The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 23 February 2016

Present:

Professor John Boland, Dean of Research (DoR), Chair
Professor Martina Hennessy, Associate Dean of Research (ADoRMH)
Dr Diarmuid O'Brien, Director of Trinity Research and Innovation, Secretary

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Professor Micheál Ó Siochrú, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Roja Fazaeli, Director of School of Languages Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Ruth Byrne, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Carol Newman, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Trevor Spratt, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science
Professor Isabel Rozas, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Professor Doug Leith, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences

Faculty of Health Sciences
Professor Geralyn Hynes, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, Trinity Long Room Hub
Professor Orla Hardiman, Director of Research, TBSI
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies

In attendance:

Dr Oonagh Kinsman, Trinity Research & Innovation, Rapporteur to the Committee
Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation
Mr David O'Shea, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Initiatives, Office of the Dean and Vice President for Research (item RS/15-16/45 only)

Apologies:

Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics
Professor Sam Slote, Director of Research, School of English
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations (IT Services)

Not present:

Professor Peter Gallagher, Associate Dean of Research (ADoRPG)
Professor Stephen Minton, Director of Research, School of Education
Professor Aoife McLysaght, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Seamus Donnelly, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, CRANN
Professor Shane O'Mara, Director of Research, TCIN
Mr Michael Cooke, Acting Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association
Ms Katie Crowther, President, Graduate Students Union

For circulation:

Professor Brian Lucey, Director of Research, School of Business
Professor Jane Alden, Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music
Professor Mark Bell, Director of Research, School of Law
Professor Lorraine Leeson, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Andrew Pierce, Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Daniela Zisterer, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Luiz Da Silva, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Professor Sergey Frolov, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Lorraine O'Driscoll, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Gary Moran, Director of Research, School of Dental Science

Actions arising / on-going:

Agenda Item	Owner	Action	Status
RS/14-15/78	Dean of Research	Feedback on the reconsideration of the sustainability of TRIs and their value to Schools	*In progress*
RS/15-16/15	Associate Dean of Research MH	Feedback revised policies and decisions from the Research Ethics Policy Committee on US Department of Defense funding to the March Research Committee	*In progress*
RS/15-16/16	Research Development Manager	Seeking budget approval for local budgets for selected Research Programme Officers	*In progress*
RS/15-16/30	The Director of Research for Genetics and Microbiology and the Director of Research for the School of Histories and Humanities	Lead further discussion on Measuring Research Productivity and Excellence	*In progress*
RS/15-16/39	Dean of Research	Consult VP/DOR group of the IUA to see if all Irish universities were using ORCID identifiers and if any unintended consequences had arisen.	*In progress*
RS/15-16/42	Dean of Research / Research	Briefing and discussion on H2020 at a subsequent meeting	*In progress*

	Development Manager		

RS/15-16/41   Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities congratulated the Rapporteur on the quality of the minutes.

Work on the sustainability of the TRIs (RS/14-15/78) is still ongoing. The sub-group to lead further discussion on Measuring Research Productivity and Excellence (RS/15-16/16) met last week.

Feedback from the Research Ethics Committee on US Department of Defense funding (RS/15-16/15) will be brought to the March meeting.

ACTION: ADorMH to bring this to the March meeting

The ADoRMH reported that she had met with Tom Merriman, College Safety Officer to discuss the one further amendment to the Lone Worker guidelines (RS/15-16/30) suggested at the last committee meeting to remove the role of the Head of School for approval for access to the Arts block for academic staff and to abide by existing sign in protocols. The College Safety Officer acknowledged that this pattern of work was low risk but wished that the responsibilities of the Head of School should continue and that a compromise would be that approval is granted for a period of time eg 6 months but that monitoring of such out of hours activity be summarised over the time period. Concerns were raised by the Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities that such actions could be deemed to be going beyond the purpose of this Lone Worker guideline and may have unintended implications on monitoring hours worked by academics and the Working Hours Directive. He was of the view that the current sign in process for working after 10pm in the Arts Block was working well from a Safety perspective. It was acknowledged that Laboratory working in some parts of College was a different situation. The Research Committee reports to Council and addresses policy relating to research. The College Safety Committee which reports to Board will continue with on-going dialogue.

