

**The University of Dublin
Trinity College**

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, 14 February 2023

via Zoom

In attendance

Professor Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research (Chair)
Professor Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research
Professor Pdraic 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 & Cultural Studies
Professor Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Sharyn O'Halloran, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Zohar Hadromi-Allouche, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and 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 Sergey Mozgovoy, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Marcus Collier, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Hal Duncan, Director of Research, School of Dental Science
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 Eve Patten, Director of Trinity Long Room Hub
Professor Eoin O'Sullivan, Senior Dean
Mr. Leonard Hobbs, Director of Trinity 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
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director of European Engagement, Trinity Research
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
Mr Kevin Ryan, Procurement Portfolio Manager, Financial Services Division
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Office of the Dean of Research

Apologies

Professor Rhodri Cusack, Director, TCIN

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Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Minutes of the meeting of December 6th were circulated in advance and approved by the committee.</p>
A.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RS/22-23/3 As per actions agreed at the December meeting, the Dean of Research wrote to the Provost on behalf of the Research Committee to recommend that Trinity sign DORA and the Agreement on Researchers Assessment Reform. It was noted that the Agreement on Researchers Assessment Reform was also presented to Council for approval. • It was noted that the Dean of Research Annual Report was presented to Council for approval and would be posted online.
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	<p>Update from Associate Deans of Research Brian Broderick, Padraic Fallon, Immo Warntjes</p> <p>The committee was advised that Prof. Wolfgang Schmitt had stepped down as Dean of Research and that it was expected that a new Dean of Research would be appointed by the time of the committee’s next meeting. Associate Dean of Research Brian Broderick chaired the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that the Research Development Office would be running an Early Career Researcher Funding Week in March.</p> <p>It was noted that Trinity would be hosting the TORCH Annual Forum in March. ACTION: Invitation to the TORCH Annual Forum would be circulated to the committee.</p> <p>The committee was advised that Dr Ruben Keane had been appointed to the position of Head of Clinical Sponsorship Oversight as part of a new arrangement regarding the oversight of clinical trials. It was noted that there was an expectation that there would be an increase in trials at Trinity in coming years and it was important to have appropriate governance and oversight in place.</p> <p>It was noted that Met Éireann had issued a Senior Academic Leadership Funding Opportunity.</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to the following researchers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Orla Hardiman, HRB Impact Award 2023 recognising exceptional contribution her research has made for patients living with neurodegenerative conditions • Prof. Cliona O’Farrelly recognised as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science • ERC Consolidator Grants secured by Dr Sarah Doyle (School of Medicine and TCIN) and Marius de Leeuw (School of Mathematics). Also should note contribution of staff in RDO in supporting the applications • ERC Proof of Concept grants secured by Dr Sarah McCormack (Engineering) and Dr David Finlay (Biochemistry and Immunology)

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- Prof. Luke O'Neill appointed to the ERC Scientific Council

RS/22-23/10 It was noted that the Associate Deans of Research and Dr Fiona Killard, along with a number of academics from Trinity, attended the IUA's workshop on the planned new national research funding agency which was held at the University of Limerick. It was noted that there were no representatives from DFHERIS in attendance and that attendees were frustrated by the sense that they were talking to themselves. The IUA would be sending a position paper to DFHERIS based on the feedback gathered at the event.

It was noted that the event moderator was a UK academic and a number of those in attendance on the day thought it would have been more appropriate to look to European comparators and countries with systems of a similar size. It was noted that the IUA stated at the meeting that the expectation was that government would have legislation for the new agency in place early next year. FK noted that the feedback at the meeting seemed to be mixed but there was a general sense that the agency should be driven by excellence, focus on talent development, and that appropriate governance was essential. FK also noted that it would be logical to have another national event with more appropriate comparators and advised the committee that the IUA was in talks with a view to hosting another event in May.

