

The University of Dublin
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, 10 September 2024
Boardroom, Trinity Business School

MINUTES

In attendance

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair)
Prof. Catherine Welch, Director of Research, School of Business
Prof. Pádraic Whyte, Director of Research, School of English
Prof. Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Director of Research, School of Histories & Humanities
Prof. James Hanrahan, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Prof. Mark Bell, Director of Research, School of Law
Prof. Nathan Hill, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Prof. Sonia Bishop, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Prof. Sharyn O'Halloran, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Prof. Paula Mayock, Director of Research, School of Social Work & Social Policy
Prof. Benjamin Wold, Director of Research, School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies
Prof. Mathias Senge, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Dr. Betul Hekimoglu Balkan on behalf of Director of Research, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Prof. Andrei Parnachev, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Prof. Ortwin Hess, Director of Research, School of Physics
Prof. Sarah Doyle, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Prof. Eilish Burke, Director of Research, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Prof. Sakis Mantalaris, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr Michelle Olmstead, Chief Innovation and Enterprise Officer
Dr Gordon Elliott, Trinity Innovation and Enterprise
Dr Rory Connolly, Trinity Research Staff Association
Ms Doris Alexander, Associate Director for European Engagement, Trinity Research
Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist
Mr Michael Reilly, Procurement, Financial Services Division
Dr Jennifer Daly, Research Strategy and Policy Manager, Trinity Research

Apologies

Dr Sally Smith; Prof. Eve Patten; Prof. Immo Warntjes; Prof. Michael Monaghan; Prof. Yvonne Buckley; Prof. Martine Smith; Prof. Pádraic Fallon; Dr Fiona Smyth; Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Aideen Long; Prof. Frank Wellmer; Prof. Brian Broderick

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
A.1	Tour de Table DOR welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year. It was noted that Dr Raquel Harper had left her role in the Research Development Office to take up the position of Executive Director of the Climate+ co-centre. Dr Fiona Smyth had been appointed the Interim Head of the Research Development Office.
A.2	Minutes Minutes approved by the committee.
A.3	Matters Arising from the Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">College statement on Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI: DOR noted that work still ongoing to develop statement. It was also noted that the new Senior Lecturer, Prof. Vinny Wade, had significant expertise in this area. DOR noted

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	<p>that the committee would be kept up to date on any new drafts and any policy and implementation related to it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOR noted that work was ongoing in the development of the new College Strategic Plan. It was noted that the HEA had mandated that HEIs work to a specific template in the development of plans and that it was quite proscriptive. DOR noted that the Living Research Excellence Strategy (LRES) was also due for review and update. It was noted that the DOR would be visiting each school to discuss the LRES. DOR also noted her intention to invite the Vice Provost back to Research Committee at a later stage to provide a further update on the plan. • It was noted that the establishment of an Open Scholarship sup-group was approved at the last meeting of the committee. DOR advised the committee that the next steps would be to bring some terms of reference and proposed membership to the committee for approval. Associate Dean of Research Immo Warntjes and Christoph Schmidt Supprian (Library) would be leading on this. • Research Boost Programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In total, across both streams 296 applications were received with a total ask of €11,919,248. DOR noted that this showed the pent up demand in the sector for better, more sustained support. DOR also noted that this message was being continually raised with IUA, DFHERIS etc. ○ Funded applications: Stream 1 saw a total 62 out of 123 applications funded; Stream 2 saw 52 out of 173 applications funded. ○ DOR noted that a significant amount of background admin had to be done over the summer in line with HEA reporting requirements, procurement etc. Committee was advised that the final list of funded applicants would be published by the end of this week.
A.4	<p>Terms of Reference for Research Committee</p> <p>The only change proposed to the Terms of Reference this year was to update the membership listing to reflect the College Statutes. The Terms of Reference were approved by the committee.</p>
Section B - Items for Discussion Only	
B.1	<p>Introduction to Research Committee and looking ahead to 2024/25</p> <p>Dean of Research</p> <p>The Dean of Research provided the committee with an overview of the functions of the Research Committee and the role that Directors of Research played as members. It was noted that Directors were expected to update their schools on discussions that took place at the committee, and also to share with the committee anything research-related that may have come up at a school level. It was also noted that if members of the committee had diary clashes they could nominate someone to attend on their behalf once JD/DOR were notified in advance.</p> <p>DOR noted that some topics that had been discussed at last year's meetings would continue to appear on this year's agenda. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals to establish Trinity research centres • Research policies including Export Controls, Dual Use, Knowledge Security • Reform of Researcher Assessment • Research Ethics and Integrity • Open Access publishing agreements • Establishment of a new national funding agency