The Research Development Manager reported that further information including budget approval signatures is awaited from some areas for Research Programme Officer funding (RS/15-16/16). Liability for any Contracts of Indefinite Duration is being met locally.

The DOR will consult other universities on the use of ORCID IDs at the IUA meeting next week (RS/15-16/39)

Action: DOR to raise use of ORCID IDs at IUA VP/DORs meeting

RS/15-16/42   Update from the DOR

H2020 targets and funding to date for TCD had been sent to the HEA. He would like to discuss these further at a subsequent meeting. Two Marie Sklodowska Curie COFUND awards (SFI centres and Long Rom Hub) had

been made recently to Trinity to fund additional post-doctoral fellows/visiting fellows. The SFI centres award is worth €6 Million and is the largest H2020 grant to date. An award has also been made to WiSER to promote gender equality which supports the aims of the Athena Swan programme. It is accepted that competition has increased in H2020 compared to FP7 and talks are already starting on a new Framework.

The Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities suggested that the committee could be briefed on TCDs participation in H2020 including successes, perceived obstacles and challenges etc. The Research Development Manager is also keen to get feedback on current supports.

Action: DOR and Research Development Manager include a H2020 briefing and discussion on H2020 at a future meeting.

RS/15-16/43   Discussion document on retired staff and research funding of grant

The discussion document prepared by Aveen Batt and the Research Development Manager was circulated for comment. It was noted that the salary to be requested from non-core sources was required to be at the first point on the scale and not on the point at which the member of staff had retired. A new Employment Control Framework is expected in Q1 2016. It was important to manage expectation for the 'exceptional buy-back arrangement' where greater than 20% of salary is being requested. For example this would be sought for large grants (>€1million) or for a portfolio of grants which would reach this total. The 30% time requirement for ERC is one such example. Approval should be sought for the whole duration of the grant and not on an annual basis. The usual approval at Head of School or Faculty level would also be required. There is a need for a fast track procession of approval by the HEA

The Director of TR&I emphasised that funding would be coming from non-core sources and this should be made more explicit in the document. The DOR emphasised that it should be made clear that such funded buy-back would not block new staff appointments. However he was also keen to stress that the continued participation of such staff should assist in setting the bar high for excellence, have a role as ambassadors for Irish research and participate in mentoring junior staff. The Director of Research for Histories and Humanities supported the proposal and requested emphasis that there would be no cost to the School apart from space and accommodation and that philanthropic sources of funding should be included. Co-supervision of students is also possible subject to internal requirements. The DOR commented that although SFI do not normally pay salaries for academic staff he will seek clarification on where salaries are allowed if this could extend to retired staff. In response to a question on tax implications for pensions, the Research Development Manager confirmed that HR had considered these and at the salary levels under discussion there were no significant tax implications although individuals would need to seek advice for their personal circumstances. The ADoRMH emphasised that such retired staff buy-back should not affect core head count or Ussher mainstreaming. Heads of School need to make pragmatic decisions on such retired staff arrangements.

RS/15-16/44   Measuring Research Productivity and Excellence

The DOR, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology and Director of Research, Histories and Humanities had met to discuss this topic. They will seek advice from Niamh Brennan to analyse over the last 5 years if it has promoted the wrong kind of behaviour eg an emphasis on quantity not quality. It was acknowledged in relation to the measures implemented since 2010 that there are challenges with a one-size-fits-all approach. It is intended that a Faculty based approach will be undertaken with the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences being represented by the Director of Research, Histories and Humanities and the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science being represented by the Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology. The DOR is seeking representation from the Faculty of Health Sciences. It is understood that there will be a variety of discipline specific practices.   They will raise the issue at Faculty Research meetings, and seek feedback from all Directors of Research. Current metrics are focussed on outputs ie publications but that a rebalancing needs to take place with a clearer sense of activities with impact. It may be necessary to provide a narrative alongside the metrics. Dicsussions will continue with a draft proposal planned for the end of the academic year.

The Director of Research, Social Sciences and Humanities emphasised the differing approach for different disciplines in her Faculty. The Director of Research, Natural Sciences explained that this was a particular problem in her School with variation from hard science to social science. The Director of Research, Long Rom Hub described attempts to look at quality identification in outputs and asked if there was a need for an overarching College policy. The Director of Research, Histories and Humanities emphasised that a narrative is needed as often metrics do not represent quality. The REF in the UK was difficult and time-consuming. We need to make sure we are spending time wisely and realistically.

