The University of Dublin
Trinity College
RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, 19 October 2021
Via Zoom
MINUTES

In attendance
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Dean of Research (Chair)
Professor Maria Brenner (Associate Dean of Research)
Professor Brian Broderick (Associate Dean of Research)
Professor Immo Warntjes (Associate Dean of Research)
Professor Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English
Professor Daniel Geary, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Clemens Ruthner, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Redmond O'Connell, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor John Divers, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Jacob Erickson on behalf of Director of Research, School of Religion
Professor Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Gareth Bennett, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Professor Marta Martins, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Sergey Mozgovoy, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, School of Physics
Professor Hal Duncan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science
Professor Ursula Fearon, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Professor Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Lidia Tajber, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Kingston Mills, Director of TBSI
Professor Aideen Long, Director of Trinity Translational Medicine Institute
Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of CRANN
Professor Eve Patten, Director of Trinity Long Room Hub
Professor Rhodri Cusack, Director of TCIN
Mr. Leonard Hobbs, Director of Trinity Research & Innovation
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development, Office of the Dean of Research
Dr Raquel Cabral Harper, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation
Ms Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist, Library
Ms Doris Alexander,
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research
Apologies
Professor Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, Director of Research, School of Religion
Professor Deirdre Ahern, Director of Research, School of Law
Professor Declan O'Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Professor John Saeed, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	**Minutes** Minutes from the previous meeting on September 21st were circulated in advance and approved.
A.2	**Matters Arising from the Minutes** **RS/20-21/4** Research Ethics Application Management System: The highest ranked tender was approved. Committee was advised that the working group will now start with the implementation of the system.

	Section B - Items for Discussion Only
B.1	**Update from Dean of Research**
	Dean of Research
	RS/21-22/2 The Research Boost Programme had concluded with all applicants notified of outcomes. DOR noted thanks to Dr Fiona Killard and Sarah Bowman in the Office of the Dean of Research for running the call so efficiently. Also noted thanks to members of the committee who reviewed applications. Full update from FK later in the meeting. DOR also noted that the HEA Covid-19 Costed Extensions Fund was very efficiently managed and suggested that there could be learnings to share with other areas of College. DOR also noted in relation to the Research Boost Programme how noticeable it was that small amounts of funding for very specific actions were making a significant difference for many researchers.
	RS/19-20/3 DOR advised that committee that he and ADOR Immo Warntjes had met with Mary Leahy in HR in relation to the ongoing issue around postdoc contracts and teaching. DOR noted that he proposed some language for insertion into contracts and HR seemed to be generally receptive to this. DOR advised the committee that Mary Leahy was working on a guidance document for schools around this issue and it was hoped that this would be presented to the committee in November or December.
	The chair of the Trinity Research Staff Association cautiously welcomed this development and asked for the proposed text to be shared with the TRSA so that they could discuss it as a group. DOR agreed. Prof. Eve Patten asked that research institutes be included in consultation given the large proportion of these researchers that they house. The committee noted some concerns as to whether funding agencies would accommodate changes and there was also some discussion about the implications of split contracts. The committee noted concerns that limitations on options for career development were making it harder to attract talent to Trinity. Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, noted that researchers working on EU projects must submit timesheets and extreme care would have to be exercised in relation to the accuracy of timesheets to avoid eligible costs being denied.
	ACTION: HR to present update on contracts issue.
	RS/20-21/8 DOR noted that the committee's concerns in relation to the North-South funding call were discussed at a recent meeting of the IUA, and were also discussed with the VP for Research at QUB, and the HEA. DOR noted that tight timelines seem to be where issues came from. Committee was advised that Camilla Kelly and Ciarán McEvoy in the RDO were the internal contact points for this call.
	RS/18-19/19 Committee was advised that NORF interim recommendations were close to being finalised. DOR noted that Trinity would have to be very organised to provide proper feedback during what is expected to be a relatively short consultation phase. ADOR Warntjes advised the committee that townhalls would be organised. Members of the committee noted that various groups around College had fed into similar consultations over the last 18 months, but it was not always clear how this feedback was being used by NORF. DOR also noted concern regarding the cost implications for universities.
	RS/20-21/14 DOR reminded the committee that some of the allocations under the IReL Open Access Agreement were due to run out before the end of the calendar year. The committee was advised to contact Arlene Healy with any queries.
B.1	

