



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

21 May 2024, 11am, Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Mr Laszlo Molnarfi (President, Students' Union), Ms Aoife Bennett (Welfare Officer, Students' Union), , Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Mr Declan Treanor (Director, College Disability Service), Ms Michelle Tanner (Director of Sport & Physical Activity), Dr Donal MacDonaill (Junior Dean & Registrar of Chambers), Mr Nigel Stevenson (Warden of Trinity Hall), Mr Martin John McAndrew (Postgraduate Student Support Officer), Ms Eimear Rouine (Transition to Trinity Officer), Ms Sorcha Mulcahy (Acting Director, Careers Advisory Service), Mr Samuel Isijola (President, Central Societies Committee), Ms Claudia Peroni (Postgraduate Student Representative), Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD), Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer).

Apologies: Mr Andrew Burgess (representative, Scholars' Committee), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Rev Steve Brunn (Chaplaincy), Ms Louise Staunton (nominee, Director of Internationalisation), Mr Fergus O'Brien (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Mr David Wolfe (Secretary to Trinity Publications).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary)

The Dean of Students welcomed everyone to the Student Life Committee meeting of 21st May 2024.

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/23-24/58

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 30 April 24.

SLC/23-24/59

A.2 Matters Arising

The Dean of Students mentioned in relation to the renovation works in the atrium space for students that there is budget to conduct redecorating and recarpeting, so the students' dedicated area will look much improved.

SLC/23-24/60

A.3 Student Counselling Service annual report

Mr Chuck Rashleigh, present by invitation, presented the 2022/23 annual report for Student Counselling, Student Learning Development and Student 2 Student Services, highlighting:

- 2,657 students presented to SCS, 12.3% of students,
- Emergency sessions offered to students in distress remain high with 919 students served,

- Student Learning Development recorded 4,501 attendances at their service,
- The Academic Writing Centre continues to grow with almost 500 attendances in 2023/24,
- Student 2 Student mentored 3,950 first-year students

The feedback from students is consistently exceptionally good. In terms of engagement, responses and support received. SCS is constantly taking action to reduce waiting times, which are decreasing over the time, compatibly with demand at peak times and available resources.

Members of the committee expressed their deep appreciation for the work of all teams in the Counselling Services' structure and thanked the Director for her unwavering support for students and her essential input into the management of crises and critical incidents on campus.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Student Counselling Service annual report.

SLC/23-24/61

A.4 Careers Service annual report

The Director of the Careers Service, Ms Sorcha Mulcahy, introduced the 2022/23 report and a presentation, highlighting:

- Usage and activity on the MyCareer platform up 8% from last year
- There was a quality review in 2022,
- Careers consultants facilitated 1069 individual appointments,
- 710 students attended a CV clinic, and
- There were 34 recipients of the Trinity Employability Bursary.

Ms Mulcahy also noted the focus for the coming academic year included:

- Refined planning and prioritisation of service activity, implementing the Quality Review's recommendations,
- Increasing visibility & growing engagement
- Building employability within and outside the curriculum and
- Using data to inform best practice.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Careers Service annual report.

SLC/23-24/62

A.5 Senior Tutor's Office annual report

The Senior Tutor, Prof Stephen Smith, presented the 2022/23 annual report for the Senior Tutor's office. The mission statement being bringing students from registration to graduation.

- 13,746 undergraduate students have been assigned to a tutor
- 306 tutors form the Tutorial System (from 227 in 2022)
- New training has been developed for Tutors (Blackboard modules, AI, Students in distress, Gender Identity, Inclusive Curriculum)
- 7642 student contacts for PAS
- PAS Newsletter received over 6000 views

- PAS organised 30 workshops with 2154 attendees
- ST office instrumental in the Academic Appeals Process
- Enhance awareness of and supports for student parents and carers
- SAF offered for a total amount of €609K to 331 students

SLC complimented the STO for the achievements considered the understaffing situation. The Director of Student Services complimented PAS for all the good work throughout the years.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Senior Tutor’s Office annual report.

SLC/23-24/63

A.6 Sport Centre annual report

The Director of Sports & Physical Activity presented the 2022/23 annual report, which highlighted an increased number of facility users, of which the majority are students. The Sport Centre acquired the new state of the art indoor sporting facilities at Printing House Square in 2023, to cater for a range of sports and activities including squash, GAA handball, racquet ball and Olympic target shooting. Furthermore, for the 9th time the TCD Sport Centre achieved the highest standards in the national quality awards. About 30% of the students’ body signed up to sport clubs, and some clubs achieved very high performances. Students in sport have been supported with various initiatives: scholarships, conditioning and physio sessions as well as many other services including nutrition, lifestyle and medical.

Social sport has also seen increased popularity among students, with great uptake to all various events: campus runs, basketball, volleyball, Walktober and Marchathon. The Iveagh Sports Grounds project in conjunction with Athletics Ireland and Sports Ireland is ongoing: it aims to promote a greater sense of community among TCD students and the local population in the name of athletics. Limited funds, unfortunately, are preventing such project to reach full potential and a funding steering group is working intensively to seek further opportunities to raise money.

Trinity Sport continues to implement ‘Realising Potential: A strategy for Sport and Physical Activity 2022 –2026’, in the name of equality, inclusion, engagement and professionalism. Although the Sport Centre runs an excellent service for students and staff, securing more funding remains crucial as there are still areas that require urgent improvement (already mentioned Iveagh Grounds, but also renovation of Trinity Halls Sport Centre, which is in very poor order).

The Committee commented on another year of fantastic service and initiatives carried out by the Sport Centre and agreed on the urgency of extra financial resources.

The TCDSU President mentioned UCC having increased the SLC to assist their Sport Centre, which is something he thinks could be replicated in TCD: the students’ opinion should be sought be referendum, however, as sport is valued very highly by the students’ body, a small increase in the levy could potentially be approved with no major reservations.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the Sport Centre annual report and congratulated the Director of Sport & Physical Activity on great achievements, while recognising the need of extra funding.

SLC/23-24/64

A.7 Proposal for a new PhD-Focused Service

The Postgraduate representatives presented a memorandum to advocate for an increase in resources and services available to PhD students. In particular, it was highlighted that there are several pressing current issues that PhD students face, from starting their programme at various times throughout the academic year, to the absence of a FAQ documents to guide PhD in navigating all issues relating to legal and tax queries, how to access travel grants, reimbursements, etc. The proposal suggests one short-term solution, consisting in establishing an additional PhD-exclusive orientation event, preparing a college-wide “PhD survival guide” with an FAQ on day-to-day issues of PhDs, to be periodically updated and to include a registry of questions asked by current PhD to existing PhD services.

In the medium term the Postgraduate representatives suggest the creation of a funded PhD-Specific Point of Contact responsible for the oversee of PhD-specific issues and for their resolution and ensuring Adequate PhD Representation within the University researchers. The Postgraduate representatives thanked Mr Martin McAndrew from Postgraduate Advisory Service for the precious input and expertise in the devising of the proposal.

SLC/23-24/65

A.8 Consultation on Strategic Plan 2025-2030

Ms Fedelma McNamara, Executive Director Academic Services Division met with Student Life Committee in the context of the consultations around the new TCD Strategic Plan 2025-2030. All staff is welcome to fill a questionnaire and express their opinion on what should be included in the new strategic plan, which is expected to be ready by July 2025. In particular the questions that were asked were:

1. What one strategic action could we take that would transform the way we operate during the next five years (2025-30)?
2. Why do you consider this important for our institution?
3. What needs to change or be in place to achieve this?

General themes covered were enhancing TCD profile as a leading university at a global level, increase the international presence at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, in an inclusive and equal environment; valuing students and staff alike; increase sustainability and enhance infrastructures.

The President of the SU asked if the SU might survey the students body to suggest further themes to be included to the strategic plan and planned to follow up on these directly with the ASD Executive Director.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received and noted the memorandum and presentation from the Executive Director of Academic Services Division.

SLC/23-24/66

A.9 Dean’s report – May 2024

The Dean of Students updated SLC about his continuous effort to engage, connect and communicate with all students; in particular he highlighted recent Mixer events with postgraduates, which is proving very useful. Undergrads and postgrads are being surveyed about students’ spaces until 05/05. Furthermore, the Countdown to Olympics event has been

so well received and fantastic to be part of, the Dean extended his gratitude to the Sports Team and to all the Olympians who are taking part to this.

SECTION B: Reports from SLC Working Groups

SLC/23-24/67

B.1 Mental Health Policy

The Director of Student Counselling advised that:

- The mental health policy reviewed document has been sent to all stakeholders for reviewing, the document, incorporating received feedback, has been sent to the College Solicitor. A flowchart will also be made to map the process. It is hoped that the document will reach the EO Group's for the required imprimatur and be ready for implementation in the new academic year.

SLC/23-24/68

B.2 Psychological Response Team

Dr Jo Haney from Student Counselling Service updated SLC about the creation of a dedicated Psychological Response Team, composed of volunteers among staff members who will receive training on first aid and mental health; these volunteers will make themselves available in the event of a critical incident and to assist facilitating College return to normality. Training is expected to take place in June and September 2024 and continue support will be provided to volunteers.

The Junior Dean welcomed this service.

SLC/23-24/69

B.3 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students and President TCDSU advised that:

- The SCWG meetings are going well and a space in the Science Gallery might be secured for the upcoming meetings.

SLC/23-24/70

B.4 Orientation and Transition Working Group

The Transition to Trinity Officer advised that

- Planning for Orientation 2023 is well-underway and noted the following dates:
- Postgraduate and visiting & Erasmus students: week beginning 2 Sept 2024
- Undergraduate students (Freshers' Week): week beginning 16 September 2024

SECTION C: Items for noting and/or approval

SLC/23-24/71

C.1 Capitation Committee minutes

Student Life Committee noted and approved the draft minutes, dated 27 March and 2 April 2024 (draft).

SLC/23-24/72

C.2 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2023-24

Student Life Committee noted that there will be no more Student Life Committee meetings for the academic year 2023/24, the Dean thanked all the Committee members and Ms Cristina Boccardo, Mr Martin McAndrew, Ms Eimear Rouine and Mr Aidan Marsh for all the help and support throughout his first year as Dean of Students.