

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2010

Present: Professor Patrick Prendergast (*Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and Chair*), Dr David Lloyd (*Dean of Research and Deputy Chair, DoR*), Professor Michael Marsh (*Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences*), Professor Colm O'Moráin (*Dean of Health Sciences*), Dr James Callaghan (*Associate Director of Trinity Research & Innovation, ADTRI, and Secretary*), Professor Carol O'Sullivan (*Dean of Graduate Studies*), Professor James Wickham, Professor Poul Holm, Professor Dermot Kelleher (*Faculty of Health Science Representative*), Professor Linda Doyle, Ms Patricia Callaghan (*Academic Secretary*), Professor Shane Allwright, Dr John Walsh (*Chair of the Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)*)

In attendance: Dr Camilla Kelly (*Research Development Office & Minute Secretary to the Committee*), Ms Doris Alexander (*Research Development Officer*), Ms Deirdre Savage (*Nominee of Treasurer*), Diarmuid O'Brien (*Nominee of Professor John Boland, CRANN*)

Apologies: Professor John Boland

Not present: Professor Clive Williams (*Dean of Engineering, Mathematics & Science*), Ronan Hodson (*President of the Graduate Students' Union*)

The Committee welcomed the incoming Chair of the TRSA, Dr John Walsh.

Section A

RS/09-10/22 Minutes of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009

The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed subject to the following amendments.

Item RS/09-10/16

Paragraph 6:

Change "He pointed out that, for example, with FP7 applications, 47% of these missed the internal deadlines." to "In response to a point on FP7 raised by the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and Chair, the ADTRI pointed out that 47% of applicants missed the internal deadlines."

Paragraph 8:

Change "The ADTRI also pointed out that TR&I currently handle all....." to "The ADTRI also pointed out that TR&I currently handle many....."

Action point number 2:

2<sup>nd</sup> action: The ADTRI requested that this be deleted as the memo to which the action referred had been clarified in a preceding paragraph.

Item RS/09-10/17

Paragraph 2: Add a reference to the relevant Personnel and Appointments Committee (PAC) meeting minute (PAC 2006 -07/56).

**RS/09-10/23 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

RS/09-10/14: The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and Chair clarified that the Research Proposal and Award Management System (RPAMS) is not on hold and is still in process. The tender will proceed, pending delivery of a change process document. College views RPAMS as an absolute necessity. The Interim Chief Operating Officer had asked for some clarifications with regard to the requirements for RPAMS before issuing the tender.

**RS/09-10/24 Research Staff Career Structures**

A copy of the Higher Education Research Group (HERG) Working Group (WG) on Research Careers Draft Framework Document was circulated with papers for the meeting.

The Committee was informed that Research Fellows make up the largest category of job title in College, hence it is important that the Committee gives full attention to the HERG document.

Giving background to the document, the DoR explained that the HERG WG is a funder's forum (funders such as SFI, HRB, and HEA). The IUA is also a member of the WG. The DoR was invited to a WG meeting on the day this draft Research Careers Draft Framework Document was discussed and tabled for approval. The funders approved the document, but it was then put on hold by the Department of Finance pending the 2010 Budget. Now that the budget has been formalised it is likely that the issue of researcher careers will come to the fore again. If College intends implementing the recommendations in this document, there will be a lot of implications for College.

The Chair of the TRSA commented that the document has many positive features and that it is obviously very well thought out. He supported the idea of career progression from Researcher to Senior Researcher, as proposed in the HERG document. He noted however that the idea of an 'internship' of 4 years for PhD graduates, as put forward in the document, is not appropriate for postgraduate degree

holders. If this is allowed to remain, it would devalue the PhD. Mentoring would be a better term to use.

The Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub commented on 3 sections in the document: 1) Section 1.1 - paragraph 2 needs further explanation; 2) Section 3.3, recommendation 5 - put in an actual % of time for career development, perhaps 20%; 3) Section 3.5, recommendation 11 - TCD could take the lead among the HEIs in supporting & promoting female researchers. Perhaps some sort of reward scheme could be put in place, but the percentages that need to be achieved would have to be identified.