	RS/21-22/3 DOR advised the committee that following an audit of SFI and EI by the European Court of Auditors several issues had arisen around state aid and research funding. The auditors also noted a lack of oversight on SFI's research programmes. DOR noted that SFI wanted to run pilots/audits with universities along with ex-ante checks. Committee was advised that there was some resistance from the IUA to how SFI proposed to respond to these issues. DOR also noted that every university has a different approach to state aid. Committee was advised that researchers should liaise with the Technology Transfer Office. Some members of the committee noted concerns with this issue and the implications it could have for research projects. Leonard Hobbs confirmed to the committee that academic consultancy was not affected by this issue. LH also noted that licensing was the main issue and that contracts were very carefully reviewed to ensure Trinity was not exposed. LH stated that he was confident Trinity was compliant with all state aid rules.
B.2	**RS/21-22/2 Research Boost Programme - report** Dr Fiona Killard FK provided the committee with an update on the Research Boost Programme. The call was launched on September 2nd and was based on the Research Charter principle 'Foster and grow research talent.' The aim of the programme was to provide small amounts of support to help researchers get projects back on track and boost research activity. FK noted that Prof. Mani Ramaswami had offered co-funding for biomedical and neurohumanities projects as part of his Wellcome ISSF 3 Award. The deadline for applications was September 20th with 160 applications received. The gender split for applications was 49% female, 51% male. The breakdown of applicants across faculty was 33% from STEM, 37% AHSS, and 30% HS. FK advised the committee that all applications were peer reviewed, and results had been communicated to all applicants with 61 applications approved. The gender split for successful applications was 48% female, 52% male. The breakdown by faculty for successful applications was 33% STEM, 39% AHSS, 26% HS. FK noted sincere thanks to all the reviewers who helped to complete the programme so quickly. Prof. Hal Duncan noted that researchers in the School of Dental Science did not apply as they do not technically hold Trinity contracts of employment which was one of the conditions of the programme. DOR and FK thanked Prof. Duncan for highlighting this and asked the committee to highlight issues like this asap in the future so that accommodations can be made to include all researchers. Prof. John Divers noted that timing of the call at the start of the academic year meant that many researchers were not able to apply as a result of workloads. DOR noted that this particular call was launched to coincide with the appointment of the new DOR and ADORs but agreed that future calls would try to factor in calendar considerations as much as possible. DOR noted that the application form had been kept as short as possible to avoid overburdening applicants, and also noted that although the ODRES team was very small it managed to administer the programme very efficiently.

B.3	**RS/20-21/2 HEA Covid-19 Costed Extensions - report** Dr Fiona Killard Fiona Killard presented an overview of the HEA Covid-19 Costed Extensions Fund and explained the process behind how it was handled in Trinity. FK and JD in the Office of the Dean of Research wrote a paper in the summer of 2020 that highlighted the significant issues researchers faced due to the Covid-19 restrictions. This paper was shared with the IUA, HEA, and DFHERIS and was referred to in lobbying for financial support for researchers. Trinity was allocated €8.24million by the HEA. The fund was administered by the Office of the Dean of Research with support from HR, Payroll, and the Research Team in FSD. Three calls were run over a seven month period with in excess of 1,100 applications received. The full fund was exhausted and all funds disbursed. FK noted that Trinity's process was highlighted by the HEA as a process that other universities should consider as many had only spent about 20% of their allocations. The HEA has now closed the fund, recalled all unspent monies and will reallocate them to other institutions. The Dean of Graduate Studies noted that at a recent IUA meeting it was mentioned that all the other universities had underspent and had to return unused funds. DGS noted other universities were very interested to learn more about the process the Office of the Dean of Research used. FK noted sincere thanks to the teams in Payroll and Research Finance who were essential in turning the applications around so quickly.
	RS/20-21/12 Post Award Support Review Dr Fiona Killard FK noted that it was agreed in April 2021 that the ODRES would undertake a review of the post award space and report back with an update in six months. FK noted that the first step was to define what "post award support" actually means because this can vary widely across schools. The ODRES created a central page with a list of resources and a feedback form to identify further gaps. FK advised that the feedback form had generated a list of issues to address and the ODRES would now begin to address these, with a further progress update to be brought to the Research Committee in three months. In response to a question from Leonard Hobbs about the kind of issues that had been flagged, FK advised the committee that many supports were already in place but people did not know they existed or how to access them. FK noted that better communication around existing supports was needed. FK also noted that the processes researchers have to interact with need to be refined and updated. FK noted that feedback made it clear that more efficient processes was a priority for most as opposed to hiring extra resources to work with inefficient systems.
	Section C – Items for Noting
C.1	**Items for Noting** • **RS/18-19/11** A memo from REPC re pending addition to the proposed structures for Research Ethics Committees was circulated to the committee for noting. Chair of REPC will be attending faculty forums in the coming weeks. • National Development Plan: Raquel Harper noted that plan intended for SFI centres to become independent entities and it would be important for universities to start a dialogue around this. DOR noted disappointment with the

		plan, and observed that in conjunction with the recent budget it does not really do much for research. Talent, infrastructure, challenge based research, and investigator led research are all mentioned but in very general terms. Noted emphasis on north-south collaborations. Certain capital projects at Trinity were mentioned (the Library) but others were not which might be a concern.
C.2		**Items for future discussion** • RS/18-19/11 Proposed structures for Research Ethics Committees
C.3		**AOB** • Leonard Hobbs noted that Learnovate had secured a third phase of funding. • It was noted that in line with Horizon Europe requirements, Trinity must have a Gender Equality Plan in place by January 2022. It was noted that Prof. Lorraine Leeson, the VP for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was conducting a gap analysis and had asked for this to be flagged to the Research Committee. • Members of the committee noted the importance of reminding government that basic research infrastructure was crumbling and was having a negative impact on research and teaching. It was noted that this also negatively impacted on Trinity's ability to attract and retain talent. • Members of the committee again noted the disparity between PhD fees and the amount funding agencies allow. Also noted was the unwieldy registration system used by Academic Registry and the many problems and extra administrative burden this creates. Dean of Graduate Studies advised the committee that the Graduate Renewal Programme had just started and that she was working with Academic Registry on these issues. DGS noted that the priority was to simplify as much as possible.