

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 17th January 2012

Present: Professor Vinny Cahill (*Dean of Research, DOR, and Chair*)
Professor Kevin Rockett (*Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music*)
Assistant Professor Aidan Seery (*Director of Research, School of Education*)
Assistant Professor Clemens Ruthner (*Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies*)
Professor Frank Barry (*Director of Research, School of Business*)
Assistant Professor Caoimhin MacMaolain (*Director of Research, School of Law*)
Professor Ailbhe Ni Chasaide (*Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences*)
Professor Malcolm MacLachlan (*Director of Research, School of Psychology*)
Assistant Professor Gaia Narciso (*Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy*)
Associate Professor Suzanne Cahill (*Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy*)
Assistant Professor Iain Atack deputising for Norbert Hintersteiner (*Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics*)
Assistant Professor Ed Lavelle (*Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology*)
Professor Georg Duesberg (*Director of Research, School of Chemistry*)
Associate Professor Carl Vogel (*Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics*)
Associate Professor Anthony Quinn (*Director of Research, School of Engineering*)
Professor Seamus Martin (*Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology*)
Associate Professor Sinead Ryan (*Director of Research, School of Mathematics*)
Assistant Professor Andrew Jackson (*Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences*)
Professor Martin Hegner (*Director of Research, School of Physics*)
Professor Derek Sullivan (*Director of Research, School of Dental Science*)
Professor Padraic Fallon (*Director of Research, School of Medicine*)
Professor Catherine Comiskey (*Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery*)
Associate Professor Carsten Ehrhardt (*Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences*)
Professor Stefano Sanvito (in place of Professor John Boland (*Director of Research, CRANN*))
Professor Poul Holm (*Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub*)
Prof. Shane O'Mara (*Director of Research, TCIN*)
Professor Veronica Campbell (*Dean of Graduate Studies*)

Dr Erika Doyle (*Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association*)
Dr James Callaghan (*Associate Director of Trinity Research & Innovation, ADTRI, and Secretary*)

In attendance: Ms Doris Alexander (*Research Development Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation*)
Dr Geoffrey Bradley (*CSG Manager, ISS*)
Ms Deirdre Savage (*Research Accounting Manager, Treasurer's Office*)
Dr Camilla Kelly (*Research Projects Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation and Minute Secretary to the Committee*)
Niamh Brennan (*Research Information Systems, Library*) for RS/11-12/32
Paddy Naughton (*Project Manager, FIS*) for RS/11-12/35

Apologies: Associate Professor Crawford Gribben (*Director of Research, School of English*)
Professor John Horne (*Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities*)
Professor Louis Brennan (*Director of Research, IIS*)
Mary O'Connor (*President of the Graduate Students' Union*)

Section A

RS/11-12/26 Introduction

The DoR welcomed everyone to the meeting.

RS/11-12/27 Minutes of 8th Dec 2011

The minutes of the meeting were approved by the Committee.

RS/11-12/28 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Item RS/11-12/17 (referring to item RS/11-12/11): Research Ethics Policy. Since the December 2011 meeting, only one more School (School of Computer Science and Statistics) has submitted information on its ethics committee and ethics processes. The DoR reminded members that it was important that every School responded to the call for information.

Action: Directors of Research to remind their Schools to forward information on their ethics committees and processes to the Research Committee.

Item RS/11-12/19: Research Funding Diversification. The DoR noted that in relation to staff retention policies, there appears to be a gap where high-performing research staff is concerned. He informed the committee that he has started a discussion with the Director of Human Resources to devise a scheme to assist such staff whose employment contracts do not extend across the duration of a grant application. Committee members were invited to put forward further ideas.

Action: Directors of Research to forward ideas for helping to retain junior research staff to the DoR.

Items RS/11-12/21-22: Associated Staff - Participation in Research Working Group & TRI Working Group. The DoR informed the Committee that volunteers were still being sought for these working groups. The DoR extended his thanks to those members who have already volunteered their time.

