

The University of Dublin  
Trinity College

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

11:00, 21 January 2025  
Board Room, Trinity Business School

MINUTES

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research (Chair); Prof. Brian Broderick; Prof. Padraic Fallon; Prof. Catherine Welch; Prof. Pádraic Whyte; Prof. Lindsey Earner-Byrne; Prof. Sonia Bishop; Prof. Sharyn O'Halloran; Prof. Nicola Carr; Prof. Jacob Erickson; Prof. Ed Lavelle; Prof. Mathias Senge; Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Harun Siljack; Prof. Frank Wellmer; Prof. Andrei Parnachev; Prof. Ortwin Hess; Prof. Sarah Doyle; Prof. Annabel Walsh; Prof. Sakis Mantalaris; Prof. Kingston Mills; Prof. Eve Patten; Prof. Rhodri Cusack; Prof. Eoin O'Sullivan; Dr Michelle Olmstead; Prof. Martine Smith; Claudia Peroni.

*In attendance:*

Dr Sally Smith; Dr Fiona Smyth; Elaine Sharkey; Susan Maguire; Doris Alexander; Vincent Coole; Audrey Crosbie; Michael Reilly; Helen Shenton; Dr Jennifer Daly.

*Apologies*

Prof. Yvonne Buckley; Prof. Mark Bell; Prof. Caroline Jagoe; Prof. Eilish Burke; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Anne Marie Healy; Prof. Aideen Long

<b>Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval</b>	
<b>A.1</b>	<b>Minutes</b> Minutes were amended to noted Audrey Crosbie was in attendance and then accepted.
<b>A.2</b>	<b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DOR noted thanks to those who submitted details for the updated QS survey lists.</li><li>RS/24-25/6 - An updated application to establish the TCD-TU Dublin Joint Centre for Sociology of Humans and Machines (SOHAM) was circulated to the committee with amendments based on feedback received at the December meeting. The committee approved the proposal.</li></ul>
<b>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</b>	
<b>B.1</b>	<b>RS/24-25/8 Trinity East update</b> Prof. Eleanor Denny, College Bursar <i>The Bursar joined the meeting for this item.</i>  The Bursar joined the meeting to provide an update on progress at the Trinity East site. It was noted that building would be finished at Portal in March with a view to the space being ready to open in June. Work was currently underway to upgrade the IT provision on the site. In presenting the various proposed phases for work at the site, the Bursar noted that the Yellow phase would considerably increase the capacity for research and would be the least disruptive as it focused on refurbishment and retrofitting. Bursar noted that the yellow phase was the preferred option and asked the committee to support the decision to proceed. It was noted that no construction would start in the yellow phase until the end of 2028 at the earliest.  In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>DOR noted how welcome it was to see the site coming to life, and welcomed the master plan activity.</li><li>The Librarian noted that the same architects who worked on Portal had been engaged to develop plans for the Library's presence on the site. It was noted that the Library was consulting with colleagues and would also like to have a</li></ul>

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	<p>consultation via the Directors of Research. The Librarian also noted the benefit of visiting the site to get a real sense of its potential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dean of Graduate Studies shared enthusiasm for strategic long-term planning, and was keen to know where PhD researchers would be prioritised as they have the least access to space in College. Bursar noted that the masterplan engagement would help identify suitable spaces, but also noted better utilisation of space across the university was needed.</li><li>• It was confirmed that there would be space for interdisciplinary research. Bursar noted the need to move away from discipline-specific space or school-allocated space. Emphasis would need to move to more shared and collaborative spaces. It was noted that Trinity had one of the poorest space utilisation factors in recent HEA audits of teaching space; 38% was considered a good utilisation factor, and Trinity was currently at 17%. It was noted that there is an issue around the quality and suitability of spaces which would hopefully be teased out in the masterplan exercise.</li><li>• Planning permission had been received for 346 beds at Dartry but delays had eroded the business case. College was engaging with the government to bridge the gap.</li><li>• It was suggested that a site visit for the committee be organised before the end of the academic year.</li></ul> <p><i>Bursar left the meeting.</i></p>
<b>B.2</b>	<p><b>RS/24-25/9 Spotlight: Trinity Development &amp; Alumni</b> Kate Bond, Director of Advancement, Trinity Development &amp; Alumni</p> <p><i>Kate Bond joined the meeting for this item.</i></p> <p>The committee was given an overview of the activities of Trinity Development &amp; Alumni. It was noted that TDA was established in 1994 from a philanthropical gift from Atlantic Philanthropies and was a separate legal entity from the university. Activity covered everything from small monthly donations to major gifts. It was noted that €235million had been raised over the last 7 years and that philanthropy now made up about 10% of the university's annual turnover.</p> <p>During the presentation it was noted that donors are a very diverse group and that philanthropy is a long-term game with quick wins very rare. TDA took a systematic planned approach which involved building long, deep relationships with donors over many years. It was emphasised that fundraising was not typically about responding to need to plug the gap in a budget etc. It was noted that Trinity's team was relatively small with 8 major gift fundraisers.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• TDA would like to be able to facilitate donor funding that would match co-funding with annual grant schemes, or a 'Choose Trinity' style programme for academics looking to relocated. It was noted that TDA would need to know what was needed in order to build a compelling narrative that would resonate with donors.</li><li>• The U.S. framework for fundraising was very different to Ireland. TDA did not typically organise events as these were resource intensive, but were happy to explore opportunities in the future.</li><li>• Members of the committee noted that previous efforts had concentrated on capital projects or named chairs for senior academics. It was suggested that a fund to support early career young academics would be very welcome. It was noted that TDA had been directed to a specific focus on capital projects and was still working</li></ul>

