

**The University of Dublin
Trinity College**

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 20 February 2018

Present:

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (DoR)

Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Professor Ruth Barton, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts

Professor Ann Devitt, Director of Research, School of Education

Professor Daniel Geary, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities

Professor Brian Brewer, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies

Professor Diarmuid Phelan, Deputy Director of Research, School of Law

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

Professor Gaia Narciso, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Professor Jacob Erikson, Director of Research, School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology

Professor Trevor Spratt, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Faculty of Engineering

Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Jeffrey O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science

Professor Louise Gallagher, Director of Research, School of Medicine

Professor Helen Sheridan, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Mani Ramaswami, Director, TCIN

Professor Orla Sheils Director, TTMI

Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub

Mr Shane Collins, President of Graduate Students Union

In attendance:

Mr David O'Shea, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division

Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services

Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian

Mr Leonard Hobbs, Director Trinity Research & Innovation

Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Initiatives, Office of the Dean of Research

Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation

Dr Jennifer Daly, Office the Dean of Research, Secretary to the Committee

Apologies:

Professor Thorfinnur Gunnlaugsson, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
 Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
 Professor Sinead Ryan, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
 Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Not present:

Professor Sam Slote, Director of Research, School of English
 Professor Brian Lucey, Director of Research, School of Business
 Professor Adrian Bracken, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
 Professor Emma Creagh, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
 Professor Ruth Byrne, Director of Research, School of Psychology
 Professor Luiz Da Silva, Director of Research, School of Engineering
 Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics
 Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director, CRANN
 Professor Orla Hardiman, Director, TBSI

Agenda Item	Owner	Action	Status
RS/17-18/08	ALL	Members of the RC Committee to get feedback from their schools/units on research principles and SWOT to feed in to the into the strategic planning process	<i>Due next meeting</i>

A.1 Minutes

The meeting opened with the minutes. It was noted that the date on the minutes needed to be amended, but otherwise minutes of January meeting accepted as accurate record.

A.2 Matters Arising from the Minutes

The DoR ran through the matters arising and the action points from the minutes.

The DoR noted that many of the actions are now obsolete as the focus on the strategic plan will incorporate most of them. The action list will be updated to take account of this. There were no major updates on any of the existing actions since the last meeting.

The DoR pointed out that the new Assistant Deans of Research have been nominated, but have to be confirmed by Board so cannot be announced until this has taken place.

DoR discussed research integrity modules that will be made available through Epigeum. As part of a consortia headed by the IUA, Trinity now has licences to access these modules. New PhD students will get a licence as they register. Staff will get a licence through the Office of the Dean of Research. The staff course is approximately 50 minutes, student course approximately 5 hours. It was confirmed the modules are for research integrity and ethics training, not ethics processing. It was advised that Epigeum also provide modules for leadership training. A question was brought up about whether these licences will be available to Masters students. The DoR said that this has not been considered and it was pointed out that capacity might not be available for this. It was also noted that with new requirements from funders Trinity will have to move to provide ethics and research integrity training for everyone.

A.3 Update from the Dean of Research

The DoR gave a report based on the following points:

- Regular meetings with many academics to develop a better sense of the breath of research concerns - As part of this process the DoR is inviting 12 different researchers from a range of disciplines and career stages to weekly meetings in order to broaden the conversation and get a wider sense of research issues.
- Launches - Beyond 2020 and the Centre for Environmental Humanities.
- The SFI Starting Investigator Research Grants (SIRG) - This process is underway. Trinity has to do a first filter to nominate 12 candidates who will proceed to full application.
- Rankings - The Office of the Dean of Research has been notified of the results of the forthcoming Subject Rankings from QS. These rankings are embargoed until February 28th so can't provide any specific details, but the news is generally good.

B.1 Research Strategy

The DoR began by noting that there is only one item on today's agenda as she is keen to try out a new approach that involves allowing a more in-depth discussion of material, and greater interaction during the meeting.

