

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> March 2014

- Present: Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research (DoR) and Chair  
Dr Diarmuid O'Brien, Director of Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I) and Secretary  
Professor Derek Sullivan, Associate Dean of Research (ADoR)  
Professor Paul Coughlan, Director of Research, School of Business  
Professor Colette Murphy, Director of Research, School of Education  
Professor John Horne, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities  
Professor Blanaid Clarke, Director of Research, School of Law  
Professor David Tombs, Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics  
Professor Malcolm MacLachlan, Director of Research, School of Psychology  
Professor Daniela Zisterer, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Andrew Jackson, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Mike Peardon, Director of Research, School of Mathematics  
Professor Frank Boland, Director of Research, School of Engineering  
Professor Georg S. Duesberg, Director of Research, School of Chemistry  
Professor Carl Vogel, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Gabrielle McKee, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Shane O'Mara, Director of Research, TCIN  
Professor Juergen Barkhoff, Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub  
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies
- In attendance: Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation  
Mr David O'Shea, Acting Research Acc. Manager, Financial Services Division  
Mr John Murphy, Director of Information Systems Services  
Dr Camilla Kelly, Research Projects Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation and Minute Secretary to the Committee
- Apologies: Professor Irene Walsh, acting Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Science  
Professor Gaia Narciso, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics  
Professor Gary Moran, Director of Research, School of Dental Science  
Dermot Frost, Acting Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)  
Ryan Kenny, President, Graduate Students Union

Not present: Professor Martin Adams, Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music  
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English  
Professor Clemens Ruthner, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Robert Gilligan, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Seamus Martin, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Director of Research, School of Medicine  
Professor Lorraine O'Driscoll, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Luke O'Neill, Director of Research, TBSI  
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, CRANN  
Professor Louis Brennan, Director of Research, IIS

**RS/13-14/44 Introduction**

The Dean of Research welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**RS/13-14/45 Minutes of 21<sup>st</sup> January 2014**

The minutes of the meeting were approved by the Committee.

**RS/13-14/46 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Item RS/13-14/37 (referring to Item RS/13-14/27): SFI's Career Development Award (CDA) and Starting Investigator Research Grant (SIRG) schemes. The DoR noted that he had communicated College's concerns about these schemes to SFI (Professor Mark Ferguson) in the context of the last meeting of the IUA VP/Deans of Research Standing Group. At that meeting, Professor Ferguson indicated that he was agreeable to the notion of a variable (by HEI) quota as long as all participating HEIs agree to the process for deciding quotas. On the issue of the HEIs having to pre-filter applicants - Professor Ferguson indicated that these schemes are targeted at individuals on an academic career track, and therefore the HEIs should have some means of input to identifying the best candidates in the context of their strategic staffing priorities. The DoR noted that there was also some discussion post that meeting around how the HEIs might help SFI overcome the load issue, other than by pre-filtering applicants, for example by having Research Office staff based at SFI during busy (high-volume application) periods.

Item RS/13-14/37 (referring to Item RS/13-14/22): College Research Web Site. The DoR noted that the site has been soft-launched. The DoR asked that staff take a look at the website and revert with any comments before the site is fully launched.

Item RS/13-14/37 (referring to Item RS/13-14/29): Policy Update: Broadening Participation in EU Framework (FP) Programmes. Professor Carl Vogel, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and

Statistics, asked for clarification on situations where repeated (successful) applications to EU Framework Programmes would trigger a Contract of Indefinite Duration (CID) for the applicant.

*Action: The DoR to seek clarification with respect to CIDs and research staff applying to EU Framework Programmes.*

RS/13-14/37 (referring to Item RS/13-14/32): Research Support System (RSS). The Vice Provost's Office is in the process of collating information on research activity, to feed into the Annual Budgetary Cycle. The DoR consequently asked that the Directors of Research inform staff of the importance of keeping their RSS profiles up to date.

RS/13-14/39: College Strategic Plan 2014-2019. The DoR informed the Committee that the proposed review of the College Research Themes was approved by Council. A Working Group, which includes six members of academic staff (two from each Faculty), is now in place. Three meetings have taken place. A draft proposal is in preparation, and will be circulated for comment. The timescale for the review is longer than had been previously envisaged. A two-tiered review process is emerging as a favoured option.

RS/13-14/42: TR&I Update - Horizon 2020 Strategy. One of the Committee asked about the Brokerage Event for the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS). In response, it was noted that this would be arranged in due course.

