The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 22 March 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 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 Aoife McLysaght, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Sergey Frolov, Director of Research, School of Mathematics

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

In attendance:

Dr Oonagh Kinsman, Trinity Research & Innovation, Rapporteur to the Committee
Mr David O'Shea, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division

Apologies:

Professor Sam Slote, Director of Research, School of English
Professor Roja Fazaeli, Director of School of Languages Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics
Professor Seamus Donnelly, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies
Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation

Not present:

Professor Peter Gallagher, Associate Dean of Research (ADoRPG)
Professor Stephen Minton, Director of Research, School of Education

Professor Ruth Byrne, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, CRANN
Professor Shane O'Mara, Director of Research, TCIN
Professor Orla Hardiman, Director of Research, TBSI
Mr Michael Cooke, Acting Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association
Ms Katie Crowther, President, Graduate Students Union
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations (IT Services)

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 Gary Moran, Director of Research, School of Dental Science
Professor Lorraine O'Driscoll, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

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/15-16/16	Research Development Manager	Prepare and circualate a call for additional Research Programme Officers	*In progress*
RS/15-16/50	Dean of Research	Consider timelines for progression of the document 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/15-16/49	Dean of Research	Report back to IUA VPDoR on concerns with Research Career framework policy document	*In progress*

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

The discussion document on retired staff and research funding (RS/15-16/43) is being tabled at a meeting with the HEA in the next few weeks. The Dean of Research is confident that they will make progress. There is an example already where they have agreed to a retired professor being funded for a research contract for the duration of funding.

The call for the new Research Programme Officers (RS/15-16/16) will be issued mid-April with a deadline in mid-May. Priority will be given to

School(s) who do not currently have a position and to avoid existing resource duplication.

Action: The Research Development Manager will circulate the call for new Research Programme Officers.

The ADoRMH reported that the Research Ethics Policy committee were charged with revision of wording of the US Department of Defense funding policy by Council ((RS/15-16/15) However the issue with the wording was not included in the Council minutes and it was unclear what needed revision.   The wording was reviewed and the word 'also' was removed in the following sentence:
'The guiding principle for ethical approval is that the research must ~~also~~ have a significant potential to mankind'
The DOR emphasised that there were potential opportunities in Materials Science funding from the US Dept of Defense.

The ADorMH updated the committee on the Lone Worker guidelines (RS/15-16/30. She had passed on to Tom Merriman the proposal that the status quo should stand for working out of hours in the Arts Block. The safety committee can discuss further with Heads of Schools if necessary.

The Director of Research clarified that the policy for Tenure Track System for Entry Level Academics (RS/15-16/46) was returning to Board for approval for procedural reasons.

RS/15-16/48   Director of Trinity Translational Medicine Institute

Professor Orla Sheils has been put forward as the Director of this Institute which will form a bridge between the Life Sciences and the clinical environment. The Committee approved this appointment. The DoR will be working with Prof Orla Sheils and Prof Paul Browne to build the appropriate institute structure.

RS/15-16/49   Research Career Framework policy discussion document

This document had been brought to the VP/DoR committee at the IUA from a working group headed by Tony Mc Mahon. One of the main aims of this document was to comply with open and transparent recruitment. The DoR was of the view that the document provided an inflexible approach and that post docs are often needed to be put on projects with a degree of urgency eg a commercialisation project.   He was also concerned about the salary ranges. TCD currently does not differentiate between research fellows and post doctoral researchers.

The Director of Trinity Research and Innovation emphasised that we are in a globally competitive market and this is what drives salaries in some instances and it would not be workable to comply with the pay ranges for some unique skills. He also suggested that maintaining competitive research groups required a degree of freedom to pay higher salaries for key staff and that open competition processes required for promotion was restrictive. He also gave examples that within SFI funded centres

there were short term posts for research staff from industry; this framework does not address these types of roles.

The Director of Research for Histories and Humanities required clarity on the issue of a Contract of Indefinite Duration (COID). He also saw the viewing of a senior research fellow as an academic appointment as problematic. The ADoRMH commented that the first draft assumed progression through the grades without reference to COID. Specific purpose contracts specify the timelines for each contract. A few committee members commented that there was lack of clarity around recruitment processes where funding may be available for 4-6 years. They need advice on the implications for moving a post doc onto another grant eg redundancy. It was clarified that payment from core funding rather than research funding may provide additional COID expectations.

The DoR commented that other Irish universities including UCD and UCC had similar frameworks in place. It is appreciated that the transferable skills are important and that in other countries there are more opportunities to move on to other careers while there are fewer opportunities in Ireland. In the US the turnover of post docs is greater while we seek to hold on to good researchers. We also need to avoid progression thought grades by default

The Director of Trinity Research and Innovation commented that it would be advisable to keep records of processes involved in the appointment of each research position as this may be a requested by some audits. He suggested that HR should advise PIs especially when transfers of salary costs are requested especially to School accounts.