Members of the committee noted concerns that SFI would be overly dominant in the new agency to the detriment of AHSS disciplines. It was also noted that it was highly problematic that SFI was proceeding with a new centres call that had an 8-year timeframe, essentially tying any new agency's hands in terms of new funding programmes and scope for activity. It was also noted that there were no representatives from the funding agencies at the IUA event.

In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:

- Some members of the committee suggested that the ERC's strong track record of funding excellence would make it a good model for new funding programmes. It was noted that existing national funding programmes/application processes were overly complicated
- Some concern was expressed around the concept of excellence, who decides what is excellent, and the role that HEIs and academics could play in that. It was noted that there is currently no understanding of what a potential governance structure for the agency would look like
- It was noted that Lisa Keating from the IUA was open to attending a future meeting of the committee
- It was noted that some feedback at the IUA event was that grant funding should be spread geographically rather than primarily based on excellence. Members of the committee noted serious concerns with this concept noting that research funding should not be treated the same as distributive politics.
- Members of the committee who had worked in the UK system noted that it was not an appropriate model for Ireland. It was noted that the REF did not allowed room for research that did not require competitive grant capture to breathe and grow. It was noted that the knowledge of how things have gone wrong in the UK system should be used to inform how any new agency might operate.

ACTION: Lisa Keating to be invited to attend a future meeting of the committee.

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B.2	<p>RS/22-23/7 Export Controls Dr Fiona Killard</p> <p>The committee was informed that there was an emerging concern about the implications of export controls for research activity. FK advised the committee that the current definitions were so broad as to encompass all research activity regardless of funding status. There was no sliding scale of fines/sanctions if something was found to be in breach of controls and these fines and sanctions were extremely severe. It was noted that SFI had conducted a retrospective review of projects, LERU was currently examining the issue, and the IUA had contracted a risk analysis from Price Waterhouse Coopers. There had been an assumption that there was some joined up thinking internally in Trinity regarding export controls but this had not proved to be the case. The committee was advised that the Office of the Dean of Research was convening a group to examine this issue, decide how to address it, and work to reduce the risk exposure.</p> <p>Members of the committee thanked FK for taking on this task. It was noted that college was currently completely exposed in this regard. It was also noted that there was a short optional module on export controls included as part of the Epigeum Research Integrity Training that all Trinity staff have access to, but more work needed to be done to raise general awareness of the issue.</p>
B.3	<p>RS/22-23/8 Open Access Publishing Agreements Arlene Healy, Sub Librarian (Digital Systems and Services)</p> <p><i>Arlene Healy joined the meeting for this item</i></p> <p>The committee was provided with an overview and update in relation to current open access publishing agreements. It was noted that the majority of OA agreements come to Trinity via membership of the IREL consortium. These agreements consolidate a subscription and publishing costs under one agreement. One of the most significant agreements was that with ScienceDirect/Elsevier. This agreement is negotiated by a larger group of 16 organisations including IREL. The first agreement had expired at the end of 2022, and negotiations for a new agreement to replace it had been very protracted. The committee was advised that a new agreement was now in place pending final sign-off. This agreement replicates the previous one providing access to the same content and publishing arrangements. It was noted that there was a limit on the allocation of open access articles – the agreement only allows for the publication of 70% of members’ outputs. These allocations typically run out by Aug/Sept each year leaving researchers with two options: obtain the publication charge by some other means, or make the publication available through an institutional repository like TARA. It was noted that the cost to Trinity to participate in the ScienceDirect/Elsevier agreement alone was around €600k per year.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monographs were not covered by IREL agreements• Some members of the committee noted that repositories like TARA would not increase the impact of an article as they were not easily searchable• Many major publishers were not covered by these agreements. It was noted that some publishers were specifically excluded from Elsevier agreements as they were major profit-makers for Elsevier• Given the move towards open access, funding bodies should do more to support publishing costs

