

Research Committee

Minutes of 7th March 2003

Present: Michael Gibney (Dean of Research), Dermot Kelleher, David Dickson, Deirdre Savage, John Saeed, Dylan Scammell, Sheila Greene, Clive Williams, John Dillon, Jim Sexton, Doris Alexander, Margaret O'Mahony

Not Present: Michael Coey, Hilary Tovey

1. Minutes of the Meeting of 7th February 2003

Minutes approved and signed by Chairman.

2. Matters Arising - Freedom of Information

Mr Tom Turpin, Freedom of Information Officer, discussed the implications of putting the minutes from the Research Committee on the College external web site. It was noted that of the committees which put their minutes on the web, many do not mention names or give a great deal of detail. It therefore causes more work for the secretariat and is more cumbersome to keep records of meetings. Some committees will put their minutes up on the external web site and some will not. If the Committee believes that they are dealing with sensitive issues, they should not go down the route of making them available externally. If the Committee ends up continually dealing with requests under Freedom of Information, it may reconsider its position.

Outcome: The Research Committee decided to have its minutes available internally only, and an annual report on research will make the activities of the Research Committee available to the external community.

3. High Performance Computing - Centre Review

The Committee received a list of names of potential reviewers, and discussed which names should be chosen. They decided on the following three: Dr J. Valdorf, Innovation Europe; Prof. Risto Nieminen, Helsinki University of Technology; and Prof. P. McCabe, Business Studies, College. The Dean of Research will ask them if they would be happy to act as reviewers for the HPC centre.

4. Start-up Grant 2003

It was agreed that Start-up funds may be used to fund a Ph.D. studentship. The Dean of Research will go through the list of applications with the Research Office in order to ascertain which are ineligible.

Andrew Mayes had asked whether the Research Committee would consider allowing a professor to apply for start-up funding as, with the current financial situation, he would not be getting the usual professor's dowry. However, two issues were raised. First, whilst the Committee was sympathetic to the application, it did not want to set a precedent. Second, if such an application were accepted, would it now be regarded as a late application? It was decided that the Dean of Research would contact the secretary to ascertain the future policy on dowries, and also contact A Mayes to let him know that we are seeking more details on the situation from College before making a final decision. The Committee noted that utilising the start-up funding was not an acceptable way to support professors generally. If the decision was that the professor could apply, the applicant would apply in the usual way but constraints may have to be established on the amount of money available – perhaps about €5K.

Joseph Keane was not considered eligible under the current rules for Start-up funding but should be considered for the Maintenance Grant.

Amanda Murphy is on a one-year renewable grant and does not appear to be eligible. In addition, she appears to have made her application with a proposal which was perhaps more appropriate for the Health Research Board.

The Committee decided to remove those not eligible from the list, and then take the 'minus 20%' option and see how close the total amount allocated comes to the €250K that is available for the scheme. The two physicists should not be included in this total as their grants are coming from Physics Department not Research Committee funds.

5. Maintenance Grant

Some 327 applications have been received of which 64 have still to be processed. The Dean of Research is to make a judgement call on whether, if any, late applications will be accepted for evaluation.

6. **Research Strategy**

A discussion took place concerning the document entitled “A Strategy to Realise our Vision of Trinity”. The document indicates areas to be fostered. It was suggested that each area should have a director and that perhaps there ought to be a Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies. The concept is that unless there exists a structure or framework over the areas with aims and objectives, the areas may not in fact develop to the extent that they could.

Other members of the Committee suggested that perhaps a new model of Dean of Faculty with extra duties might be the way forward. It would however be difficult to jump from the level of faculty to interdisciplinary/interfaculty level whilst striving to achieve inclusiveness and fairness. It was also suggested that perhaps the Dean of Research could act as a Dean of Interdisciplinary Studies. However it was acknowledged that both Deans of Faculty and the Dean of Research already have very full agendas.

Another option would be to expand the role of director of each of the strategic areas but it was still felt that it would be important to have someone to ‘police’ them.

The strategic plan for the College will come to Board in the next two months or so.

It was pointed out that the concept of a joint forum was to provide a means of unity rather than disunity, and the question remained as to what structure would be needed to develop and support the areas of research and to bring the strands together. For example, environment is not mentioned as a strategic area but rather one that forms part of each of the four areas mentioned. This is not to preclude environment from gaining recognition as a strategic area by College in its own right in the future. The strategic areas need to be driven in an organised and transparent way so that it is not derisive and it is important that the overall architecture is one that allows new areas to develop.

A forum to meet and exchange ideas to develop research sub-themes is needed. Rationalisation, for example, in terms of purchasing an expensive piece of equipment for many, would be more cost effective. The identification of gaps in research and development of expertise to fill those niches could be done through a unified approach. Seeking external sources of funding needs in many cases a multidisciplinary approach to be successful and this could be facilitated through the development

of such strategic areas. Areas of research that are small at present but which should be supported and developed, could form an important part of the process. However, the over-riding factor is that the areas need to be as inclusive as possible and the director needs to be objective and not one who is intent on just developing their own particular area of interest.

D Kelleher presented the document outlining the development of a strategic approach in the Life Sciences in College. This was discussed and positively received by the Research Committee who felt that, subject to the Provost's approval, it might be used as a template for other areas. This is to be included on the next agenda and perhaps the Provost could be asked to attend the next meeting to discuss same.

The next meeting will take place in the Board Room, No. 1 College Green, at 2 p.m. on Friday 4th April 2003.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____