The DoR will raise concerns at the next IUA VPDoR meeting

Although not covered under this agenda item it was also pointed out by the Director of Research for Histories and Humanities that school administrators and other administrators in the Faculty of AHSS need advice on procurement for specific services and engagement with industry partners as their experience is less than other Schools.

Action: DoR will raise issues with the Framework at the IUA VPDoR meeting.

RS/15-16/50 Research Productivity and Excellence update

The Director of Research for Histories and Humanities reported that a meeting took place with the Dean and representatives from the three faculties, (Director of Research for Histories and Humanities, The Director of Research for Genetics and Microbiology and the Director of Research for Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences). It was acknowledged that there were differences in approach within Faculties. Since the metrics were introduced in 2010/2011 there was no evidence that the requirement to publish numbers of papers had affected quality. However they were not complacent. The topic was being explored at Faculty research committees. A draft discussion document will address the important differentiation between outputs and actions. Outputs are now deemed to be more important. Best practice and need for quality

will be emphasised. It should also be understood that no metric will capture everything and there is a need to deal with exceptional cases. They are taking into account best practice from ERC, RIA papers and UK systems.

The ADoRMH asked how cross-disciplinary outputs will be assessed. There isn't an easy solution. Niamh Brennan is identifying journals that might better reflect inter-disciplinary outputs. The Director of Research for Social Sciences and Philosophy suggested that this could be step 2. The DoR also suggested that an analysis of such collaborations and how they are currently counted could be useful.

The timescale for completion was suggested to be June is the end of the academic year and the DoR would investigate the dates of Council meetings. However this was thought to be ambitious as the topic was being reviewed at School level in May. He will revert with proposed timelines at the next Research committee

Action: DoR to propose a timeline for progression of the discussion document to Council.

RS/15-16/51   H2020 update

The Director of Trinity Research and innovation reviewed the overall financial target for TCD (€154 million) and the funding to date. Although this was an ambitious target the data indicated that from the awards in the first 2 years it may be achieved. Success in the ERC has contributed to this with 17 awards to date. However H2020 funding in other areas was more difficult to obtain than in FP7 with increased proposals and a decreased success rate. The number of PIs in College applying is good but the strategy is to increase the number of coordinators and to maximise the budgets for TCD participants in consortia led by other institutions.

Funding from ERC support grants for successful awardees within the ERC remit will be split 70% to the PI and 30% to College. The central funding. will support a Visiting Scholars programme to encourage external ERC applications and central Research Development Office resourcing to assist internal and external candidates. The was a target to increase the numbers applying from the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and to target all new Ussher lecturers.

He commented on the mid-term review of H2020 and that any major changes were unlikely to happen within the lifetime of H2020 but may shape the next Framework. Low success rates may be tackled by having more 2-stage calls to cull more earlier. College is feeding into these reviews via EARMA and COIMBRA. He stated that more influence could be made by TCD staff on the large technology platforms who are influential in programme content. In comparison with other Irish universities TCS is achieving the largest financial drawdown however if the ERC contribution is disregarded other institutions have had more success. There are a number of measures in place to increase non ERC awards including 'bootcamps' for coordinators early in the planning process which to date has increased the success rate. The

encouragement of research fellows to become involved and become the main driver for an application has been successful. There will be a visit to UCL who have achieved high success rates to look at their processes and focus on innovation management.

He stressed that the time and effort commitment to achieving H2020 funding which accounts for approximately 25% of research funding far outweighs effort on national funding which accounts for 60-70% of research funding.

The Director of the Long Room Hub commented that significant effort was being made by the Research Programme Officer to encourage applications to the ERC but that evidence of success with Prof Poul Holm is very helpful. The Visiting Research Fellowship Scheme recently funded through COFUND should also increase the opportunities for engagement with potential external candidates. She hopes that there will be at least 16 applications over the next 2 years. Heads of Schools and Directors of Research have become engaged with the process. One issue was the time commitment and possible buy-out of time for preparation and suggested that a small budget be available for this purpose. The Director for Research for Histories and Humanities emphasised the importance of local engagement especially with new staff.

The DoR also drew attention to the IRC funded events to promote inter-disciplinarity and to bring AHSS collaborators into consortia.. He also commented on the financial targets and informed that there would be a meeting of the Higher Education Research Group with DEJI to discuss realistic national targets and what proportion should come from the university sector. Although TCD may achieve their proposed target this may not be the case for other universities.

SFI provide a €300,000 ERC support for successful candidates (now reduced to €150,000) but an application from the School of Natural Sciences was deemed to be outside the remit of SFI. The DoR suggested that the IRC should encourage applications from their PI cohort and make successes by providing a similar scheme. DoRMH also commented that ERC applications by clinicians may have a different window of opportunity with respect to eligibility

The Director of Trinity Research and Innovation commented that large industries In Europe were influential on H2020 programme content but that there is no such lobby group in Ireland

RS/15-16/52   AOB

The Director of Research for Computer Science and Statistics wished to discuss Irish funding agencies funding for PhD fees which did not map to the TCD fee structure. With time constraints it was agreed to be discussed at the next meeting.