



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

**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Quality Committee

20 October 2022, 2.00 – 4.00pm

Draft 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 Gail McElroy, Dean of Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences (AHSS)
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
Mr. Patrick Magee, Corporate Services Division (CSD) representative
Ms. Julia Carmichael, Chief Risk Officer
Professor Emma Stokes, Vice-President for Global Engagement
Professor Jan de Vries, Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Gizem Arikan, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences representative
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
Ms. Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Professor Dirk Van Damme, External Member
Ms. Zöe Cummins, Education Officer Students' Union

Apologies

Ms. Orla Cunningham, Chief Operating Officer
Ms. Vickey Butler, Secretary's Office
Mrs. Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian

In attendance

Mr Loughlin Deegan, Director of the LIR for item *QC/22-23/010 Quality Review of the LIR Programmes*.
Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students and Ms. Amy Murray, Quality Office Administrator for *QC/22-23/011 Report on the National Student Survey.ie (UG & PGT) 2022*
Professor Deborah Kelleher for *QC/22-23/012 Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) Quality Assurance*.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (VP/CAO) began the meeting by welcoming the Vice-President for Global Engagement (VPGE), Professor Emma Stokes, to the Committee as the Global Engagement representative.

QC/22-23/008 Draft minutes of the meeting of the 26 September 2022

The draft minutes of the meeting of the 26 September 2022 were approved

QC/22-23/009 Matters arising:

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer reported that the following had been approved by Council at its meeting on the 5 October 2022:

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

QC/22-23/004 (i) Quality Review of the School of Genetics and Microbiology

QC/22-23/004 (ii) Quality Review of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology

QC/22-23/010 Quality Review of the LIR Programmes

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer welcomed the Director of the LIR, Mr Loughlin Deegan, to the meeting and invited the Dean of AHSS to provide some preliminary comments. The Dean welcomed the review and congratulated the LIR on its achievements to date. Noting that the reviewers had made a number of recommendations regarding the strategic direction of the LIR, she advised that these would be considered by the Board of the LIR and that the Committee should confine its discussion to those recommendations that respond to the Terms of Reference for the Review.

The Director of the LIR welcomed the report and said that many of the issues raised by the review had already been on the LIR's agenda to address. He noted that the report echoes the LIR's own ambitions to expand into Units 31 and 32 of the Trinity East Campus and he stressed the importance of maintaining a conversation with Trinity about the capital development of the LIR. He reported that the review had identified the weakness in the academic governance of the LIR and that the Board of the LIR needed to engage with Trinity to agree a new academic governance structure. He suggested that the establishment of a working group with relevant senior officers might be the best way forward in this regard. He reported that the recommended review of the undergraduate curriculum was timely and that he would work with the relevant office in Trinity Teaching and Learning to structure the review. Referencing the student experience, he noted that a comparison between student feedback obtained from the pre-pandemic survey and focus groups and that provided by students during the site visit showed a deterioration in the student experience over that time. He reported that the LIR had rolled out an enhanced induction week at the start of this academic year and that they would continue to work with the student services to improve the offering to their students. He advised that work will begin on a Disability Policy later this year and an Anti-racism Policy will be launched in January 2023. A student/staff Council has been announced and a recently implemented student communication plan is working well.

The Dean of AHSS stated that issues raised in the review around the student experience needed to be addressed. She suggested that the off-campus location of the Academy and the different term-structure for LIR students presented particular challenges in terms of accessing the suite of available welfare and pastoral supports, and she stressed the need to

do more to highlight these supports and encourage their use. With regard to the recommendation to review module and programme learning outcomes and associated assessment practices, the Dean hoped that this would address issues related to student workloads and expectations. She stressed the importance of regularising the role of the Academic Director as it is a key link between Trinity and the LIR in terms of the quality assurance of academic programmes. She noted that the LIR is not currently represented on key Trinity governance structures i.e. USC and GSC. She also advised that the issue of succession planning for the role must be addressed. The incumbent carries out these duties in a voluntary capacity, and it will be difficult to find a replacement if the role is not formalised. The Dean of Graduate Studies reported that some early-stage work had commenced on how to connect the LIR governance structures with those of Trinity and that this issue was intrinsically linked to the role of the Academic Director. The Director of Student Services, reporting that the Counselling and Disability Services were working closely with the LIR and were onsite two evenings a week to support students, undertook to continue to engage with the LIR. The Director of the LIR noted that one of the issues is that the summer term for LIR students runs into July, at which stage many must vacate their accommodation. He noted that the student survey conducted as part of the review found that 85% of students had never engaged with student services and stressed the need to create two-way traffic.

