, noting the strong commendations in the report, remarked that there were pertinent points that needed to be addressed. The Faculty Dean congratulated the School and the Discipline for keeping the programme running under the difficult circumstances posed by the pandemic.

The VP/CAO invited comments from colleagues in the Singapore Institute of Technology. Dr Peck Hoon welcomed the reviewers' positive comments on the partnership and reported that SIT would take the review recommendations on board and integrate them into its own programmes. She noted that endeavoring to preparing students earlier for placement was a universal problem and not confined to the joint Physiotherapy programme. She reported that the last two cohorts of students on the programme had been sent on service learning and voluntary work in order to address this issue. She acknowledged the impact of the pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions on the ability of Trinity staff to travelling to Singapore, and she undertook to continue to work with Professor Gormley to implement the review recommendations.

The VP/CAO queried whether there would be an Implementation Plan (IP) and the Quality Officer reported that an Implementation Plan focusing on the final two years of the programme would be brought to the December Quality Committee meeting. The Vice-Provost Global Engagement (VPGE) reported that the reviewers' recommendations would be considered in the coming year. She reported that the introduction of innovative practice-based learning arising from the pandemic would be considered in the round by the College community. Regarding the development of a joint masters degree, she suggested by way of an example that the area of musculoskeletal physiotherapy hadn't been explored to date but could be discussed with SIT and the wider Physiotherapy discipline.

The Chief Risk Officer noted the specific challenges that Covid-19 had posed to the well-being of students and queried how this could be addressed. Professor van Damme suggested that the review team should have been larger, reporting that a panel of two would not normally be acceptable for the review of a joint degree. He also stated that it was not clear to him from the report why the collaboration had been established, what the objectives were, whether they had been realized and what Trinity and SIT had gained from the collaboration. The Academic Secretary clarified that there had been many attempts to establish a larger panel but that the difficulties posed by the time difference between Dublin and Singapore and the uncertainty around travel restrictions had impacted on the availability of many potential reviewers. Having finally secured a date and with the requirement to review the programme before the end of the partnership in 2024, the decision was taken to proceed with the team of two for the dates secured in 2022. The Dean of Health Sciences stressed that the review report had met the terms of reference for the review, and he cautioned against mission creep. The Academic Secretary queried the mechanisms in place in SIT, year-on-year, to address issues raised. Professor Bhing Leet reported that policy revisions are one way in which issues are addressed, citing recent revisions to the assessment policy aimed at managing the number of assessments.

The VP/CAO thanked the School of Medicine staff, the Faculty Dean, the VPGE, colleagues in SIT, the review team and the internal facilitator, and she closed the discussion.

Decision:

002.1 The Quality Committee recommended the review of the joint award B. Sc. (Hons) in Physiotherapy, Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Trinity College Dublin (TCD) to Council for approval.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies joined the meeting at this point.

QC/22-23/003 Matters arising from the minutes of the 14 April 2022

QC/21-22/023 Update on the Institutional Review

The Academic Secretary reported that the Institutional Review report had been received by Trinity and that an institutional response had been sent to QQI. The report, which identified issues in three main areas – Communication, Governance and Policies – will be considered by the Quality Committee following its approval by QQI.

QC/21-22/024 Annual Faculty Quality Reports (2020/21). The Quality Officer reported that the consolidated Annual Faculty Quality Report and the presentation from the Faculty Deans were considered by Council on the 1 June 2022. She noted that the circulation of the report and presentation to the Committee (included on the agenda as item B1) was in response to a request from the Deputy Librarian in 2021.

QC/22-23/004 Quality Review of the School of Genetics and Microbiology and the School of Biochemistry and Immunology

(i) Quality Review of Genetics and Microbiology

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Jane Farrar, Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology to the meeting. She invited the Dean of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) to initiate the discussion by outlining her response to the specific issues raised in the Genetics and Microbiology report. Providing some context for the review, the Dean reported that the Schools were reviewed by the same review panel and that the Terms of Reference for the review had included the identification of opportunities for increased synergies between the two Schools. The Dean reported that many of the issues raised were common to both Schools including concerns around administrative supports and an increase in workload which emerged during the pandemic. The review also considered how better to connect the disciplines of Genetics and Microbiology in a way that is beneficial to both. Currently there is an asymmetry in terms of funding and postdoctoral students and the Dean remarked that there is an opportunity for a rebalancing of numerical success for Microbiology in the coming decade.