Action: Directors of Research interested in joining either the Associated Staff or TRI Working Group to contact the DoR.

Item RS/11-12/24: Any Other Urgent Business:

In relation to the IRCHSS and IRCSET merger, the DoR informed the Committee that, to date, progress with the mechanics of the merger appears to be slow. A new research council is expected to be appointed in the first quarter of 2012. Operationally, the two units will remain separate in the short term.

The briefing on Horizon 2020 took place on January 13th as planned and was very well attended.

RS/11-12/29 Update on Research Strategy Implementation (DoR)

The Chair informed the Committee that the first thematic town hall meeting (Ageing) took place on 11th January 2012. The meeting had a high level of participation, with ca. 90 people attending and 40 making presentations. The DoR noted that many people were pleasantly surprised with the level of activity in the area. A steering group for this theme is now being formed. Two more town hall meetings are taking place this week, International Integration and Digital Humanities. Town hall meetings for the Smart and Sustainable Cities and Cancer themes are in the pipeline.

RS/11-12/30 Research Funding Diversification (DoR)

The Committee noted two documents, circulated in advance of the meeting. The first was a document from Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation, relating to the deployment of local Research Project Officers (RPOs). The second was a summary of a subgroup meeting that took place in January of 2011, outlining suggestions on how time might be freed up in the Research Office.

The DoR started the discussion by informing the meeting of further ideas for funding diversification proposed by Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I), including one-to-one mentoring, workshops around particular funding programmes, e.g. FP7, and strategy development workshops for Schools, Trinity Research Institutes (TRIs), and thematic areas. Another possibility might be one-to-one engagement formally linking TR&I staff to individuals and groups around College. TR&I could also keep libraries of useful templates

and boilerplates on file. The idea of dedicated 'desks' for U.S. & FP7 funding opportunities was also mentioned. The DoR invited feedback from the Committee on these ideas and suggestions for other possibilities. All ideas and suggestions will be distilled into a single document and presented at a future meeting.

Doris Alexander then spoke to the document on local RPOs. If the decision is taken to deploy local research staff, consistency between job specifications, title, and grade would be very important. It would also have to be decided whether these posts should be based in Schools, TRIs, or Faculties. It would be necessary to evaluate how such posts would add value and complement existing services in TR&I.

The Committee welcomed the document, noting that it was vital that permission be given to advertise at the appropriate grade; for example, one of the TRIs failed to recruit at Admin 3, but was not permitted to advertise the post at Admin 1. Some flexibility up to Admin 1 would be appropriate. Reporting lines might also be an issue. The Committee considered it appropriate that the RPO would report to the head of host unit directly and indirectly to TR&I.

The issue of how smaller units or Schools was might be supported was addressed, with the DoR noting that smaller Schools might consider sharing an RPO for example.

One of the Committee asked whether College would ever consider setting up a separate legal entity to provide research services such as grant management, so that grant applicants could cost these into their proposals e.g. on FP7 applications. Imperial College, for example, has taken such an approach.

On the question of funding local RPO posts, the intention would be that College would initially underwrite these posts with the view that they become self-funding, possibly from grant overheads. Ideally Schools would pay back these 'start-up' funds, allowing College to fund more positions down the line.

It was also suggested that it might be worthwhile to subject the document to a review mechanism with people that have already gone through this process.

The discussion finished with one of the Committee asking how many posts would be funded initially. The DoR responded by saying the intention would be to fund 4-5 posts. He added that it will not be possible to do one per school and perhaps smaller schools could share an RPO as discussed. It was noted that preference may be given to schools/TRIs that are in a position to cost-share with College the funding of such posts. In concluding the discussion, the DoR said that he would clarify the source and level of the College element of this funding before a call for proposals was made.

Action: DoR to clarify the source and level of the College element of funding to support the deployment of local Research Project Officers.

RS/11-12/31 Trinity Research News

Mindful of the time that it takes TR&I to prepare Trinity Research News, the DoR asked the Committee whether it was an activity worth continuing.