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	<p>through that legacy but there would be a move towards this kind of work in the future as the profile of donors and their interests changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A gift acceptance committee reviews any gift of more than €500,000. It was noted that Kate Bond had delegated authority to accept gifts below that threshold but that smaller gifts had also been referred to the committee for consideration. It was noted that a number of gifts had been declined and TDA had been asked not to proceed with the engagement.</li> <li>• TDA was happy to visit schools to discuss fundraising opportunities in more detail. DOR also suggested that a workshop could be organised for the Research Committee.</li> </ul> <p><i>Kate Bond left the meeting.</i></p>
<p><b>B.3</b></p>	<p><b>Dean of Research update</b> Dean of Research</p> <p>Congratulations were noted to TCD recipients of IRC Legacy Awards. These included Prof. Christine Casey (Histories &amp; Humanities) who was named Researcher of the Year and Daniel Gilligan was awarded the Eda Sagarra Medal of Excellence for being the top-ranked postgraduate researcher in the AHSS category; three Trinity researchers also featured in the highly commended lists of the Researcher of the Year awards: Prof. Seamus Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology; Dr Mary Canavan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology; and Dr Esther Murphy, School of Engineering.</p> <p>Congratulations were also noted to Prof. Mary McCarron who was awarded the 2024 Research Impact Award by Health Research Charities Ireland for her transformative work to improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities living with dementia.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Charging of Full Economic Costs for Fully Funded Collaborative Research Projects:</b> In October 2023 a new FEC indirect cost rate of 65.7% on fully-funded industry projects was introduced. This was based on a 3-year sectoral average, to be reviewed and updated periodically reflecting most recent FEC data. FEC outputs for 2021/22 were recently signed off by IUA finance officers and submitted to the HEA. Based on those outputs the 3-year sectoral average rate has increased to 75%. <u>The new rate of 75% should be applied effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025 for all new fully funded collaborative research projects.</u> Note that as before this is only for fully funded projects and only for new projects; where discussions and/or agreement have already taken place based on the current rate of 65.7% that will stand.</li> <li>• <b>RS/24-25/13 - HEREG update:</b> all waitlisted proposals from Round 1 would be funded from second tranche of funding. Once all details were confirmed a lightning call would be opened to allocate remaining funding of approximately €1.4million. Only those who had not already received funding would be eligible. It was noted that across the two tranches of funding, €9.3million had been allocated to research equipment. DOR noted that it was unclear if this would become a multi-annual commitment but hoped that the lobbying about the poor state of research infrastructure was finally beginning to resonate.</li> <li>• It was noted that the new <b>Programme for Government</b> retained DFHERIS as a full government department but it remained to be seen who would be appointed as Minister. A number of broad commitments were made including closing the core funding gap, and to “increase funding for research which adds value to our economy, grows future job opportunities, and strengthens our competitiveness.” It was noted that the TU borrowing framework was included with student accommodation explicitly referenced in this regard.</li> </ul>

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	<p>In response to questions from the committee about the charging of full economic costs it was noted that it had been agreed to redistribute the amount going back to schools at a higher rate than the current policy, but that there were very few grants to which this would actually apply. It was also noted that existing agreements based on the old rate would stand.</p> <p>It was also confirmed that Research Ireland was conducting a consultation on its corporate plan but no dates had been confirmed yet. It was noted that they had only requested academic contacts at this stage.</p>
<p><b>B.4</b></p>	<p><b>RS/24-25/10 - More Than Our Rank</b> Dean of Research</p> <p>DOR presented an overview of the More Than Our Rank initiative to the committee for discussion. It was noted that no decision was being asked of the committee at this time. It was noted that rankings capture some activity but not all activity that a university should value. This initiative was not about withdrawing from the rankings and no suggestion was being made in that respect.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many institutions were following the “spirit” of MTOR but had not signed up to it. Statements, or “health warnings”, were being posted with rankings information to reinforce the limited scope of what they capture.</li> <li>• It was noted that while rankings might be of initial interest to students, it was other aspects of a university’s offering that encouraged them to commit. It was noted that Trinity could do better at expressing the full experience.</li> <li>• No conversation about MTOR had taken place at IUA level and it was unclear if there would be any appetite across the sector for it.</li> <li>• It was reiterated that signing up to this initiative, or taking on aspects of it, did not require a withdrawal from the rankings and no proposal was being made in that regard.</li> <li>• Members of the committee noted that there was also reputational risk to doing nothing as it would make the institution look like it was not living up to its values. A conversation would need to take place about what kind of statement or message should be conveyed.</li> <li>• It was noted that the motivation of the rankings agencies was purely commercial and while some organisations were trying to work with them to improve how they worked it would take a long time to see any notable change.</li> <li>• Members of the committee noted the importance of coherent messaging about any initiative in this area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Section C – Items for Noting</b></p>	
<p><b>C.1</b></p>	<p><b>Items for Noting</b> No items for noting.</p>
<p><b>C.2</b></p>	<p><b>Items for future discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RS/23-24/6</b> - DOR advised the committee that HR would be bringing the Researcher Recruitment process to the committee for approval at an upcoming meeting. DOR also welcomed Susan Maguire, Deputy Director HR, to the committee and noted she would be attending from now on. SM noted that committee had previously approved a plan for researcher recruitment as part of Trinity’s commitment to Athena Swan silver accreditation and noted thanks to colleagues who contributed to the process and workshops. DOR reminded colleagues that there was a lot of feedback from this committee and across college. DOR noted thanks to colleagues in HR for the level of engagement, and for noting some understandable reluctance from the research</li> </ul>

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	community; it was noted that significant efforts had been made to incorporate feedback and to ensure the process would not be too cumbersome.
<b>C.3</b>	<b>AOB</b> No AOB.