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial intelligence <p>Other expected topics for discussion in the coming year included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Culture initiative • The role of research in the new College Strategic Plan • Research Ireland/Taighde Éireann • International funding landscape
<p>B.2</p>	<p>Update from the Dean of Research Dean of Research</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to the following researchers on recent awards and funding announcements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prof. Aonghus McNabola, (Engineering), and Dr Séamus O’Shaughnessy and Dr Daniel Trimble (both Engineering) were among the first nine teams to receive funding National Challenge Fund, a competitive programme aiming to deliver solutions for major environmental and societal issues. 2. Dr Conor Finlay (TTMI) and Dr Colm Delaney (Chemistry) secured SFI-IRC Pathway awards 3. Dr Martin Worthington (Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies) won an ERC Advanced Grant. DOR noted that this was the only Advanced Grant to come to Ireland in this call. 4. Dr Josephine Wu (Engineering) secured a Wellcome Early Career Award 5. Dr Johanna Vos (Physics) and Dr Michael John Dolan (Genetics & Microbiology) were awarded ERC Starting Grants <p>DOR noted that the School of Genetics and Microbiology, the School of Law and the School of Social Work and Social Policy had all successfully renewed their Athena Swan Bronze awards. Additionally, the School of Psychology and the School of Physics advanced from Bronze to Silver Athena Swan award status. DOR noted that it took a very significant amount of work to both secure and retain the awards and noted very warm congratulations to all involved for their efforts.</p> <p>DOR advised the committee of recent developments related to Research Ireland/Taighde Eireann. The DOR noted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New agency was established as of August 1st • Interim CEO, Celine Fitzgerald, had taken up the post as of Sept 1st • 9 members of the board had been announced. DOR noted congratulations to Prof. Valera Nicolosi on her appointment to the board. DOR also noted that while it was good to see some academic representation on the board it was still somewhat disappointing to see that the majority of the board did not have active researchers in the majority. DOR noted that it was unclear what the strategic priorities of the board would be. DOR also noted that the composition of the board was of some concern given the strong feedback from the sector that the board needed adequate academic representation. • To date, there had been no communication from Research Ireland to HEIs at all. • There was still no update on the status of the SFI research centres call which continued to cause serious uncertainty for all involved. • The most recent information the DOR had regarding the board was that it was due to meet on Sept 25th but there was no agenda. DOR hoped a decision related to the SFI centres call could be communicated to PIs and leads in early to mid-October but this could only happen if it was on the board’s agenda.

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	<p>During discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues had arisen in relation to state aid as it pertained to SFI ARC Hub programme. Two hubs had been awarded, one at TCD and another to TUD. Following extensive consultation and collaboration across the sector to agree a unified approach to state aid, SFI had now taken a different approach which was causing significant issues in relation to these hubs. DOR noted that DFHERIS, DETE, and DPER were now all involved and a resolution would need to be found as the programme was funded by the European Development Fund – if the money was not spent, it would have to be returned. • DOR noted the lack of communication from Research Ireland. Also noted that a sector-wide consultation had taken place last year with Prof. Philip Nolan visiting each HEI to solicit feedback on the formation of the new agency. The visit to TCD ultimately did not happen, but the DOR noted her intention to issue an invitation to the new CEO in this regard. • Members of the committee noted the interview that Sean O’Driscoll, the chair of UCC’s governing authority, had given on Radio 1. Members of the committee also noted that it was unlikely that the university sector would be able to make a compelling case on its own, and would need supporters in other sectors such as industry to assist in this regard. • The publication of a report by Mario Draghi (‘The Future of European Competitiveness’) was noted by members of the committee. It was noted that the report had potential to be useful in lobbying for enhanced sectoral supports. • DOR advised the committee that IUA VPDORs group would be writing a position paper responding to the Draghi report.
Section C – Items for Noting	
C.1	<p>Items for Noting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to rename the TCD Centre for Contemporary Irish History (memo encl): the proposal was noted and approved. • Professor John Gallagher has been appointed the Director of the Trinity Haus research centre: the appointment was noted and approved.
C.2	<p>Items for future discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No items were noted.
C.3	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee was reminded that European Researchers’ Night would take place on Friday, September 27th and all were invited to this free public engagement event. This year would also see a full week of events around campus with the Child Health Research Festival – curated by the School of Medicine and the School of Nursing & Midwifery – taking place on Wednesday, September 25th. The Trinity Long Room Hub was also running its Arts & Humanities Research Festival from September 23rd – 27th. • In response to a question from the committee, it was noted that the proposal to establish the TRISP research institute was in the process of being revised following on from external reviews and would be brought back to the committee for consideration in due course.