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publication costs could be written into grant proposals but given the volume of outputs from some projects and the associated costs this would not be feasible for everything• Some members of the committee noted it would be helpful if a running total was available so that researchers could see how much of the allocation was available at any time <p>The committee noted its thanks to the Library team for their work in this space.</p> <p>ACTION: the link to the Library's webpage on open access publishing would be recirculated to the committee.</p>
B.4	<p>RS/22-23/9 Software Licences Ronan Lyons, TRiSS</p> <p><i>Ronan Lyons joined the meeting for this item</i></p> <p>The committee was advised of initiatives that TRiSS had undertaken in relation to securing software licences for college use in research activity. It was noted that a number of software packages were in wide use across college and TRiSS had developed a model where it would procure an institutional licence for use across a number of schools with the expectation that the schools would contribute to the cost of the subscription. This would allow researchers to access tools needed to conduct research and reduce the financial cost for participating schools.</p> <p>It was noted that an issue had arisen over the last year in relation to Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey. RL noted that Qualtrics was heavily used by researchers but following a tender process SurveyMonkey was now a preferred supplier, which resulted in confusion for many researchers as to the software they could use. It was noted that TRiSS had been able to agree with central college that it could renew its Qualtrics subscription for another year but it was unclear what would happen after that.</p> <p>Kevin Ryan, Procurement Portfolio Manager (Lab & ICT), endorsed RL's summary of the situation, agreed that there was a very awkward process for software subscriptions, and clarified the issue regarding Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey. He noted the Qualtrics issue had arisen from a need in the Careers Service that had triggered a tender process in compliance with public sector procurement. Procurement had wanted a multi-supplier arrangement but Qualtrics opted not to engage in the tender process despite repeated attempts from Procurement to engage with them. It was noted that a similar template was used for the tender that had been used by another HEI when contracting with Qualtrics but they still would not engage. It was also noted that the agreement with SurveyMonkey was not a sole supplier, but an 'option to buy' and that researchers could still procure the software that was most appropriate for them. It was confirmed that data protection concerns around SurveyMonkey had been resolved in consultation with the Data Protection Office. KR also noted to the committee that Procurement and FSD's main goal was to support research and they would never mandate anything to researchers that was not appropriate. He also acknowledged that communication regarding this issue could have been better and steps were being taken to improve processes for the future.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thanks were noted to TRiSS for sharing licences for a number of software packages

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the committee had assumed that IT Services had a role in overseeing what kind of software researchers required rather than Procurement or FSD but this was not in fact the case • Schools cannot afford separate licences, but there is no central knowledge as to who holds licences and who manages them. There should be greater oversight of this activity • While TRiSS was commended for taking a proactive role in this regard, it was noted that this was a clear flaw in how college organises itself around this activity as it should not be the responsibility of a school or institute to take on this task • Greater consideration needed to be given to the impact on research activity as well as teaching and admin when tendering processes are about to commence
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	<p>Items for Noting</p> <p>No items for noting</p>
C.2	<p>Items for future discussion</p> <p>No items noted</p>
C.3	<p>AOB</p> <p>It was noted that the QS Subject Rankings would be published on March 14th. FK would communicate results to schools once the results were received.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications of public sector pay increases for research projects <p>Members of the committee noted concerns regarding the impact of public sector pay increases on research project budgets. It was noted that these increases had not been factored into budgets and would result in overspends. Elaine Sharkey noted that this was a national issue, not just specific to Trinity. ES advised the committee that the issue had been raised with the IUA who were engaging with funding bodies to explore the possibility of releasing extra funds to cover the increases. It was noted that some funders had not agreed to this and had advised that the costs would have to be addressed through budget reallocations. It was also noted that for some projects, such as IRC postdoctoral fellowships, there was very little non-pay budget to begin with making reallocations virtually impossible. Siobhán O’Shea noted that HR could also escalate the issue through the IUA’s HR Directors Forum. The committee agreed that the increases were justified, but funders and government needed to do more to cover the associated cost. Members of the committee expressed concern at reallocating funds from pension funds or travel funds as this could be detrimental to research activity.</p>