The VP/CAO agreed with Committee members that it was not necessary to develop separate services for LIR students but rather to identify overlaps with existing services and possible efficiencies. The Quality Officer suggested that the curriculum review might result in reduced pressure on students and more opportunities to engage with supports. The Dean of Health Sciences reported that feedback from some students indicated a reluctance to engage with support services due to a fear of being penalized for taking time off or being stigmatized for engaging mental health supports. He pointed to the need to change the culture in our courses, suggesting that there needs to be a more fundamental look at this and that signposting the services wasn't enough.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies praised the progress of the LIR and offered to help with the review of learning outcomes. The VP/CAO concluded by summarizing the three main issues to be addressed – student services, governance and the review of the curriculum. She noted that some of these issues have already begun to be addressed in various ways and that they now need to be consolidated into the IP. She congratulated the Director for his positive engagement with the review process and willingness to address the issues raised. She confirmed the view of the Committee that a working-group needs to be established to look at governance issues. Mr Deegan reported that he had already engaged with the Quality Officer and relevant College Officers prior to the review and was hopeful that a structure could be agreed quickly. The VP/CAO thanked him and closed the discussion.

Decision/Action:

QC/22-23/010.1: The Quality Committee recommended the review of the LIR Programmes to Council for approval.

QC/22-23/010.2 A working group to be established to review an academic governance model between the LIR and Trinity College Dublin.

QC/22-23/011 Report on the National Student Survey.ie (UG & PGT) 2022

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Catherine McCabe, Dean of Students and Ms. Amy Murray, Quality Office Administrator to the meeting to speak to a report on the results of the National Student Survey.ie UG/PGT survey for 2022. Prof. McCabe spoke to a slide presentation on the results, reporting that the response rate in 2021/22 was 35% (3,433) compared to 33% (3,106) in 2020/21. This is the highest response rate achieved by Trinity since the inception of the National Study Survey and was similar to that of Dublin City University (DCU). Ninety-three percent of respondents were full-time, 67% were female and 75% were Irish. Trinity scored higher in two (Reflective and Integrated Learning; Quantitative Reasoning) and lower in two (Effective Teaching Practice; Supportive Environment) of the 10 indicators compared with other Irish Universities, with the Reflective and Integrative Learning indicators continuing to differentiate the Trinity teaching and learning experience from that of other Irish universities. Sixty-seven percent of respondents reported that they had 'not considered' withdrawing from Trinity and the top reason for considering withdrawing was personal or family (11%). Final Year respondents were most likely to consider withdrawing from their programme (58%) and PGT respondents are least likely to consider withdrawing from their programme (74%). A suite of civic engagement questions was piloted by Trinity in 2022, which will inform a new Trinity Civic Engagement strategy. The Dean concluded by noting that the survey had shown that Trinity needs to promote services that help students succeed academically and manage their non-academic responsibilities and that students want more interaction with academics, better communication and a greater focus on timely and effective feedback. She noted that the proposed development of action plans to address issues arising from the survey had been postponed due to the pandemic and said that she would be willing to attend Faculty meetings to re-engage on this.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor McCabe and Ms. Murray and asked if the data could be normalised in future for the purposes of the presentation. The Quality Officer said that this could be explored but that the need to consider the impact on Trinity's ability to benchmark itself against other Irish Universities and any disruption in monitoring of trend data would need to be considered. The Dean of AHSS reported that while staff would love to provide more feedback and small group teaching, staff:student ratios negatively impacted on their ability to do this. The Dean of Health Science welcomed the report but felt that it was too general to be of real help, as the data is so aggregated. The dis-aggregated School-level reports can be more useful but when the response rates are low, the data is not valuable. The Chief Risk Officer suggested that the survey questions may not assess the services/supports that Trinity offers, making it hard for Trinity to score well. She suggested looking at the survey results from the inside out to see what needs to be addressed locally rather than taking a higher-level national view.