In response to point 2, the Dean of Graduate Studies noted that 20% is a lot of time for a researcher to devote to 'non-research' activities, and funders might not be happy.

It was also pointed out by the meeting that the Irish funders may agree to the recommendations in the document, however non-Irish funders also need to be considered. For example, the EU (FP7) may not welcome recommendation 5, which states that "all levels should be encouraged to engage in continuous professional development."

It was also noted that there would be issues in situations where a researcher is not funded by one individual grant.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer informed the meeting that he had been involved in the development of TCD's Academic Titles document. In that document, it states that after 6 years, a Research Fellow may apply for promotion to Senior Research Fellow. However, as yet, no mechanism exists to progress from Research Fellow to Senior Research Fellow. On foot of this HERG document, this process could be reinitiated.

In relation to the recommendation relating to career development, the Head of School of Social Science and Philosophy agreed that measureable career development is needed but that careful consideration should be given when deciding upon appropriate career development tasks. The point was also made about the cost of promotion. In reply, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commented that promotions did not necessarily have to be accompanied by a pay increase.

The Dean of Graduate Studies highlighted the situation where funders have their own titles linked to pay scales; SFI, for example, has a Senior Research Fellow position on its pay scale.

The DoR noted that there may be confusion over what postdoc, Research Fellow and Senior Research Fellow refer to in the HERG document and the Academic Title document.

The meeting commented that the context of "independent" researcher should be clarified and whether a researcher would have to secure independent funding to be eligible to apply for Senior Research Fellow status.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that it would be difficult to accept the document as is for a number of reasons, including the fact that it makes references to postdoctoral researchers and internships. However, much of document could be used for the basis of a new working group.

The Dean of Research commented that this document will be sent to all HEIs asking if they want to adopt the recommendations. TCD will have to have a very good argument for not opting in should it so decide.

The Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub, raised the issue of gender again and suggested that Schools should adopt a policy of rewarding schools for hiring females. The meeting also noted some unease with positive discrimination and commented that figures on staff will reflect many junior female staff but less senior female staff. The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences commented on the fact that different Schools have very different gender balances and a reward scheme may not be appropriate.

The issue of appointing someone to a senior position when they have not yet been in receipt of any grants was also raised. In reply, it was pointed out that many funders will not allow Research Fellows etc to apply for grants. The Faculty of Health Science Representative commented that funding agencies need to be made aware of this situation.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commented that the Committee needed to decide whether the document should be adopted before setting up a working group.

The meeting further noted that the issue of career structures for researchers had a lot of practicalities associated with it, of which funders may not be aware.

The DoR commented that this document was tabled at this meeting because the College's Academic Titles document and PAC recommendations were going ahead without any reference to a national strategy or document.

It was suggested that the document be adopted pending Department of Finance decisions and in tandem with the TCD-centric plan for career structures. The Committee endorsed this suggestion.

*Action: A Working Group on career structures to be set up. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer will initiate this.*

**RS/09-10/25 Dean of Research Annual Report**

A copy of a draft structure of the Dean of Research Annual Report was circulated with papers for the meeting. The Committee was informed that this outline would form the basis of the final

document, which, in its completed form, will be a glossy brochure that can be disseminated outside of College.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer commented that the draft document is going in the right direction and that having such a document available publicly will enhance the reputation of College.

The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences noted that there was a very noticeable lack of metrics relating to the Humanities. In response, the ADTRI replied that the final document could include a section/page with highlights from each Faculty.

The lack of metrics relating to books was highlighted by the Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences and the Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub. In reply, it was suggested that a category outlining 'Numbers of Books Published' by school could be included in the report.

In relation to a chart showing Research Income between 2001 and 2008, the Committee queried what the research income figures would be for 2009 and was informed that the figure would be in the region of €100M.

The Head of School of Social Science and Philosophy commented that the Humanities are not represented in the document, and that specific areas are masked by what is measured. It was also noted that it might be worth including financial information by Faculty. In response, the DoR stated that we would need to be careful as to how information is presented in the document; it is not a competition between Faculties, it is a document that showcases TCD research.

