

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 07 October 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 Paul Coughlan, Director of Research, School of Business  
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English  
Professor Blanaid Clarke, Director of Research, School of Law  
Professor Ruth Byrne, Director of Research, School of Psychology  
Professor Paul Scanlon, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Daniela Zisterer, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Carl Vogel, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Frank Boland, Director of Research, School of Engineering  
Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Gabrielle McKee, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Lorraine O'Driscoll, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Trevor Spratt, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Professor Juergen Barkhoff, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub  
Professor Shane O'Mara, Director of Research, TCIN  
Dermot Frost, Acting Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)  
Megan Lee, President, Graduate Students Union

In attendance:

Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation  
Dr Fiona Killard, Research Strategy Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation and Rapporteur to the Committee

Apologies:

Mr John Murphy, Director of Information Systems Services  
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Director of Research, School of Chemistry  
Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics  
Mr David O'Shea, Acting Research Acc. Manager, Financial Services Division  
Professor Andrew Pierce, Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics  
Professor Clemens Ruthner, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Carol Newman, Director of the Institute for International Integration Studies (IIS)  
Professor Mike Peardon, Director of Research, School of Mathematics

Not present:

Professor Aoife McLysaght, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Martin Adams, Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music

Professor Colette Murphy, Director of Research, School of Education

Professor John Horne, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities

Professor Lorraine Leeson, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

Professor Gary Moran, Director of Research, School of Dental Science

Professor James O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Medicine

Professor Luke O'Neill, Director of Research, TBSI

Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, CRANN

Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies

#### **RS/14-15/01 Introduction**

The Dean of Research welcomed attendees and introduced Fiona Killard as incoming minute secretary.

#### **RS/14-15/02 Minutes of 10 June 2014**

The minutes of the meeting were approved with minor revisions. A request by the School of Chemistry, Director of Research, Prof Georg Duesberg, was considered by the members and, although the amendment was not accepted by all members, it was agreed that the additional wording requested would be added to the minutes of 10 June 2014 as an option.

#### **RS/14-15/03 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

The DoR noted that the *Good Research Practice* document is now available on the College policies webpage. The Dean of Graduate Studies and IS services reviewed this document, but no major revisions were recorded. This document is not due to come before Research Committee again.

#### **RS/14-15/04 Dean of Research Update (DoR)**

The DoR informed members that the College's Strategic Plan 2014-2019 had been approved and will shape strategy over the next five years.

The DoR updated members on the university rankings. It was noted that Trinity is ranked 138<sup>th</sup> in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings 2014 and 71<sup>st</sup> in the QS World Rankings. The DoR pointed out that both of these results represent a slip down the rankings for the College, however, overall these results were broadly positive as the falls were small and had been predicted. The QS decline owes much to 'reputation', and the DoR noted that this is a concern for Research Committee, which must take a central role in prompting research excellence. The DoR also reported that, as part

of the metrics for the rankings, international academics were asked to consider what they think are the top universities across world. The DoR noted that Trinity typically secures few votes for this metric. The need to increase international visibility was, therefore, highlighted by the DoR as most of these votes appear to come from English-speaking countries. The DoR commented that the THE scores showed a general upward trend, however, the College excels in 'research impact' and this is now declining. The DoR stressed the Research Committee's role in encouraging research excellence. The DoR also informed members that there is an increase in the number of papers being produced by College. The Dean highlighted the potential problem this could pose should these papers not be sufficiently well cited and commented on the need for publications to be high in quality, as well as quantity.

The Dean updated members on the SFI Research Centre competition 2013 noting that five such Centres will be funded each securing approximately €30 million per centre over 6 years. Trinity will host two of these Centres - 'CONNECT', the telecommunications centre led by Prof Linda Doyle, and 'ADAPT', the digital content centre led by Prof. Vinny Wade. The DoR noted that they have secured over €50 million over the lifetime of the centres. The Dean also reported that Trinity was a partner in three other funded centres in the medical devices, geosciences, and software engineering and that we now lead three out of the major ICT centres in the country. The Dean informed members that there was no SFI centres call scheduled for next year, but that there may be one in the following year. The Dean stressed the importance of industrial engagement in these bids and the need to beginning developing future proposals now.