The Head of School thanked the reviewers, reporting that the review had been a very valuable process for the School and for her personally. The reviewers found the School's teaching and research to be excellent and it praised the School's leadership team. The review identified the integration of the two Disciplines as a key issue and Professor Farrar acknowledged that their location in separate buildings makes this process more difficult. She reported that steps had already been undertaken before the review to increase integration and this process has since been renewed with vigor. A module jointly-taught by academic staff across both disciplines has been developed and implemented in 2022/23. Other opportunities for synergy at UG level are being considered. At postgraduate level, a seminar series that brings postgraduate and postdoctoral students from both disciplines together in an informal environment has been initiated, and it is hoped that this will stimulate networking and collaboration. Plans are also underway to include academics from both disciplines on thesis committees. Going forward, joint programmes and research projects in cross-cutting areas such as Microbiomes and Genomics will be considered. Core facilities are vital and the Bioinformatics facilities, in particular, were highlighted by the review team as providing excellent research support.

Referencing the Reviewers' comments on the College's funding model, Professor Farrar highlighted the impact of the budgetary model and associated budgetary constraints on the ability of the School to operate optimally, to support infrastructure and to plan for growth. She also stressed the need to fully understand the impact of the new Budget Planning and Allocation (BPA) model on Schools. The VP/CAO questioned if this aspect fell within the remit of the review but clarified that under the new model, there will be an increase in allocation to Schools from 42% to 60% and the intention is that there will be a more equitable distribution of funding. Noting that funding is an issue arising from multiple School reviews, Professor Farrar suggested that this body of evidence could be brought to government to make a case for increased funding.

With regard to the recent requirement to admit more undergraduate students in response to sectoral and strategic imperatives, Professor Farrar highlighted the impact of this on the School's ability to provide quality capstone projects for these students. Traditionally, these projects have been funded from PI grants. Supporting an increased number of UG students impacts on the School's ability to maintain research activity. At postgraduate level, harmonisation of the PG experience is a priority and Professor Farrar reported that the Director of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning will be working on this.

With regard to postdoctoral and early career researchers, developing their career path is crucial and the School is working on grants to support this. In conclusion, Professor Farrar reported that she had met with the Head of School for Biochemistry and Immunology to discuss synergies and in this regard, joint PhD students, joint academic appointments and joint thesis committees are being considered. She queried whether there would be matching finance from Trinity for such initiatives.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Farrar and reported that she was working with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of Graduate Studies on an admissions strategy which would provide a roadmap for future admissions decisions. She also referred Prof Farrar to the work being led by the Dean of Graduate Studies on the postgraduate Renewal Programme. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies stressed the importance of the capstone project as a key element of the Trinity Education Project (TEP). With regard to the PhD student experience, the Dean of Graduate Studies acknowledged the challenge in multidisciplinary Schools of creating a postgraduate student community and welcomed the work being undertaken by the School in this regard. Noting that communication to PhD students was also highlighted in the report, she reported that specific orientation sessions for PhD students have been initiated to ensure that this cohort's particular information needs are addressed. In relation to the reviewers' comments on EU and non-EU fees, the DGS reported that it was a complex issue requiring careful consideration as removing non-EU fees from the current system would have profound and deleterious consequences on wider College finances.

The Chief Risk Officer recommended that the Implementation Plan (IP) should highlight issues that are outside the control of the School and accept that where there are dependencies there will be risk. She also suggested that the IP should reference work being undertaken elsewhere in College to address issues raised in the report. Professor van Damme welcomed the conciseness of the report. Noting the significant issues raised by the review team around postgraduate education, he queried the short response from the School. Professor Farrar confirmed that the issue would be dealt with in greater detail in the IP, as the format of the response did not allow for a detailed commentary. She concluded by thanking everyone involved in the review.