Director of Research, School of Psychology asked if it was intended to use information for other purposes eg ABC allocation or promotion. . The DOR confirmed that there were no plans at present. However it was suggested that the balance of activities between teaching/research/outreach and a more holistic approach could be taken and that the policy for promotion may need to be reviewed. It is also important that in the expectations of performance for new staff the targets are realistic

The Director of Research, Long Rom Hub emphasised that we need to be careful that interdisciplinary research is not disadvantaged and there is no easy metric for this.

RS/15-16/45   Ranking Strategy

The Head of Strategic Projects presented an ranking analysis from Quantup which had looked at TCD data and how influential changes in a parameter could impact the ranking ie a small change could have an

impact, for example research reputation could be influential. Six indictors used the underlying numbers of academic staff. This had now been corrected to be FTE in the new data submission, Research assistants should not be included in research staff numbers by their guidelines. A useful summary table showed the indicators and which ones were best to target. Industry funding was not considered

The Director of Research, Histories and Humanities asked if we should base our strategy on some indicators which might change and that we should be very careful that we do not allow such analyses to influence College strategy. The DOR replied that he agrees and the Head of Strategic Projects clarified that changes to parameters from ranking agencies only happen very slowly as they wanted to maintain consistency of approach over a number of years. Similarly it was indicated that the reputational parameter is unlikely to change. Internal approaches to ensure high quality outputs are considered by the rankings is consistent with measuring excellence. Following a question from the Director of Research, Chemistry it was clarified that staff numbers used were data provided by us and that publication analysis was using Scopus. The data cleansing is currently underway in all Schools and she was asked to consult her School further on this topic. It is understood that books and monographs were outside of this current Scopus analysis and it will be at least 2 years before such outputs are considered. The Director of Research asked for information on the time period considered for publications. This varies from 5-6 years and is based on the last academic year outputs

RS/15-16/46   Tenure Track System for Entry Level Academics

The Vice Provost detailed that the Research committee had been consulted on this topic last year and the document had been considered by Board and Council and approved. Legal advice had also been taken on the robustness of the contracts and that the Department of Education and Skills were supportive. The previous review process had been simplified. It was intended that the offer of a 5 year contract and continuation beyond the 5 year term with the issue of a permanent contract would be based on three annual reviews and a tenure/conversion interview in the fourth year. If this was unsuccessful the contract would not be renewed at the end of 5 years. There was the possibility of a reassessment in the final year. This process would supersede the merit bar requirements of the lecturer scale. More work was needed on the metrics or benchmarks for the full spectrum of activities. It is acknowledged that time post PhD for these entry level recruits will vary from area to area. Inputs are welcomed over the next 3 months.

The Director of Research for the School of Histories and Humanities requested confirmation on the approval by Board and this was confirmed. He asked if the College wide promotion/progression committee would continue as it provided a useful comparison across all areas. The tenure track process took into account that the past panels were too large and the final composition was a compromise.

The Director of Research, Psychology asked if there were any other career options, for example those who excelled at teaching. The Vice Provost clarified that the promotion processes for teaching specialists will be considered next and would be quite different and it may be that College might have a teaching only track in future but it was not expected that an individual would move between different categories. The Director of Research, Psychology also asked what specific gender issues were being incorporated such as the time allowances applied by the ERC for maternity leave(s). Such time allowances are under discussion and there might also be a possibility of a period of research leave after a maternity leave being offered.

The Director of Research, Computer Science and Statistics asked if one external assessor was enough and should this be increased. The Vice Provost indicated that the original proposal contained 2 external assessors but that this was reduced following interactions with the union and academic staff association. It was also commented that with the current composition of panels it will be hard to get panels organised.

The Director of Trinity Research and innovation asked how the 5 year contract would affect the individuals applying for research funding in the later stages of their five year contract. The Vice-Provost confirmed that there would be a form of wording provided for assurance and this should not restrict their funding applications. If for example funding had been granted where tenure was not granted a specific purpose contract may be an option.

RS/15-16/47   AOB
None