Commenting on a chart showing articles in Nature by Irish institutions between 2004 and 2008, the Faculty of Health Science Representative noted that some of the publications from hospitals such as Our Lady's Hospital are actually TCD publications.

*Action: DoR and ADTRI to have a draft report completed for the next Research Committee meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010, ready to go forward to Council.*

#### **RS/09-10/26 Innovation Bursaries**

A copy of a draft document outlining the new Innovation Bursaries (as per item RS/09-10/17) was circulated with papers for the meeting. The Dean of Graduate Studies introduced this item, noting that the scheme is to be rolled out in the 2010/2011 academic year and that sustainability is not an issue with this scheme as it is only intended to be a 'kick-start' for activity in the College research theme "Sustainable Society".

The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences commented on the composition of the proposed committee for choosing the recipients of the bursaries, noting that three of the committee have a technical background and come from the same Faculty, which may

not be appropriate given that applications may come from any discipline. It also may not be appropriate to have a representative of the Graduate Students Union onboard. In response, the Dean of Graduate Studies suggested that the Faculty Deans (or their nominees) could sit on the committee.

The Faculty of Health Science Representative asked that Table 3 on the estimated costs be amended to include Health Sciences.

The DoR pointed out that the budget for the Research Committee is typically €330K per annum and that this year's budget of €630K is not usual. This bursary scheme will cost ca. €1M over a 4 year period. It was proposed that the surplus of €355K in this year's budget be redistributed over the next 4 years.

In response to a query on eligibility for the bursaries, it was noted that the scheme is only open to internal candidates. However, positions made available through the scheme will be open to both internal and external candidates.

The meeting commented that it might be appropriate to emphasize that the call is intended to explore the theme of a "Sustainable Society".

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that it might be a good idea to specify having a symposium halfway through the 4 year PhD.

The meeting asked for more clarification on the postdoctoral scheme. In reply, the Dean of Graduate Studies stated that the scheme for postdoctoral researchers would consist of a once-off payment of €5K in the first year.

The suggestion was made that these PhD studentships should all come with the proviso that students sign up for an appropriate structured PhD programme. The Dean of Graduate Studies responded that it might be more appropriate to make it a strong recommendation rather than make it mandatory, as the latter course of action might limit students. A better solution would be to just specify a certain number of ECTS that must be completed.

The Committee endorsed the proposal for this new scheme. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer on behalf of the Committee thanked the Dean of Graduate Studies for putting together the proposal.

*Action: The Dean of Graduate Studies to amend Table 3 on the proposal document to include Health Sciences.*

*Action: The Dean of Graduate Studies to proceed to advertise the Innovation Bursaries.*

**RS/09-10/27 Formation of Research Ethics Policy Group**

The Committee noted a copy of a letter that was circulated to the Committee from the Centre of Health Policy and Management regarding a request for approval for a new Research Ethics Committee (REC) for Health Policy and Management and Global Health. A background document and a draft of the proposed Standard Operating Procedures for the REC were circulated with the letter.

The DoR started the discussion by giving some background on how the request should be handled. In the Good Research Practice (GRP) document, there is a recommendation for the formation of a Research Ethics Policy Group (REPG) to look at proposals for the establishment of new RECs. To date, the REPG has not yet convened. The Research Committee cannot itself give approvals for the formation of a new REC, however it can recommend that the REPG be convened to make decisions on RECs.

*Action: ADTRI, on behalf of DoR, to write to members of the Research Ethics Working Group to ask if they would serve on the REPG and consider the request for the new Research Ethics Committee for Health Policy and Management and Global Health.*

**RS/09-10/28 Discussion of College Research Quality Metrics**

The Committee noted a memorandum from the Dean of Research, dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010, on Research Quality Metrics. The Committee was invited to comment on a) the proposed criteria for research productivity and b) the proposed global research objectives/targets, both of which are components of the Research Quality Metrics for the Resource Planning Model.