*The Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology left the meeting at this point.
The Director of Student Services and the Head of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology joined the meeting at this point.*

(ii) Quality Review of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Derek Nolan, Head of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology to the meeting. The Dean of STEM reported that the key issues pertaining to the School were governance structures and the ability to influence policy, and the repayment of the loan on the TBSI building. She reported that the increase in undergraduate students in the School has been accommodated by the Biomedical and Biosciences stream of TR071 and that while student numbers will return to 2019/20 levels, there is a resulting bulge of students coming through that will require access to facilities in the Biosciences institution.

Professor Nolan thanked the VP/CAO for the opportunity to meet the Committee and remarked that he was very happy with the Reviewers' comments regarding the performance of the School. He reported that growth was achieved against the odds by asking School staff going the extra mile but that it was not sustainable to keep asking people to do so. The appointment of a School Administrative Manager has been transformative in terms of supporting activities that generate income, but additional staff are still required and some leading academics will retire in the next few years. The School intends to develop, in conjunction with the Faculty Dean, a strategic plan for future staff recruitment. The review team remarked on the high-profile coverage of the School's research activities during the pandemic but Professor Nolan stressed that the ability to conduct high-calibre research and research-led teaching depends on having the infrastructure available – imaging systems, flow cytometry etc. The ability of the School to support these cutting edge infrastructure and facilities is key to obtaining external funding from national and international funding bodies. As these facilities are entirely supported by School resources, the reviewers correctly identify the current funding model and the legacy debt issue as issues that need to be addressed going forward. While €450,000 of the debt has been re-paid to-date, the remaining debt must be paid from service teaching by 2025, which Professor Nolan reported was unrealistic. It was noted that the School and the Faculty Dean are in discussion with the University to resolve the issue. The impact of the debt on staff morale was acknowledged.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Nolan for his presentation. Addressing the reviewers' recommendation that the Head of School should have more direct input into decision-making processes beyond the current Heads of School forum, she asked Professor Nolan where else he would like to have a seat. Professor Nolan remarked that there is no mandate for executive roles on the HOS committee and that the structures are not in place to facilitate input elsewhere. He remarked on the tremendous support and advice that he receives from the Faculty Dean and suggested that input at Faculty level or via an executive role on the HOS committee might be most appropriate. The Dean reported that Professor Nolan is the Head of School representative on the Finance Committee but noted that generally Heads of School are not represented on key/principal Committees.

The VP/CAO queried whether College and PIs need to rethink the approach to funding research infrastructures and consider a concerted sectoral approach that might gain more traction and be more sustainable. Professor Nolan agreed that this approach was probably inevitable, noting that key infrastructure is generally located within Schools rather than individual labs. He reported that maintenance costs run into the €100ks, which is prohibitive. He also suggested that the

universities should consider a collective approach to the suppliers and also should consider leasing rather than buying equipment.

The Dean of Graduate Studies reported that issues around the PG student experience in multidisciplinary Schools and stipends for PhDs were part of the work plan for the Postgraduate Renewal project and were also part of the national discussion. She queried whether issues raised by the reviewers around dual use of research was an issue of concern for the Director of Research, and the VP/CAO stated that it was. With regard to knowledge management, the Deputy Librarian highlighted the importance of retirement planning. She also reported that Trinity Development and Alumni (TDA) can assist Schools with equipment purchase through alumni donations. The VP/CAO thanked the Deputy Librarian, noting that the maintenance of the equipment rather than the initial purchase is often where the issues lie.

The Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology rejoined the meeting at this point.

The VP/CAO thanked both Heads of School, noting that the role of Head of School is a difficult one. She also thanked the four reviewers and the internal facilitator, Professor John Parnell. The Dean of STEM thanked the Quality Office staff for their work on the complex review.

The Dean of STEM, the Head of the School of Genetics and Microbiology, and the Head of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology left the meeting at this point.

Reflecting on the reviews of the joint Physiotherapy programme and the review of the two STEM schools, the Academic Secretary remarked that there were many lessons to be learned. In response to a query on the rationale for reviewing the two STEM Schools using the same review team, the Quality Officer clarified that this decision was influenced by the former Dean of STEM as both were small Schools specializing in Life Sciences disciplines. The VP/CAO asked whether the benefits outweighed the workload and also wondered if there had been a perception by the Schools that there was a mission to merge them. The Quality Officer reported that the Schools had been given reassurance at the start that this was not the intention or purpose of the review.

