

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, 8 November 2022
Boardroom, Trinity Business School

MINUTES

In attendance

Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Dean of Research (Chair)
Professor Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English
Professor Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Mary Cosgrove, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Etain Tannam, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology & Peace Studies
Professor Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Professor Declan O’Sullivan, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Professor Frank Wellmer, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Sergey Mozgovoy, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Hal Duncan, Director of Research, School of Dental Sciences
Professor Aideen Long, Director, Trinity Translational Medicine Institute
Professor Eve Patten, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub
Professor Eoin O’Sullivan, Senior Dean
Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development, Office of the Dean of Research
Dr Darren Fayne, Trinity Research Staff Association
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office
Ms Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Ms Siobhán O’Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Human Resources
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist, Library
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement, Trinity Research
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

Apologies

Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, School of Physics and Director of CRANN
Professor Lidia Tajber, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Mr Leonard Hobbs, Director, Trinity Innovation
Professor Rhodri Cusack, Director, Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience
Professor Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor Deirdre Ahern, Director of Research, School of Law
Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Sharon O’Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	Minutes Minutes of the meeting of October 11 th were circulated in advance and approved by the committee.

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A.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>Matters arising would be addressed during the Dean's update.</p> <p>RS/22-23/4 Dean of Research noted that the issues related to procurement and supply chain problems that were noted at the last meeting appeared to be easing. DOR noted the efforts of Procurement in coordinating orders with suppliers and schools.</p>
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	<p>RS/22-23/2 Energy and Research Orla Cunningham, Chief Operating Officer</p> <p><i>The Chief Operating Officer joined the meeting for this item.</i></p> <p>The COO noted that it became apparent over the summer that energy supply could become a problem and so plans were put in place to address this. It was noted that unplanned blackouts were now unlikely as mild weather meant that energy could be stockpiled. COO noted that while the power grid should remain uninterrupted the price had skyrocketed and had not been subsidised in any form. Only €10million had been provided to the whole higher education sector and so the cost impact would remain.</p> <p>COO noted that the government was still looking at planned blackouts, and College would have to continue to monitor the situation. It was noted that there is very little failover in most buildings with the IT centre the only place with secure backup generators in place. COO noted that efforts were being made to secure backup generators so that in the event of power outages college would still have the ability to support research activity. It was noted that the Provost appointed a group to look at contingency planning. Katharine Murray from Estates and Facilities has been leading on this and worked directly with labs to ensure procedures are in place. It was also noted that a further complication was campus accommodation. It was also noted that temperatures in all buildings had been turned down to 19 degrees and efforts were being made to only heat buildings as required.</p> <p>DOR noted that derogations from planned blackouts had been applied for through the IUA and that most critical research on campus was linked to just one MPRN. COO noted that the derogation has not yet been confirmed.</p>
B.2	<p>RS/22-23/3 Agreement on Reform of Researcher Assessment Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement</p> <p>DA presented an overview of the Agreement on Reform of Researcher Assessment. It was noted that Trinity was already engaging with this process in way but had not necessarily recognised it as researcher assessment reform. It was noted that the agreement sought to broaden the concept of research assessment and what it includes. It was also noted that the agreement was now open for signing but was not legally binding; it was more about developing a community of practice.</p> <p>DA summarised the implications of signing up to the agreement as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to begin a process within one year of reviewing, reflecting on, and developing assessment criteria, tools and processes • to have gone through a cycle of review within five years.

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It was noted that this agreement went beyond Europe as major international funders were being invited to get involved in the process. It was noted that Ireland was on the 'danger list' for brain drain and researchers needed to know that they would be valued and supported at Trinity. It was noted that Trinity had indirectly committed to the DORA principles through the Policy on Good Research Practice. DFHERIS had confirmed it would examine any administrative or legal barriers that might impede the implementation of the agreement.

DA suggested to the committee that it was important for Trinity to be part of this process as the change is already happening. DOR agreed that Trinity was already active across a number of elements of the process and noted that the Provost's manifesto looked to change the promotions process. Significant College groupings were already established such as CHARM-EU, NORF and Open Scholarship etc.

In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:

- the School of English believed the agreement was broadly positive and could help to improve recognition of outputs in disciplines such as creative arts. The emphasis on peer review was also welcomed as this is vital to disciplinary processes in English.
- the Trinity Long Room Hub welcomed the document as a move towards inclusivity and diversity but had two points of hesitation regarding the 'abandoning' of metrics relating to publication venue, format etc and peer review. The statement on metrics was felt to be too broad and would need clarification. Peer review takes many different forms and works to many different standards and was now evolving again in light of developments in open scholarship.
- some members of the committee noted dissatisfaction with DORA-style CVs and expressed some scepticism with the current developments. It was suggested that the move away from current processes would be an unfair disadvantage to mid-career researchers who have been working to specific targets and metrics up to this point.

In response to these points, it was noted:

- This was the beginning of a process rather than immediately moving to a pre-defined end point.
- Rather than abandoning all metrics entirely, the emphasis would be more on the responsible use of appropriate metrics.
- There would still be institutional autonomy over the process.