#### **RS/13-14/47 DoR Update**

The DoR advised the Committee that there would be no update at this meeting given the full agenda.

#### **RS/13-14/48 Policy on Charging PI Time to Horizon 2020 Awards**

The Committee noted a draft policy document, which was circulated in advance of the meeting. Mr David O'Shea, Acting Research Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division spoke briefly to the document.

Unlike the previous Framework Programme (FP7), the funding model for Horizon 2020 (H2020) is based on a 100% reimbursement of Direct Costs identified/incurred, plus a contribution to Indirect Costs of 25%.

The policy proposes the following:

- Where the programme and budget allows, PIs should include an element of their time when costing proposals.
- Associated income/payment received by College in respect of PI time (where core funded) will be split as follows: 50% to the School's Indirect Cost Activity and 50% to College
- Schools in receipt of European Research Council grants will receive the full income stream associated with PI time (i.e. 100% of the PI time claimed).
- Schools will ensure that income streams generated by way of PI time claimed directly supports the PI's participation in the H2020 project

Under FP7, the cost of PI time was included in proposals but, as most projects were reimbursed by the EU at a rate of 75%, this funding stream was applied by College as the matching contribution required to the project and so did not translate as actual income to College or School. In 2012/13, costs of c €500k were claimed on FP7 Projects specifically relating to PI time. Taking into account Horizon 2020's increased budget, as well as projected TCD success rates, PI time claimed could increase to c. €1m per annum (€7m in total over the life of the Programme). In addition to this income stream, College can expect to receive an increased contribution to indirect costs, (which is set at a flat rate of 25% in H2020) resulting in potential income of c. €8.75m.

There was some discussion by the Committee regarding the proposed 50%/50% split of this PI income (50% to the School's Indirect Cost Activity and 50% to College where PI is core funded). Some of the Committee suggested that more than 50% of the money should return to the School, as anything less might disincentivize people from applying for grants. David O'Shea noted that even with a 50%/50% model, there would be more cash flowing back to the School via H2020 than through FP7. Any higher than 50% back to the School might also pose an auditing risk, since it might be viewed as double funding of salaries for core funded staff. Doris Alexander concurred adding that in FP7 in addition to the PI time being used to provide direct cost matched funding, indirect costs had to be used to cross subsidize the remaining direct cost deficit. This would now not be the case in H2020 and hence aside from the PI time issue, more indirect costs would flow back to the School/TRI hosting the grant as per the College's indirect cost policy.

It was agreed that a decision on the policy would be held over until more information was made available on the distribution of overheads. The principle of including the cost of PI time was accepted but the distribution of the funding received in respect of same required more discussion

*Action: David O'Shea to provide more detailed information on the options put forward for the split of PI income*

#### **RS/13-14/49 Approval of Research Ethics Committees**

The Committee noted a memo, 'Provisional approval of Research Ethics Committees by Research Ethics Policy Committee', which was circulated in advance of the meeting. Professor Derek Sullivan, Associate Dean of Research (ADoR), spoke briefly to the document.

One of the responsibilities of the Research Ethics Policy Committee (REPC) is to consider for approval existing Research Ethics Committees (RECs) and the formation of new RECs, at levels 1 and 2. In order to begin this process, in November 2013 the twelve RECs currently active in College were required to submit documentation for review by the REPC by January 13th. Seven of the twelve RECs made submissions and these were considered by the REPC at its meeting on the 20th of February. The result of this review is that the seven RECs have been

provisionally approved, subject to the implementation of recommendations made by the REPC. The remaining 5 have been asked to submit documentation by the middle of March.

The ADoR noted that training for RECs will commence at end of March with a workshop for REC members on informed consent.

The ADoR reminded the committee that to comply with College policy, all Schools must have their own REC or nominate an appropriate REC in another School. Schools should keep the appropriate webpages up to date with relevant information on their ethical approval processes. For those Schools or Faculties wishing to form a new REC a call has been launched and the ADoR stated that he would forward the relevant details to Directors of Research.

One of the Members noted that compliance with ethical guidelines on data retention can have significant associated costs.

The DoR and ADoR concluded by noting that unapproved RECs will not be recognised by College, and approvals from the REPC should be sought as soon as possible.