The VP/CAO thanked all involved once more and closed the discussion.

QC/22-23/005 Quality Committee Self-Evaluation survey 2021

The Quality Officer spoke to the report on the Quality Committee Self-Evaluation survey 2021, noting that the Committee's Terms of Reference require the conduct of an annual self-evaluation survey. She reported that response rates to the survey was disappointing this year (47%, n=8/17). Due to this, the approach taken in the report highlighted trends in responses to particular questions over the last four years. She noted the Committee's comments on the National Student Survey and reported that she had asked the Dean of Students to respond to these comments in her annual presentation to the Committee in October. Comments on the effectiveness of the Risk Register in monitoring quality will also be addressed as part of the presentation of the Risk Register to the November meeting. The ability to escalate issues to the appropriate committees and owners, and to monitor these issues beyond the quality assurance cycle has been discussed previously by the Committee in the context of the Annual Faculty Quality Report. In an effort to strengthen the escalation pathways, the Quality Officer reported that the Faculty Deans had included a presentation on issues that they wished to escalate to Council with the submission of the 2021/22 Annual Faculty Quality Report to Council in June 2022.

The Chief Risk Officer queried where/how the Committee ensures that recommendations are closed out and addresses recommendations that remain open at the end of the year. With regard to the low response rates to the survey, the VP/CAO wondered whether the type of questions asked or the timing of the survey were contributing factors. She also wondered whether there was a lack of awareness as to what the data derived from the survey was needed for. The Quality Officer reported that the survey is usually promoted at the last meeting of the year and the VP/CAO, remarking that this was the busiest time of the year, asked if it could be done at a different time. The Quality Officer undertook to consider moving the survey to earlier in the year.

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

Action/Decision:

005.1 The Quality Committee approved the Quality Committee Self-Evaluation survey 2021

QC/22-23/006 Engineers Ireland – Accreditation Reports

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Nicola Marchetti (School of Engineering) and Professor Goetz Botterweck (School of Computer Science) to the meeting to present the highlights of the recent accreditation by Engineers Ireland of Engineering and Computer Science programmes in Trinity.

Professor Marchetti reported that all of the Engineering and Computer Science programmes examined by Engineers Ireland during a site visit in March 2022 had been re-accredited to 2025 with no mandatory recommendations. Speaking to a slide presentation summarizing the comments from the panel regarding the Engineering programmes, he reported that employers were very happy overall with the quality of the Engineering graduates. The panel made a number of recommendations for individual programmes, including a suggestion to include programming earlier in the curriculum (Electronic and Electrical Engineering) and the need for more administrative support for internships (Mechanical Engineering). Professor Marchetti reported that Engineers Ireland have traditionally assessed seven accreditation criteria but that this year they had introduced an additional two - sustainability/energy and management.

Speaking to the key issues raised in the Computer Science accreditation reports, Professor Botterweck noted that the panel had commended the strong links with industry that feed into project work inspired by industry collaborations. This result in graduates that require less time to integrate into the work environment. The accreditation panel recommends better support mechanisms for students and Professor Botterweck reported that the School has already reopened their UG Computing Centre, which provides lunchtime supports for students. The panel also suggested to include complementary skills related to typical software development scenarios. Professor Botterweck reported that this is directly in line with actions taken by the School in the context of its HCI Pillar 3 project on software engineering. He noted that students were concerned about clustering of assessment and to address this, the School will provide more assessment information in module descriptors and encourage students to construct their own assessment calendar.

The VP/CAO thanked Professors Marchetti and Botterweck for their concise presentations, which she suggested did not do justice to the amount of work involved in the accreditation reviews. She also commended both Schools for their industry engagement, which is important for Trinity. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies congratulated the Schools for their positive accreditation reports. Referencing the students' comments on assessment overload, he suggested that they engage with the work of Professor Kevin Kelly, whose work on mapping assessment could be very useful in this regard.

Action/Decision:

006.1 The Quality Committee noted the accreditation reports from Engineers Ireland.

QC/22-23/007 Any other business

The Quality Officer reported that the Annual Dialogue meeting with QQI had taken place on the 18th May 2022 at which Trinity had provided a strategic update to QQI.

There was no further business and the meeting closed.