The Dean of STEM reported that her Faculty had reviewed the report as a whole and that individual Schools had then been asked to devise one action to address an issue relevant to them. She noted that scores for Reflective and Integrative Learning and Effective Teaching Practices had reduced in STEM and said that the Faculty would reflect on these. With regard to the postgraduate taught (PGT) results, the Dean of Graduate Studies reported that most responses are from masters' students. She suggested that it would be useful to disaggregate the PGT data from the UG data to determine whether there are patterns in the PGT responses. The Education Officer of the Students' Union noted that 'Supportive Environment' was one of the two indicators where Trinity continues to score lower than other Irish Universities. Noting that 11.3% of respondents cited personal or family reasons as possible reasons for withdrawing, she

suggested that the information on learning supports needs to be provided to students throughout the year and not just at orientation. She concluded by stressing the importance of providing timely feedback to students, noting that the current Policy which requires feedback to be provided in 20 days is not being adhered to.

Professor van Damme queried why the impact of the pandemic was not reflected in the survey results. The Quality Officer reported that there were Covid-specific questions in 2020/21 but that all Covid restrictions had been lifted before the field-work for the survey took place this year. Ms. Murray suggested that the scores for collaborative learning and effective teaching practice could reflect the impact of Covid-19. The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies reported that in 2021 the Undergraduate Studies Committee had chosen collaborative learning as a topic for consideration and had asked Schools with high scores for that index to share best practice with DUGTLs from other Schools. He wondered if something similar could be considered this year. Regarding the provision of timely feedback to students, the VPGE suggested that that this needed to be looked at further if the 20-day policy is not working.

Stressing the importance of academic and learning supports, the Director of Student Services reported that the University's small learning support team (1.5 FTE) was very effective, providing a wide range of programmes that are well attended, particularly by international students. She asked how Trinity compares with other institutions in this regard. The VPGE reported that it is difficult to get empiric data on this. She disputed the anecdotal contention that non-EU students use the support services more than other students. She suggested that usage of the services by international students needs to be objectively examined, noting not only that their needs are different to those of other students but also that they are a non-homogenous group with ethnic and cultural backgrounds and needs that are different from each other.

The Academic Secretary reported that recurring issues are raised in the survey every year and that the results seem to be broadly similar across all the universities. She noted that the survey was adapted from international surveys and, as such, it may not be the best model in the Irish context. She suggested that we should engage with the sector to devise a survey that is more fit for purpose, and that is shorter and takes less time to complete. In relation to the reflective and integrative learning responses, Ms. Murray queried whether it would be worth establishing a focus group to see how students are interpreting the questions. The Dean of Students agreed that a larger discussion needs to be had on what we use the survey data for.

The VP/CAO thanked the Dean of Students and Ms. Murray and commented that it is a disincentive to students if the results of the survey cannot be not used. She concluded by expressing her appreciation to the Quality Office for the report, acknowledging the considerable amount of work required to produce it.

Action/Decision:

QC/22-23/011.1: The Quality Committee recommended the report on the National Student Survey.ie (UG/PGT) 2022 to Council for approval.

QC/22-23/012 Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM) – Quality Assurance

The VP/CAO welcomed Professor Deborah Kelleher, Director of RIAM, to the meeting. Professor Kelleher spoke to the key points of a slide presentation on the reviews of RIAM's Finance Office and RIAM's NFQ level 7 and 8 programmes, which were the first internal

reviews conducted by RIAM under its new Quality Standards and Assurance Policy. She reported that, prior to engagement with Trinity on RIAM's quality assurance processes, reviews at RIAM had more closely resembled quality assurance audits. There had been significant learnings from the two reviews, however, which would inform future reviews and the preparations for RIAM's institutional review.