#### **RS/13-14/50 Dean of Research Initiative**

The DoR raised the issue of the Research Committee budget. In recent years, these monies were used to fund PhD students (the Innovation Bursaries). The Committee was asked for suggestions as to how the funds might be dispersed going forward.

Four suggestions emerged from the ensuing discussion:

1. Funding 'Pathfinder' (short, potential high-impact) projects;
2. Funding for fee shortfalls (for e.g. where funding sponsors set limits on fee levels);
3. Funding for teaching buyout in order to allow time to drive the application process of some types of research applications;
4. Funding to reward research excellence in the form of a fellowship;
5. Continuing the Innovation bursaries.

A straw poll conducted by the DoR indicated an initial preference towards funding Pathfinder projects.

*Action: DoR to bring forward a proposal on the use of the Research Committee budget*

#### **RS/13-14/51 Any Other Business**

The Committee noted and approved an application for recognition from the Centre for Literary Translation, subject to any new policy that might emerge.

## RS/13-14/52 College Strategic Plan 2014-2019

The DoR began the discussion by informing the Committee of the progress to date in relation to developing the College Strategic Plan.

Working Groups have been convened in 4 key areas, including Research & Innovation. Each has been tasked with producing a reference document that addresses 5 topics, namely:

- Current challenges facing Trinity;
- Opportunities for future development;
- High level goals to be achieved;
- Key objectives (prioritised);
- and dependencies.

The Research & Innovation Working Group is currently meeting weekly on Thursday mornings.

The group consists of DoR as Chair; Dr Diarmuid O'Brien, Director of Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I) as Secretary; Professor Derek Sullivan, ADoR; representatives from each Faculty (Professor Juergen Barkhoff, Long Room Hub, Professor Ed Lavelle, Biochemistry, and Professor Rose-Anne Kenny, TCIN/CMG), Professor Shane Allwright, Registrar and Professor in Epidemiology; the nominee of the Vice-Provost and Dean of Research (Professor Blanaid Clarke, Law); two representatives of the TRSA (Dr Britta Stordal, Histopathology, and Dr Thomas Archer, Physics); the President of the GSU, Ryan Kenny; Orme de Saint Hilaire, Trinity Student/Co-Founder at Adme Apps; and two external members (Brendan O'Callaghan, Vice President Biologics, Therapeutic Proteins & Contract Mfg Operations at Merck & Co; and Brendan J Cannon, Corporate Affairs Director Intel Ireland). The group is also supported by Dr Camilla Kelly, Research Development Office

Four key issues are emerging from the working group discussions:

- protecting and making more time for research
- acknowledging and rewarding the best research & researchers
- adequate administrative support structures for research.
- workload balance

The DoR opened the floor for discussion and suggestions.

One of the members asked about the College Research Themes and their fit with the developing strategy. The DoR responded that a review of the themes is in progress. However, this process will not finish until at least the first semester of the next academic year, which is after the delivery of the strategic plan. The plan is therefore likely to contain a statement to the effect that College is in the process of identifying areas of research strength.

The DoR noted, in the context of making time for research, that the topic of teaching-only posts arose during the working group meeting. Currently 30% of staff are not research productive and that perhaps there is a case for having a teaching-only cohort of staff. Many of the Committee disagreed with the notion of having teaching-only staff noting the importance of the link between research and teaching. The DoR commented that a programme of staff mentoring, which needs development, might be another route to increasing productivity. A number of members agreed that the teaching of routine, large classes was extremely time consuming, not least because of the associated marking, and that there must be a more efficient way of doing this. The use of teaching fellowships was suggested as one solution.

One of the Members noted that traditional research outputs do not always reflect scholarly activity.

Some of the Committee suggested that users or consumers of research were an important factor to be considered. There should be a clear commitment to define the impact, or value, of Trinity's research.

The DoR noted that leadership (in terms of, for example, institutional initiatives and multi-partner grant applications etc.) has emerged as a challenge. It seems that there is a lack of interest, or a lack of tradition, in leading initiatives of this type. One of the members suggested that a lack of time and capacity might be the reason. It was also suggested that leadership is a symptom of a broader issue in College, namely the lack of added value for a researcher in choosing to lead a large initiative. There should be significant rewards for those that show leadership.

Finally, the DoR turned to the subject of rankings. It was agreed that rankings are important. The DoR reminded staff that this is the time of the year that the reputation surveys (which are an integral part of the rankings) take place; Trinity has not performed particularly well in the past.