The Dean updated members about the on-going SFI Targeted Professorship recruitment process, which aims to attract high-calibre research leaders to Ireland. The DoR reported that College responded to SFI's initial call for expressions of interest for this programme and, as a result, secured ten potential roles for which SFI would consider proposals. Over the last few months efforts have been underway to recruit high-calibre candidates to these roles, and recently approximately two potential candidates per role have been short-listed. The Dean noted that this process will be completed shortly.

The DoR noted that two ERC call deadlines have passed so far this year for the Starting and Consolidator grants. The Dean reported that in the case of the ERC Consolidator Programme of the ten candidates progressing to interview stage nationally, seven are Trinity-based researchers. The Dean reflected on the fact that this is a strong statement on the quality of Trinity candidates. The Dean cautioned, however, that the final number of candidates to successfully secure funding is not yet known.

The Dean updated members on the progress of the Research Themes Review process, noting that it is currently in the information gathering phase and that most Themes have agreed on the schedule for their review. The Dean reported that Theme Champions have identified key colleagues that will engage with the Theme Review

and that the first Theme Review will take place in November. The Dean also informed members that one Theme has reconsidered its Theme status and that two themes have merged through this process.

The TR&I Research Development Manager (RDM) provided a H2020 update and reported that 183 applications have been submitted by College since the start of H2020. Of these eleven have secured funding so far and more results are due. The RDM noted that the College is still become familiar with the implications of 'no-negotiation' contracts and that the Research Office are producing a help document. The RDM reported that there was a low success rates for 2-stage proposals in stage 1 and commented that this may be due to the increase in thresholds due to oversubscriptions to the programmes. The members were informed that efforts were underway to analyse these results so that we can ensure that future applications are over threshold. The RDM noted that so far H2020 calls are proving to be very competitive and that success rates will not be as good as in the past, but that resubmissions were being encouraged and insights in to the reasons that projects failed to progress to stage 2 would be shared and that Research Office personnel will share verbally reasons why projects are failing. The RDM also reported that the Research Office is producing a tool kit for those writing impact sections. The RDM commented on the encouraging number of applications across the College. The members were also informed that Enterprise Ireland (EI) are offering funds to help with resubmissions, but that applications to EI for support must be submitted ten weeks before a call closes, or within three weeks of the opening of an ERC call.

#### **RS/14-15/05 Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Committee (Director TR&I)**

The Director of TR&I updated members on the reinstatement of the Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Committee, which has been dormant for 4/5 years. A memo on membership was circulated in advance of the meeting and the TR&I Director sought advice from Research Committee on the proposed membership. The Director suggested that membership might include internal members, but more importantly an outside perspective including company membership. The Director reported efforts to balance membership, so that it includes College representatives, VC, IDA members, public bodies, international members, including a US member, Intel, an entrepreneur, a member from Johnson & Johnson, Oxford/UK, etc. The Director proposed that the first meeting would take place in December or January and then quarterly. The Director also stressed that the proposed committee will not make decisions on patents, but rather will review the process on how we make patent selections. The Director confirmed that this committee is formally a sub-committee of Research Committee. Research Committee approved the proposed composition for this committee.

**RS/14-15/06 Evolution of the Institute for International Integration Studies (VP/CAO)**

The Committee was informed by the DoR that in the context of assessing the possible evolution of the Institute for International Integration Studies (IIS) a review had been undertaken by the VP/CAO leading to the report and recommendations circulated in advance of the meeting.

The VP/CAO informed the Committee that for many years no strategic funding had been secured by the IIS under the Strategic Allocations for TRIs Scheme. It was noted that this was mainly due to Planning Group's concern about the level of funding and activity generated by IIS. It was also reported that discussions about creating a new infrastructure of supports for social science research had taken place. The VP/CAO was, therefore, tasked with examining the configuration of research in the Social Sciences.

The VP/CAO stressed that an assessment of the quality of research was outside the scope of the review and that aspects of this would be achieved via the research themes review. The VP/CAO stated that the scope of her report was focused solely on structural and organisational aspects of research in the Social Sciences. The VP/CAO reported that the review and consultation took place over a 6-month timeframe and that the outcomes are captured in the circulated report.

