

**The University of Dublin
Trinity College**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11:00, 12 March 2024
Boardroom, Trinity Business School**

MINUTES

In attendance

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)
Prof. Brian Broderick, Associate Dean of Research
Prof. Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research
Prof. Padraic Fallon, Associate Dean of Research
Prof. Catherine Welch, Director of Research, School of Business
Prof. Joseph Roche, Director of Research, School of Education
Prof. Darryl Jones, Director of Research, School of English
Prof. Jane Ohlmeyer, Director of Research, School of Histories & Humanities
Prof. James Hanrahan, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Prof. Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Prof. Sharyn O'Halloran, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Prof. Edurne Garcia Iriarte, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Prof. Benjamin Wold, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies
Prof. Marco Ruffini, Director of Research, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Prof. Michael Monaghan, Director of Research, School of Engineering
Prof. Frank Wellmer, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Prof. Andrei Parnachev, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Prof. Yvonne Buckley, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Prof. Ortwin Hess, Director of Research, School of Physics
Prof. Sarah Doyle, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Prof. Sakis Mantalaris, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Kingston Mills, Director of TBSI
Prof. Aideen Long, Director of TTMI
Dr Michelle Olmstead, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer

In attendance

Ms Mary Tracey, Executive Director, Trinity Innovation & Enterprise
Dr Gordon Elliott, Trinity Innovation & Enterprise
Dr Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, Research Development Office, Trinity Research
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement, Trinity Research
Ms Elaine Sharkey, Projects Accounting Manager, Financial Services Division
Ms Siobhán O'Shea, Senior HR Specialist, Human Resources
Dr Geoff Bradley, Head of Academic Services and Operations, IT Services
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy Officer, Trinity Research

Apologies

Prof. Mark Bell, Director of Research, School of Law
Mr Mick Reilly, Procurement, Financial Services Division
Prof. Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Prof. Ed Lavelle, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Prof. Sharon O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Prof. Claire Gillan, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Dr Sally Smith, Director of Research, Trinity Research
Prof. Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies
Prof. Nicholas Johnson, Director of Research, School of Creative Arts