Speaking to the review of the Finance Office, Professor Kelleher advised that the review had resulted in six recommendations, with management actions that would be reviewed in June 2023. She reported that the review visit had not incorporated a meeting between the review team and the finance committee and had therefore reduced the reviewers' 360-view of the finance function. Lessons learned from this had informed the review of level 7 and 8 programmes which tasked the reviewers to consider amongst other things, the strategic direction of the programmes. The resulting six recommendations have encouraged RIAM to consider expansion of RIAM's offer from one that is wholly (99%) focused on classical training to one that resonates with a general trend for musicians who are genre-fluid, adaptable, and able to respond to an increasingly varied (and often insecure) professional environment in a very productive way. This change will need to be supported by staff that are trained and aware of the new landscape, and RIAM is reviewing its CPD according. The reviewers also support RIAM's increased engagement with Trinity through the RIAM holistic capstone project and the RIAM-developed Trinity Elective (TE) *Music-making, the Arts, and Society*. Professor Kelleher concluded by outlining the reviews planned to 2025.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Kelleher for her comprehensive response and invited the Quality Officer to speak to the revised RIAM Quality Standards and Assurance Policy. Ms. Smith reported that she had worked with RIAM to update the Policy to incorporate lessons learned from the finance review. These included incorporation of reference to corporate/administrative units, in addition to RIAM academic programmes, and procedural detail on the conduct of reviews.

The Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies congratulated the RIAM team and in relation to the development of the TE and the capstone project, and encouraged Professor Kelleher to engage with Professor Graham Murdock, chair of TE Sub-committee on any issues relating to the TE. The VP/CAO echoed Professor Shepherd's comments, noting the considerable amount of work involved. She also encouraged Professor Kelleher to engage with other relevant members of the Trinity community. The Academic Secretary queried the CPD plans for staff and Professor Kelleher outlined two projects to be initiated in 2022 and 2023 aimed at principal study instrumental staff. The first involves peer-to-peer learning for four staff through the EU-funded *Innovative Conservatoires Seminars*. Participation requires onsite workshops in the Hague with international colleagues from all over Europe, followed by monthly online meetings. The second CPD concerns working with teaching staff to expand their expertise in repertoire outside the 'classical' genre by considering issues of equity and privilege in the 'Musical Canon', using a 'Rubric for Leading Epistemic Change in Higher Education Music Programmes' developed by Kathleen Douth, D.M.A.

The VP/CAO thanked Professor Kelleher and closed the discussion.

Action/decision:

QC/22-23/012.1: The Quality Committee recommended the review of the RIAM Finance Office and the RIAM level 7/8 programmes to Council for noting.

QC/22-23/012.2: The Quality Committee recommended the revised RIAM Quality Standards and Assurance Policy to Council for approval.

QC/22-23/013 Progress Report for Academic Practice

The Academic Secretary spoke to a progress report on the implementation of the Academic Practice review, conducted from the 10-12 March 2021. She advised that many of the recommendations had been implemented or were in train. The name-change for the special purpose certificate to 'Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Academic Practice' was approved by Council and implemented in Hilary Term 2022. Funding has been secured under the HEA Teaching and Learning funds for two permanent academic developer positions and recruitment of a new Head of Academic Practice is underway following the resignation of the current incumbent. These staffing changes will provide a secure platform for AP to develop in line with Trinity's learning and development needs. Ms. Callaghan reported that the recommendation to make the special purpose certificate obligatory has not been addressed and would require Council approval. She concluded by stating that the review had been comprehensive and that much had been gained from it. The VP/CAO thanked the Academic Secretary and queried whether completion of the special purpose certificate might be made mandatory as a quantifiable objective criterion for academic progression. The Academic Secretary reported that there had been little appetite at the Quality Committee or Council for it to be made mandatory and that no broad College-level discussion had yet taken place.

Action/decision:

QC/22-23/013.1: The Quality Committee recommended the Progress Report for Academic Practice to Council for approval.

QC/22-23/014 Any other business.

There was no other business.

Section B: For noting

B.1 Revision to the External Examiner process

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to the proposal to review the external examiner process, which had been approved at Council on the 5 October 2022.

B.2 Updated schedule of Quality Reviews

The Quality Officer drew the Committee's attention to an updated schedule of quality reviews. She reported that most reviews had been put on hold during the pandemic and that a catch-up process was now required. The VP/CAO noted that Schools had been granted a leave of absence in relation to reviews during Covid but that indications from Heads of School were that they were now ready to re-engage with the process. The VPGE noted that the slippage in the timeline of the implementation of the International Education Mark (IEM) may impact on the review of Global Engagement, and she requested that this be minuted.

There was no other business and the meeting closed.