In relation to the research productivity criteria and publications, the Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub, queried the scenario where there are no international publishers, a good example being those publications relevant to Irish Studies. In response, the DoR and the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer indicated that the word 'international' would not be used in the description of what is required in relation to publications. The Faculty of Health Science Representative drew attention to the fact that criteria and metrics such as those presented in the memorandum would not recognize those contributions from staff not on the College payroll, as is the case with many staff in hospitals associated with College. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer noted that this is a situation that needs to be rectified, although this resource allocation model relates to salaries of staff paid from the HEA budget. The meeting suggested that the research productivity criterion (D) be rewritten, as it is unclear in its current form. There was also a suggestion that the definition of research productivity might not be broad enough. The Head of School of Social Science and Philosophy proposed that it might be a good idea to add another criterion (E) that refers to artistic outputs.

On the suggested criteria for those staff who may have to make a written case for research productivity, the meeting noted that the example criterion "they have been principal supervisor on at least two PhD theses who are recorded as having graduated during the immediate past 3 year period" might not be a strong enough indicator of research productivity. In reply, the DoR proposed putting an 'and' between this criterion and the next. The idea of removing these example criteria all together was also tabled by the meeting. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer suggested that it might be a good idea to remove the example criterion "they have been principal supervisor on at least two PhD theses who are recorded as having graduated during the immediate past 3 year period."

The Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub, suggested that co-authorship might not be a good idea to include as part of the research productivity criteria. In reply, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stated that Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences had indicated a preference for co-authorship to be recognized as it is a reflection of collaboration. The concept of co-authorship as a metric is already well accepted in the Sciences. The meeting proposed a points system for author and co-authors. In reply, it was noted that as authorship listings are not standard across disciplines, a points system would be impossible to implement.

On a discussion of the measurable global research objectives (targets), the Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences asked how a School that has already met the specified targets would make any improvement. In response, the DoR stated that it was doubtful as to whether any School is currently in that position. The Dean of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences also asked whether it would be feasible to ask a School to sustain an improvement over a 6 year period. It was suggested that the wording in this section could be modified to include the word 'maintain'.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer stated that he would be taking the document back to the Working Group for further discussion and asked the Committee if it was happy with the principle of global targets. The meeting questioned whether it was a good idea for different schools to have the option of selecting different criteria. In reply, it was noted that one criterion might not suit all. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer added that the Faculty Deans would have a say as to what criteria should be used. The Head of School of Social Science and Philosophy pointed out that different criteria might be applicable within a School and that Schools might spend too much time 'gaming' i.e. trying to work out which criteria to chose that would be easiest to meet. The Faculty of Health Science Representative agreed with the gaming issue and stated that the example global targets given in the memorandum might not be appropriate.

The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer summed up the discussion, stating that the Committee endorsed the research productivity



criteria (A) - (D) but had some misgivings about the global research targets.

The Academic Director, Trinity Long Room Hub, asked that it be noted that the Heads of School have indicated that they were not consulted about the document. In reply, the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer and DoR stated that the paper has already been through most Committees twice, giving everyone concerned ample choice to voice their opinions.

**RS/09-10/29 Any Other Business**

The ADTRI informed the Committee that the formation of 8 campus companies was reported to Enterprise Ireland for 2009, making TCD the top performer nationally. The Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer offered his congratulations to Trinity Research & Innovation.

**Section B**

**RS/09-10/30 Reconciliation of Trinity Research Institutes' Governance with College Structures**

The Committee noted a memorandum from the Dean of Research, dated 12<sup>th</sup> January 2010, outlining arrangements for oversight of Trinity Research Institutes by the Faculty Deans.

**Section C**

**RS/09-10/31 2010 SFI OIP Estimated Allocation**

The Committee noted a memorandum from the Research Accounting Manager to the Finance Committee, dated 6<sup>th</sup> December 2009, outlining the 2010 SFI OIP Estimated Allocation. The Committee was informed that all Heads of School have now been notified of the allocation.

**RS/09-10/32 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings**

- (i) sustainability, governance and funding of Trinity Research Institutes
- (ii) governance and funding of College Centres
- (iii) governance structures to support innovation

Signed: .....

Date: .....