The Committee agreed that it was important to have a forum for publicising research. However, the intended audience for Trinity Research News should be clarified, as should the way we measure its value, the cost, and whether there might be a better way of publicising our research. It was pointed out that Trinity Research News could have an effect that we cannot measure.

The DoR concluded the discussion by saying that PR is important but we need to consider this issue further before publishing Trinity Research News again.

RS/11-12/32 Research Quality Metrics (RQM)

The DoR commenced the discussion by noting to the Committee that the new RQM criteria were approved by Council and Board in October 2010. Niamh Brennan then proceeded to give an update on the current position with RQM.

Currently, according to the 'old' RQM criteria, 350 staff were deemed research productive. The new criteria produced a figure of 369 out of 700 core-funded staff (52%).

Many Schools do not have their Research Support System profiles up to date and it is very important that this is done. The RQM administration screen can be used to make exceptions as to who is included in the report from each School. Ms Brennan noted that it was important that there is clarification on which staff should be included.

In the new criteria, single-author publications count more than multi-author ones (1 to 0.5 respectively); to date, this difference does not seem to have made a huge amount of difference in the metrics.

Many of the Committee voiced extreme concern with this criterion (single authorship counting for more than multiple authorship). For one, it does not promote collaboration between researchers.

The Committee also commented that it was bizarre that the issue of RQM had not been discussed at the Research Committee since 2009, and asked who made the decision to implement the new criteria. In response, the DoR noted that it was a committee on Academic Freedom that reported directly to Council.

One of the members asked whether there was provision made for updating these criteria.

Members of the Committee also asked about the research expenditure criterion and also noted that smaller Schools needed a longer measurement window; 3 years rather than 2.

Ms Brennan concluded by noting that the Directors of Research have power to sign off on final statistics, and also who is and is not regarded as research productive at School level. Directors of Research should act as the 'quality control' for RQM data.

The DoR summarized the discussion by noting that the current weighting of research publications is not acceptable to the Committee. The current value of 52% research productive staff is not acceptable whatever the metrics used, and we should be aiming for a much higher figure.

RS/11-12/33 Provost's Award for Research

The Committee noted a document from Professor Seamus Martin, circulated in advance of the meeting. The document was a proposal to institute a Provost's Research Awards scheme.

Professor Martin began the discussion by informing the committee that College has never had an award for research, despite having awards in place for teaching and innovation. The motivational and public relation factors associated with such an award, particularly given the current economic climate, should not be underestimated. It is intended to have a very simple nomination process - a short half page CV that would be evaluated by the committee.

One of the committee noted that, in addition to recognising staff that are in receipt of a lot of research funding, it would also be good to provide support for people that are currently underfunded, and also provide support for staff wishing to go on sabbatical.

The notion of two awards, one for junior researchers and one for senior researchers, was put forward by another member. In response, Professor Martin noted that the award should just recognise excellence; there was no need to fragment the process.

In summary, the DoR proposed that this new award should mirror the current Provost's Teaching Award. The value of the award would then be in the region of €3K and a number of awards would be made including an early career stage award based on the use of European Research Council criteria for starting investigators. The committee agreed to this proposal.

RS/11-12/34 RPAMS Reporting Requirements

The ADTRI provided a brief summary of the types of standard reports that RPAMS might produce. The Committee was asked to forward to Camilla Kelly, details of any other reports that might be required.

Action: Directors of Research to forward to Camilla Kelly any research funding reporting requirements.

RS/11-12/35 Financial Information System (FIS) Briefing

Paddy Naughton, Project Manager, briefed the committee on the new FIS project.

Section B - no items under this section

Section C

RS/11-12/37 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

- (i) Budget Commitments

RS/11-12/38 Any Other Business

The Committee noted two applications for new Research Centres (Early Modern History & the Centre for Practice and Healthcare Innovation) that were circulated in advance of the meeting.

The DoR proposed that the applications be accepted. The Committee agreed.

Signed:

Date: