



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

12 December 2023, 11am, Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Mr Matt Dossett (Deputy Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Ms Sorcha Mulcahy (Acting Director, Careers Advisory Service), Ms Louise Staunton (nominee, Director of Internationalisation), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Mr Amhra Carey (Secretary, Central Societies Committee), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Mr Andrew Burgess (representative, Scholars' Committee), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall) Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer), Mr David Wolfe (Secretary to Trinity Publications) Ms Claudia Peroni (Postgraduate Student Representative), Mr Jovan Jeromela (Postgraduate Student Representative), Mr Laszlo Molnarfi (President, Students' Union), Ms Aoife Bennett (Welfare Officer, Students' Union)

Apologies: Rev Steven Brunn (Chaplaincy), Ms Siobán O'Brien Green (Equality Officer), Mr Fergus O'Brien (Chair of Trinity Sports Union),

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary),
(*by invitation*) Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD)

The Dean of Students welcomed everyone and introduced the recently appointed Postgraduate Students Representatives, Ms Claudia Peroni and Mr Jovan Jeromela, the Committee welcomed them also (**SLC/23-24/32**).

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/23-24/17 A.1 Minutes

In relation to the minutes dated 7 November 23, particularly to the Period Dignity Products, the Student Union noted that there was no action reflected on the agenda item and therefore it would not be possible to bring the topic to Council. A Committee member replied that the Dean of Students would bring the matter to Council, however, Council has no authority on financial matters, therefore the matter had been brought to the attention of the Vice-Provost's Office, who might decide whether it would be appropriate to have the item discussed at Council or a different Committee with jurisdiction on financial matters. In fact, the VP has approved for one year to include period products as part of the application to the student assistance fund and for a maximum of € 70 per student per year, for both undergraduate and postgraduate students, as stated in the 14-11-23 Joint Financial Assistance Committee meeting minutes.

Furthermore, the SU commented that the SLC minutes are not published on the TCD website, where the last minutes available are from 2016. A Committee member replied that there is a

plan to transfer SLC minutes to the Dean of Student part of the TCD website, but such project is ongoing and has not been completed yet.

One committee member also pointed out that Mr Liam Bean (Chairperson, Trinity Sport Union) was actually not present at the last meeting, which was noted for correction.

It is also noted that Mr David Wolfe attended as Secretary of Publications.

SLC/23-24/18 A.2 Matters Arising

The Postgraduate representative mentioned their concerns about joining the Committee so late in the term, which is mainly due to a lack of communication; the Dean of Students reassured the students that he will make sure that postgraduate representatives are in place for SLC since the beginning of activities in Michaelmas term.

The SU also noted that the paper on the state of Student Counselling and Health Service was not included in the agenda for the current meeting, while they thought it was a valuable document. The Dean of Students replied that the paper did not contain any new data and also it did not propose any solution to the problem highlighted. One Committee member added that looking at numbers in isolation can be misleading and reassured the Committee that there is a continuous effort invested into improving services and lobbying the Government for extra funding.

SLC/23-24/19 A.3 Capitation Committee Semester I report

The Senior Dean presented a brief verbal update on Capitation Committee Semester I report. He mentioned that the Committee met last 29-November-23 and that Ms Aine Mulcahy from FSD reviewed all accounts and was satisfied that they were all accurate. The Trinity Ball Committee is due to meet on Monday 18-December-23 and will discuss Trinity Ball, which is going to happen on 12-April-24. Funding has been secured to nominate a GSU and to appoint an Irish Language Sabbatical Officer. This is a result from the recent referendum which highlighted the request to increase finding from the students' body.

The Committee was requested to approve the Terms of Reference document (29-November-23) which included the changes proposed by Mr Crowley and is also inspired by the need of transparency, with all minutes being now published.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Senior Dean update and approved the Capitation Committee ToR document dated 29/11/23 and the Capitation Committee minutes dated 12/09/23.

SLC/23-24/20 A.4 Healthy Trinity 2022-23 review and 2023-24 workplan

The Health Promotion Officer presented a review on Healthy Trinity Project for 2022/23 and 2023/24 workplan: Healthy Trinity at local and national level proposes to enable students, staff, alumni and the wider community to engage in sustainable healthy habits broadening through all aspects of mental, emotional and physical health. This holistic picture of wellbeing is promoted via channels of collaboration, engagement and inclusivity. The structure of 23/24 Healthy Trinity strategic partners was illustrated, with relevance given to the new members.

A whole university approach to health was envisaged for 2024 through: events/interventions; creating a supportive environment; promoting co-curricular activities; Living Lab experiment for a tobacco-free campus; comms and seeking funding opportunities.

The progress in delivery across all intervention areas, for the first three years of Healthy Trinity was explained: healthy eating, mental health, physical activity, breastfeeding, sexual and reproductive health, workplace, tobacco, smarter travel, drugs and alcohol. Achievements within the 3 years of Healthy Trinity include:

- Greater event attendance
- Increased students' engagement in co-curricular activities
- Policy review: Tobacco (vaping and mental health under way)
- Publications: 8 in total
- Tik Tok added as a social media channel, resulting in followers' growth (but decreased engagement).
- Funding is decreasing over time, and it is required to secure more and more internal and external funding.
- Continuing initiatives for 2023/24 were also presented, across all areas of intervention, such as: wellbeing in workplace, travel, tobacco, healthy eating, physical activity, mental and sexual health, Healthy Trinity Online Tool, drugs and alcohol, breastfeeding.
- Healthy Trinity has also supported other College areas, such as DS and the Library, via onsite healthy eating courses.
- Healthy Trinity student-ambassadors have also attended various events.

While progress has been made on many areas and the plan for 23/24 is to continue and expand on all fields, it is vital to secure more funding and to promote participation from all areas of College to ensure the project's great achievements can continue.

The Postgraduate Student representative suggested a representative to Healthy Trinity from the Postgraduate body, and the idea could work very well and there could be 2 spaces reserved for Postgraduate students' ambassadors in Healthy Trinity steering committee.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the presentation from the Health Promotion Officer and approved the 2023-24 Healthy Trinity workplan.

SLC/23-24/21 A.5 STUDENTSURVEY.IE 2023 Report

The Dean of Students presented a report on the 2023 Student Survey, firstly thanking Ms Roisin Smith and the Quality Office for putting the data together from the National Students Survey, and to Dr. Fergal Rhatigan for data analysis and Helen Tonra for the composite poster which was used to aid the report presentation. The HEA National Students Survey is an obligatory survey for all third level institutes run in partnership with the IUA, THEA and USI. The Undergraduate taught (UGT) and Postgraduate taught (PGT) surveys are conducted annually, while the Postgraduate research (PGR) survey biennially.

The indicators for the taught courses are:

1. Higher Order Learning
2. Reflective and Integrative Learning
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Learning Strategies
5. Collaborative Learning
6. Student-faculty Interaction
7. Effective Teaching Practices
8. Quality of Interactions
9. Supportive Environment
10. Learning, Creative and Social Skills

The indicators for PGR are:

1. Research Infrastructure and facilities
2. Supervision
3. Research Culture
4. Progress and Assessment
5. Development Opportunities
6. Research Skills
7. Other Transferable skills
8. Responsibilities and Supports
9. Personal Outlook
10. Motivations and Career
11. Overall Experience

The Dean of Students illustrated the committee the summary data on the composite poster: the uptake was not great, with 26% response rate for UGT and PGT, and slightly higher 36% for PGR students. The data shows some good numbers in terms of students' satisfaction around their overall experience, with some areas where improvement is needed, specifically: organisation of the teaching schedule, feedback, discussion in class, quality of teaching, practical aspects to courses for PGT and student financing, university supports and clearer guidelines, additional resources, facilities and working spaces, supervisor and supervision, additional skills training for PGR students.

Lastly, the Dean of Students reported that the HEA National Steering Committee have decided that the Taught Survey (UGT and PGT) will not be delivered in 2023/24. A new survey will be

designed and tested with a focus on Irish context and offering the opportunity for institutions to ask their own questions/address their own priorities. The current PGR Survey is due to be administered in 2025, as far as we are aware.

The PG representative highlighted some areas of concerns around the postgraduate experience which were not captured by the survey, in particular: the need of clearer guidelines around the allocation/demonstration process, i.e. a draft communication document; stipend increase; clear process on supervisor change. The Dean of Students clarified that, while the Postgraduate Renewal Committee is actively looking into the production of guidelines on allocation/demonstration and change of supervisor, the funding issue needs to be dealt with at Schools' level, with an effort from TCD to persuade funding bodies to increase budgets, which will be reflected at a local level in extra budget to pay research students. Unfortunately, Student Life Committee does not have authority to dictate on budgetary issues.

The Student Union President stated that the SU boycotts the survey, considering it commercialised and severely flawed in its methodology. There is a need for students' surveys producing more accurate data and, he added, the SU runs better surveys taking into account quantifiable data.

Both the Director of Health Service and the Director of Internationalisation nominee agreed that the StudentSurvey, as it is, is not designed to capture reliable data, as every university has a different level of support services, which makes it fruitless to compare students' experiences across the board. Moreover, some of the questions are designed for the UK arena and have very little context in Ireland (i.e. the difficulty around accommodation should be adapted to the Irish context).

ACTION: Student Life Committee considered the report presented by the Dean of Students in the hope of a greater uptake for the next student survey.

SLC/23-24/22

A.6 Orientation 2023

The Transition to Trinity Officer presented a review on 2023 orientation. In sequential order: Postgraduate Orientation benefitted from a greatly expanded programme in 2023, which was possible because of additional support for the Transition to Trinity Officer. Postgraduate Orientation was fully hybrid, and overall participation rates increased on 2022, as a result of the expanded offerings.

Visiting and Erasmus Orientation was also hybrid, with in-person attendance being very high, despite module enrolment meetings being fully online.

Undergraduate Orientation was fully in-person. Attendance at general sessions remained consistent with 2022, which is near full participation for live in-person sessions, and a significant increase on 2021's online engagement. The staggered start again proved challenging for securing teaching spaces and particularly for S2S Mentor Meet-Ups which were held in the evenings to accommodate teaching. January Orientation for Visiting & Erasmus students will take place from 15-19 January 2024.

The PGR Skills for Success programme was completed in November for first semester: sign-ups remain consistently high, but attendance is mostly disappointing in the early stages of the programme. This will need to be reviewed in the context of second semester iteration.

A committee member inquired about collection of data around postgraduate events organised at orientation, although no data is available, anecdotally, most of the participants would be from the PGT arena.

The PG representative asked two questions around immigration visa and medical insurance requirements. In particular it was questioned whether students could avail of a medical card and avoid paying the yearly €700 students medical insurance required by Immigration. In order to get medical card, students need to be ordinarily resident in the country for at least a year continuously. Therefore, students are still required to purchase medical insurance upon arrival to Ireland, while they may avail of the medical card in a second moment if they still reside in the state.

The second query was about attending conferences and getting Club Travel expenses reimbursed. If the student is working in TCD, that should not pose any problem in terms of reimbursement of such incurred costs.

Lastly, a member of the committee noted that the staggered student start is a huge problem. It was agreed that things are getting a bit better with earlier release of leaving certificate results and that the VP is constantly engaging with the Government to try and resolve the matter. However, the implementation of a second leaving certificate exam sitting complicated things further and poses a problem to earlier results publication.

ACTION: Student Life Committee considered the Orientation 2023 report and thanked the Transition to Trinity Officer for all her work on it.

SLC/23-24/23 A.7 Dean's Report

The Dean of Students updated the committee that the following day, 13 December, the PG Research Renewal would meet. The Dean also commented on his engagement with the Students Directory, noting that people have been very receptive to one-to-one engagement and he would continue engaging in the new year, as part of his mission plan.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the update from the Dean of Students.

SLC/23-24/24 A.8 Any other urgent business

There were no other urgent business items brought for discussion.

SECTION B: Reports from SLC Working Groups

SLC/23-24/25 B.1 Consent Project

The Director of Student Counselling advised that:

- There is a new Consent Project Team with a new office and responsibilities on dignity and respect as well as consent. It was noted that the Consent Project Team should probably report to SLC on an annual basis.

SLC/23-24/26 B.2 Mental Health Policy

The Director of Student Counselling advised that:

- the mental health policy review is at a good stage, a greater engagement would probably speed up the process.

SLC/23-24/27 B.3 Student Centre Working Group

The TCDSU President noted that:

- the working group is happening, and the Dean of Students is to set up a Student Services person or the group to start engagement.

SECTION C: Items for noting and/or approval

SLC/23-24/28 C.1 Capitation Committee minutes and Term of Reference

ACTION: Student life Committee noted and approved the minutes dated 12 October 2023 and the ToR document dated 29 November 2023

SLC/23-24/29 C.2 Financial Assistance Committee minutes

ACTION: Student life Committee noted and approved the minutes dated 31 October 2023

SLC/23-24/30 C.3 Postgraduate Financial Assistance Advisory Group minutes

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted and approved the minutes, dated 10 October 2023

SLC/23-24/31 C.4 Undergraduate and Postgraduate Joint Financial Assistance Committee minutes

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted and approved the minutes, dated 14 November 2023

SLC/23-24/32 C.5 Student Life Committee Membership 2023-24

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted that the following that the following would serve as Postgraduate Students Representatives at Student Life Committee for the 2023-24 academic year:

Name

Claudia Peroni

Jovan Jeromela

SLC/23-24/33 C.6 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2023-24

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the remaining Student Life Committee dates for this academic year as follows:

Circulation date	Meeting Date
13 February	20 Feb
12 March	19 March
23 April	30 April
14 May	21 May

Venue: Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Meeting times: 11am – 1pm