The VP/CAO stated that the report found that there was significant strength in the College's social science research, but that, the current structures are very fragmented and that there is duplication of effort, and resulting instability. The report makes two central recommendations, designed to capitalise on the research excellence evident in the Social Sciences and to support the College's research strategy of developing areas of research excellence and scale. The first recommendation is that the College develop a strategy to re-consolidate research on International Development across the College in order to establish this theme as a research area of excellence *and* scale. This would involve fore-grounding the IIS's International Development research. The VP/CAO noted that *TIDI* had emerged from the recognised strength in international development within the IIS, but that although this structural division may have facilitated the growth of certain aspects of research in international development (particularly through researchers in the School of Medicine) this division has weakened the IIS and fragmented a research area that, re-consolidated, had a greater capacity to achieve research excellence of scale.

The VP/CAO proposed specific developments and an evolutionary path for relevant research in areas such as political science and economics, within the International Development Theme, and proposed bringing in other strands of related research from across the University that cohere with the International development theme. The VP/CAO informed the Committee that this would result in a Theme that draws on significant strands of research across the

University and provides them with a single focus of international concern. The Committee were informed that the proposal would therefore involve standing down the IIS as a TRI, however, research in the field of international integration will continue, both through the International Integration research theme as well as within the International Development theme, allowing this area to grow organically.

The VP/CAO reported that fragmentation of research supports in the Social Sciences is a second issue, but is more a result of the diversity of interests in the Social Sciences. The VP/CAO recognised the need to facilitate diversity while also redressing and reducing this fragmentation. The VP/CAO reported that there are pockets of administrative and RPO support, but there is nothing cohesive, and as such there is a need to reconfigure supports using existing resources. The second main recommendation therefore is and that a separate common collaborative infrastructure to support research excellence in the social sciences be created.

The VP/CAO reported that there was broad support for the recommendations outlined in the report and that the response from most PIs, the Dean and Heads of Schools was broadly positive.

The School of Business Director of Research queried the timing of the dissolution of the IIS and suggested that, it might be better to wait until the themes review is completed before a structural decision is made. The DoR noted that the issues covered by the report and the recommendations were not being addressed by the themes review process.

The VP/CAO reported that the IIS has been a prominent entity and had provided a strong profile for the College in the international integration space, but concern over last few years that the IIS strategy for the future was static and that a delay in standing down the IIS might result in reputational damage.

The Director of the TLRH queried the nature of the 'new' proposed infrastructure, and questioned whether the proposed structure would represent another 'new' structure outside of current established structures such as centres and institutes and queried if another 'new' infrastructure type was required. The DoR reported that what is expected to emerge is an articulation of common supports and that a reconfiguration of existing centres may also emerge. As such the creation of a 'new' type of entity is not envisaged. It was further reported that there would be an audit of existing supports and an analysis of what supports could be shared. The DoR also noted that there is significant diversity in how centres are supported across the university.

The Committee questioned the nature of the restructuring and sought clarification on who would be able to access it. The VP/CAO noted that there was a defined roadmap for the next few months in the report outlining the next steps to be taken. The VP/CAO stated that there were some financial supports available for this exercise to

scope out changes required. The VP/CAO was clear that the changes required need to be worked out by Social Science PIs. The VP/CAO has mapped out a development path, but noted that it was down to Social Science PIs to develop.

The Research Committee were asked to support 1) the standing down of the IIS, and 2) the proposed pathway for development in Social Science as outlined in report. The Research Committee formally approved both.

#### **RS/14-15/07 Dean of Research Initiative (Research Development Manager)**

A document outlining the call for proposals for Pathfinder projects was circulated prior to the meeting for approval by the Committee. The DoR stated that the draft call for proposals attempts to capture the spirit of the initiative.