For the purposes of this item the DoR presented a short presentation about the research excellence strategy that focused on the following:

1. The fact that a research strategy has to be something for the whole university
2. The different stages involved in creating a research strategy and how people might feed in to the process
3. The research mission of the university
4. The proposal to build the vision around a set of core principles rather than a range of research topics/areas.
5. An initial SWOT analysis that could be the basis for determining goals and actions
6. The aim to agree the principles, goals and actions before writing the actual strategic documents

The DoR suggested that all members of the Research Committee need to bring this conversation back to their schools/units for discussion. She emphasised that it is imperative that a conversation is had at all levels so that everyone can see the point of developing a strategy and can feed in from the beginning. More specifically the DoR wants specific

feedback on the over-arching principles on which the strategy could be built, as well as getting more detailed SWOT input. The members of the committee were asked to supply feedback by the next RC committee meeting. Following that, next steps will be taken. In the meantime the DoR will continue to discuss the strategic research plan widely. The aim is to complete the strategic plan by June 2017.

A very engaged conversation ensued with inputs and suggestions from a wide range of RC members. The conversation was free flowing and highly interactive and the following summarises a range of points that were made:

Comments on opportunity to engage with the planning process

Various members of the RC welcomed the opportunity to be able to engage with the strategic research process from the beginning, and in an open manner.

Comments on the value of having a strategic research plan

During the discussion on the value of a strategic research plan, the point was made that a strategic research plan is critical as this would become a public facing document to articulate Trinity's commitment to research across all disciplines, to challenge the national dialogue, and to affirm the university's commitment to specific values and research at all career stages.

Comments on the research mission

During the discussion on the research mission, it was noted as currently phrased, the research mission description could be a description of any university, hence we all need to ask what is so different about Trinity? It was postulated that the intensity at which we carry out research is a key differentiator. This led to the observation that Trinity takes the approach that everyone does research, i.e. that there is not supposed to be a division between research staff and teaching staff, which is not always the case with other universities. The committee was asked to consider, apart from this intensity, what sets Trinity apart?

The discussion on research intensity drew the comment that being research active can be more challenging in certain areas, especially where researchers are obliged to deal with lengthy accreditation processes. Observations were made that Trinity prioritises a research-led teaching experience, positioning research in teaching provision and thereby growing researchers from the beginning. There were questions around whether multi-disciplinary research should feature as a part of the research mission while noting it is not the focus of all research.

Comments on the motivation for the research vision

This discussion began by looking at the drivers of 'why' we aim to do better research/focus on research excellence. A conversation ensued about how we might articulate this without recourse to mentioning research areas or topics. The idea of striving '*to build a world we want to live in*' was put forward as a possible articulation.

Comments on the research principles

The suggestion that the vision be built around a set of core principles was broadly accepted and the suggested structure for building on the principles was deemed a workable one. Discussion followed around the initial suggestions as to what those principles might be.

There were comments in favour and against the idea of stressing *curiosity-led* research. Those in favour felt that intellectual curiosity is a trait we try to grow in researchers, that it is a mindset, and a fundamental requirement to do the work of a university. Those against worried about false interpretations of the term by the wider public. There were comments on the need to emphasise research-led teaching. The observation that the university doesn't use its unique elements as much as it could – places such as the Douglas Hyde Gallery, the Science Gallery, the Lir, even the Library – from a research perspective and the vision of the strategy could accommodate this. There were discussions around the need to be agile and respond to big opportunities as well as the need to lead. There were suggestions that the strategy should prioritise opportunity, the freedom to explore new ideas, establish new initiatives for collaborative discussions, have inward-facing conversations to regain the sense of opportunity. Researchers need the space to carve a path for themselves.

Comments on the SWOT

The initial SWOT was examined and the committee members agreed to pay particular attention to this when getting feedback from their Schools/units.

Comments on the research strategy document format

The DoR noted that the plan is to have an outward-facing part of the strategic plan, for wider public consumption, and an inward-facing more detailed implementation plan. The latter will be derived from the determining the goals and mapping those to detailed actions.

Comments on other aspects of the process

Comments were made on the importance of including as diverse university staff in the strategic planning process as possible as many college divisions have an impact on, and are impacted by, research.

Comments on the research themes

In response to questions about the role of the themes, the DoR emphasised that while the strategic research plan is being revisited, the themes will continue to play a strong role, and will be embodied in the plan in different ways. There was a request to keep the themes open for expansion/inclusion.

B.2 AOB

None.

C.1 Items for Discussion at Future Meetings

DoR asked for items to be sent on for discussion.

C.2 Items for Noting

An application for funding as part of European Researchers' Night was submitted.