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Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	<p>Minutes</p> <p>Minutes of February meeting were circulated in advance and approved.</p>
A.2	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>RS/23-24/15 British Library cyber-attack: The College Librarian noted that the BL had published an interesting account of the recent cyber-attack. It was noted that the BL was trying to be as transparent as possible within the bounds of security and ongoing investigations. The Librarian recommended the paper to the committee and confirmed that the committee would be kept updated on the issue. ACTION: BL paper to be circulated to the committee.</p> <p>RS/23-24/6 DOR noted that an update on the researcher recruitment project would be given under AOB.</p>
A.3	<p>RS/23-24/8 Export Controls <i>Victoria Butler, College Secretary joined the meeting for this item</i></p> <p>The College Secretary joined the meeting to provide an update on recent developments related to export controls. A draft of Trinity’s Internal Compliance Programme along with a memo were circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting. It was noted that Trinity is obliged to have an internal compliance plan which will include a website with FAQs, links to guidance and training, and other helpful resources. It was noted that a significant piece of work would be required in relation to training along with a communications plan. The committee was advised that the compliance aspect for export controls sits with the Secretary’s Office which will work closely with the Dean of Research and Trinity Research and Trinity Innovation & Enterprise.</p> <p>The committee was given an overview of a recent visit from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Notice was received in November that DETE would conduct an “audit” which took place in February. The committee was advised that the visit was more of a compliance check than a formal audit. The focus was on whether Trinity was aware of its obligations and whether a plan was in place. It was noted that the Dean of Research strongly pushed back on the requirement from DETE that each HEI had to produce their own training resources and plans etc. DOR noted that a central governmental resource would make much more sense instead of having needless duplication of effort across the sector with a risk for differing interpretations of guidelines. It was noted that there did not appear to be any appetite from DETE to provide a centralised resource.</p> <p>DOR noted that there would be more vigorous assessment every two years, which would have a more significant level of inspection. DOR also noted that she would continue to advocate for a central resource.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was an awareness gap across College in relation to this issue. Associate DOR Prof. Brian Broderick stressed that Directors of Research had a responsibility to keep their schools updated in relation to this emerging area of importance.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The term “export controls” was somewhat misleading as it suggested a piece of equipment or something physical that could be transported when in fact the guidelines encompass information, knowledge etc. <p>It was noted that the committee would continue to be updated as the guidelines were developed.</p>
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
<p>B.1</p>	<p>Update from the Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>DOR noted that it was Green Week with lots of activities taking place around campus. DOR also noted that it was a good time to think about research and what kind of changes could be made to make research activity more sustainable.</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to researchers who had recently been awarded funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr John O’Donoghue and Cian McLoughlin won SFI Discover Programme funding to lead projects that will encourage a deeper understanding of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). • Prof. Rachel McLoughlin is one of a group of researchers who received a €5.3 million Wellcome Trust award to tackle fatal bloodstream infections. The female-led project brings together experts from the Trinity Biomedical Sciences Institute, APC Microbiome Ireland, a world leading SFI Research Centre based at University College Cork (UCC), the University of Exeter and the University of Bristol. • Dr Patrick Morrissey and Dr Paul Liston secured EPA funding to support sustainability and societal transformation projects. <p>RS/23-24/16 HEA Equipment grant/research boost programme: DOR advised the committee that €2,613,549 was awarded to Trinity by the HEA for research equipment. It was noted that the funding had very specific conditions attached. The committee was advised that Trinity would define ‘research equipment’ as “objects or tools, the study or use of which is required for the creation of research data or new knowledge.” A call would be opened to college by the end of March. It was noted that a second stream of funding for a general research boost programme worth €400,000 would also be launched at the same time to cover more general research costs not permitted by the HEA award.</p> <p>RS/23-24/14 Research & Innovation bill: DOR noted that the bill had completed Dáil committee stage and moved to the Seanad. A number of amendments from the Oireachtas committee on Education/FHERIS had been offered. These included the insertion of the text: ‘to support the undertaking of research and innovation in all fields of activity and disciplines by researchers with different levels of knowledge, experience and specialist skills in such fields or disciplines.’ It was noted that this was the closest to the concept of parity of esteem that can be found in the new text.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the committee expressed disappointment that many of the Oireachtas committee’s amendments were not accepted. Concerns remained about the lack of unequivocal support for basic research in the legislation. • Members of the committee noted that there appeared to be very little willingness on the part of DFHERIS to make any changes to the bill, and concern was noted for the vulnerable position this leaves the sector in.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current calls already launched by SFI and IRC would continue, but there was not clarity on what would happen after those calls concluded. • The Director-Designate was receiving feedback from all universities on the need for a wide range of schemes at different levels. • No further clarity was forthcoming on the composition of the new agency's board. <p>DOR noted thanks to everyone who attended the formal launch of Trinity Research.</p>
<p>B.2</p>	<p>Spotlight - School of Engineering Prof. Michael Monaghan</p> <p>Prof. Monaghan presented an overview of the research activity of the School of Engineering to the committee during which the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School was relatively large and has discipline-specific admin support. • The School recognised that Engineering is very much male-dominated discipline. An EDI group had been established to address this and the school now has a bronze Athena Swan award. The highest number of female staff were in professional categories and higher % of postgraduate researchers. • The school has four Trinity Research Centres as well as collaborations across all the TRIs. • Industry activity within the school was not captured very well in RPAMS as much of the school's activity in this space happened through co-funded projects in AMBER, CONNECT etc, and EIT grants in Tangent. • The school's largest funder was the European Commission with PIs performing well in European Research Council awards. It was noted that the school had a specific policy relating to the distribution of overheads. • The school had identified the need for a research strategy and noted that the School of Medicine had an excellent strategy that they would be using as a template. • Resources were also shared as part of E3 and the school had noted the benefits to the cross-school collaboration in this space. • It was noted that the administration of awards/contracts continued to be an issue with the reliance on a paper-based system creating multiple trails that could be broken at any point. <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERC awards noted in the presentation were currently housed awards; it was not known if awards had been lost from the school. It was noted that recruiting ERC awardees from outside Trinity was difficult for several reasons including the inability to match offers from home institutions, salary shortfall at Trinity, difficulties creating a permanent position as well as the ability to offer any space. • The gender balance at undergraduate level was improving, particularly in biomedical engineering. It was noted that the balance switches at Assistant Professor level and worsens at higher scales. The school was finding it hard to recruit at that level. • It was suggested that the school's success in securing EU funding was in part as a result of the reliability of the EU calendar. PIs knew when to expect calls and could plan accordingly. • DOR noted in relation to a question about aligning the school's research strategy with the Living Research Excellence Strategy that the focus was currently on understanding the timeline for the overall Trinity strategic plan.