The RDM noted that the initiative was meant to be as open and inclusive as possible and also included scope for considering innovation and outreach activities. The RDM reported that there would be up to €20,000 per grant over a one year period during which time the impact should also be realised. The scope of the call has been left open to attract innovative proposals and is open to all disciplines and relevant staff based anywhere in College. The application is also short and a proposed draft template was included in the circulated documentation. The application would be open to individuals and groups and the lack of external/other funding available for the proposed project must be explicitly stated in the application. It was also reported that any external funding received during the course of the project would require any unused funds from the Research Committee Grant to be returned. The only reporting requirement is the submission of a final report requested after the term of the project. It was stressed that should teaching buy-out be requested as part of the bid then this must be agreed in advance with the PI's Head of School.

The TR&I Director commented that it is important that Pathfinder programme funding is used to create opportunities and to open up projects with big impact and scale. The Director also suggested that scoping should be weighted much more significantly towards impact and should encourage applications from disruptive thinkers. The Committee noted that there is a need to tighten language around teaching buy-out as this needs to be discouraged. The DoR reported that this initiative would launch early in the New Year. The Committee recommended that the scheme also be open to projects which may result in a longer term impact and as such the weighting for impact should be increased from 30 to 40. The call for proposals was approved subject to the agreed changes being implemented.

**RS/14-15/08 Internal Selection Process for SFI SIRG and CDA Awards**

The DoR reported that SFI SIRG and CDA awards are made to high potential postdocs and emerging PIs. The Committee was informed that in the past Trinity have been given a limited number (five) of slots for applications and an internal process was, therefore, required in order to decide which candidates could apply. The Dean reported that there were 23 and 27 applications respectively from internal candidates. The DoR noted that most were competitive, but that it was necessary to make a selection from the applications. The Committee were informed that applicants were requested to submit CVs and outline proposals and that the DoR and Deans reviewed and ranked proposals. Those proposals which ranked most highly then progressed to the application phase. The DoR reported that there was a high level of consensus from the selection committee on the ranking of the applications last year, however, the DoR highlighted the fact that a limited number of reviewers were ranking the proposals and hence not all expertise were covered. The DoR noted that most proposals were from the STEM areas with rare ones in the Arts/humanities. The Dean has considered using external experts, but noted that this approach was also potentially problematic. The DoR asked the Research Committee for suggestions on how this process could be undertaken.

The DoR left this item open for future feedback.

**RS/14-15/09 Innovation & Entrepreneurship Forum**

The DoR extended an invitation to Schools to nominate members for this I&E forum previously approved by the Research Committee (RS/13-14/06).

**RS/14-15/10 Dean of Research Annual Report 2012-13**

The DoR informed the Committee that the circulation of the DoR Annual Report 2012-2013 had been delayed as the availability of updated data on publications from resources such as InCites routinely causes a time lag. The Dean reported that in future a separate report on publications would be provided so as not to delay the publication of the report.

The Dean noted that overall the report showed an upturn in most of metrics in the University (income, publications, etc.). The Dean stated that there was a positive trend overall, however, he highlighted the vulnerability caused by the increase in publications should these papers not result in an increased number of citations. The Dean further reported that, based on RSS data, outputs are estimated to increase.

The DoR also noted that the report included information on key impacts from schools and institutes. The Committee requested that future calls soliciting information on research impacts from schools are aligned with SFI reporting periods for institutes.



#### **RS/14-15/11 Consultation Process**

The DoR informed the Committee that there was an invitation for the DoR to meet with the HRB review panel. The DoR requested input on this from Schools. Contributions are sought by end of the month particularly from Schools in Health Sciences.

The DoR noted that there was also a request for input into an assessment on the benefit of Ireland (nationally) joining CERN. The Dean reported that the Institute of Physics in Ireland have prepared a document to support the case. The Dean requested that Schools also canvas opinions on this. It was also noted that there is a cost for membership likely to be of the order of €1 million for associate membership or €10 million for full membership and that this would be drawn from the national research budget with consequent implications for the wider research community. The Dean requested comments from Schools. The Committee requested a list of benefits and the Dean agreed to circulate a copy of the IoP document.

#### **RS/14-15/12 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings**

The Committee was informed that a Translational Medical Institute proposal would be brought to Research Committee shortly.

The Committee was informed that reports on H2020 activity would be brought to future sittings of Research Committee.

The Dean invited agenda items from members.

#### **RS/14-15/13 AOB**

None recorded.