Associate Dean of Research Immo Warntjes noted that this could be a genuinely transformational process if it was managed properly. He noted that there was a responsibility on College to ensure that researchers who have been working in the current system are not disadvantaged, but there was a similar responsibility to ensure that researchers are prepared to work in a new system that Europe is moving towards.

Siobhán O'Shea noted that the agreement was discussed at a recent LERU Care Group meeting and no problems had been identified with signing up to it. SOS noted that this was essentially a change programme and when implementing change in how something is assessed it was important to have a pathway to work towards so that people did not default back to the old way of doing things. It was noted that new processes would have to be embedded in our systems and structures so that it would be easy for researchers to participate in it. It was also noted that brain drain and the

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	<p>cost of living were points of concern across all the LERU Care group members and Trinity was not an outlier in that respect.</p> <p>Members of the committee asked whether DFHERIS had committed any resources to the implementation of the agreement. IW noted that the question of financing was unclear and that some aspects were already covered as part of NORF. DOR expressed concern about resourcing.</p> <p>Members of the committee noted that the Research Committee would have a role in this process and if Trinity was to sign up to the agreement planning would need to start right away.</p>
B.3	<p>RS/19-20/1 University Rankings Dr Fiona Killard, Head of Strategic Research Development</p> <p>Following on from the recent announcement of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Dr Fiona Killard presented an overview of how university rankings work to the committee. It was noted that university rankings would not stand up to any kind of academic rigour, but unfortunately they are still a significant external interface. It was noted that a lot of incorrect information and spurious claims was often made about the rankings and how they are compiled.</p> <p>FK provided a breakdown of the methodology for the two main global rankings, the QS and THE. It was noted that while Trinity does return some data each year for these rankings, mostly financial, the majority of the information used to prepare the rankings is taken from databases and reputation surveys. No data is returned for citations or publication outputs by any university as this is taken from Elsevier databases by the rankings agencies themselves. FK also noted that Trinity's scores for citations and publications are generally very good with researchers performing at or above the global average in all disciplines. Other metrics used in the rankings such as the staff-student ratio showed that Trinity's ratio is very poor compared to other universities.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research performance is already excellent and it would be very difficult to improve on this.• Responsibility for returning data to the rankings agencies sat with the Office of the Dean of Research. It was noted that there had been issues several years ago with the quality of data being returned but a group had been established to oversee the returns and this was working well.• FK noted that the Elsevier platform had an algorithm to process all iterations of 'Trinity College Dublin' so there is no problem with affiliations on papers. FK noted that it was the move from Web of Science to Elsevier that impacted on the numbers of papers captured.• FK noted that the definitions of subjects, metrics etc were all at the behest of the rankings agencies. It was also noted that QS uses a dampening factor when calculating its rankings.• Some members of the committee noted that if the issue of the PhD fees differential was addressed this could help to improve the ratio of postgraduates to undergraduates.• It is difficult to accurately capture interdisciplinary research in the subject rankings but this was a known issue with Scopus.• The rankings show that academics at Irish institutions perform far beyond the system they operate in. More creative solutions were needed to address staffing levels.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rankings can be used as a lobbying tool to highlight the lack of investment in the sector compared to other countries. <p>DOR noted that it was his intention to put together a group for the rankings and invited interested committee members to join. The group would be a combination of academic and professional staff.</p> <p>The committee discussed the reputation surveys. FK noted that QS permitted institutions to submit lists of contacts for the surveys and that those lists were due to be updated soon.</p>
B.4	<p>Update from Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>DOR noted that SFI announced a co-centre programme call with UKRI for all island centres. The first call was in the area of climate and sustainable and resilient food systems. DOR noted that the expectation that there would be similar calls in the areas of health and infectious diseases.</p> <p>It was noted that SFI was not intending to automatically renew Phase 2 centres to Phase 3. All Phase 2 centres would have to apply to new calls with expected start dates for those new centres in 2026. It was noted that these would be expected to align with national priorities.</p> <p>DOR noted that the IUA had lobbied the government for an increase to PhD stipends but this did not materialise in the recent budget. After further discussion, DFHERIS has agreed to review PhD programmes, stipends, and the status of PhD students. This was due to take place in early 2023.</p> <p>DOR noted that Planning Group and Finance Committee both have standing items on their agendas for the ‘sustainability of research institutes’ and that he had been asked to develop a ‘unified funding model’ for all the institutes. DOR noted that this would be very difficult given that all the institutes have different remits, structures, histories etc. DOR noted that he had no intention to propose a reduction in the funding institutes received from College. It was agreed that a forum of the institute directors and the DOR would be established to examine the question of sustainability and develop a proposal for Planning Group and Finance Committee. It was also noted that the Policy on Trinity Research Institutes needed to be updated and this forum would be a good venue to review it and identify gaps etc. It was noted by the Directors that there is no training or support for new directors.</p>
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	Items for Noting
C.2	Items for future discussion
C.3	<p>AOB</p> <p>It was noted that the 2021/22 Annual Report was still being drafted. Reminders would be sent to Directors of Research who had not yet submitted a research highlight for their school. Intention was to circulate a draft to the committee for the next meeting in December.</p>