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	DOR noted that there would be no point revising the LRES in isolation from the university's strategy.
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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the committee noted that forthcoming public pay increases would have serious implications for research projects. Researchers would have to be let go earlier than planned or funds reallocated from elsewhere to cover increases that were not budgeted for. It was noted that pay increases could only be budgeted into a proposal to a certain point and that in many cases certain funders required specific salary scales to be used in costings. <p>ACTION: DOR to follow up with FSD and HR.</p>
C.3	<p>AOB</p> <p>RS/23-24/6 Researcher Recruitment Project: Siobhán O'Shea gave the committee an update on the status of the project noting that a year-long process of consultation and development had been conducted to this point. The committee was advised that HR intended to hold a workshop in May to clearly outline the underlying process, technology and resources that would support the implementation of a researcher recruitment policy and would address any outstanding issues with a view to updating the policy at that time. An update would be provided to Research Committee following this with the intention to bring the policy through the formal approval process in September or October. It was noted that the Flowforma project was now at UAT stage and was being pilot tested with Computer Science & Statistics, CRANN, and Physics. It was noted that HR had reallocated resources to supplement the recruitment team and that Susan Maguire had taken over sponsorship of the Researcher Recruitment Project.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the committee noted thanks to Siobhán O'Shea for her engagement and taking their feedback on the draft policy. • Members of the committee welcomed the development of the Flowforma process. It was confirmed that FSD had been involved in the development process. Some gaps had been identified but once FSD was happy the process worked then more would be done to streamline processes. • The School of Maths currently uses a portal for post doc recruitment outside of the proposed process and it was noted that they had been asked to document their process to meet OTMR requirements and a ROPA outline of their processes to show compliance with data protection regulations. • It was noted that any implementation of HRS4R would be a decision for the Dean of Research and HR and college together and was not a decision solely for HR. It was noted that the implementation of the OTMR policy was a pre-cursor to a HRS4R application so Trinity would be well-positioned in this respect. • DOR noted the importance of keeping external obligations in mind in this regard. <p>Prof. Nathan Hill shared details of a visit from the Japan Society for Promotion of Science with the committee. It was noted that there was not much awareness of the</p>

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JSPS in Trinity but as Japan's frontier, curiosity-driven funder for all disciplines there were funding opportunities that Trinity researchers could apply for. It was noted that the JSPS mobility scheme had a substantially higher success rate than MSCA postdoctoral calls and had analogous schemes at all career stages that could be of interest to Trinity researchers. Prof. Hill also noted that most national funders in Europe and UK have MOUs with JSPS which can facilitate larger collaborative projects and joint funding scheme but Ireland does not. Prof. Hill noted that the Japanese embassy in Ireland was very enthusiastic in this regard. Dr Raquel Harper noted that the JSPS does want researchers to have an existing collaboration or some sort of working relationship in place before applications are submitted. DOR encouraged other committee members to bring similar opportunities to the committee's attention.

DOR noted that this was Siobhán O'Shea's last meeting with the Research Committee before her retirement at the end of the month and presented her with flowers on behalf of the committee. DOR noted that she had been a friend and colleague to the research community and had taken the time to understand research and researchers to the extent that she was considered a strong ally for research. DOR noted sincere thanks to Siobhán for all her work on the committee and during her time at Trinity and wished her well for her retirement.