



**Trinity College Dublin
The University of Dublin**

Minutes of a meeting of Student Life Committee

01 October 2024, 11am, Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Present: Prof Richard Porter (Dean of Students, in the Chair), Ms Jenny Maguire (President, Students' Union), Mr Hamza Bana (Welfare Officer, Students' Union), Rev Peter Sexton (Chaplaincy), Ms Trish Murphy (Director, Student Counselling Services), Dr David McGrath (Director, College Health Centre), Ms Louise Staunton (nominee, Director of Internationalisation), Mr Kieran Lewis (nominee, Director, College Disability Service), Mr Matthew Dossett (nominee, 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), Mr Ciaran Doherty (Director, Careers Advisory Service), Mr Marcus Boggan (Chair of Trinity Sports Union), Ms Faith Olopade (President, Central Societies Committee), Ms Kay Williams (Secretary to Trinity Publications), Ms Susan Kirwin (Coordinator, SLD), Mr Joel McKeever (Equality Officer).

Apologies: Dr Stephen Smith (Senior Tutor), Ms Breda Walls (Director of Student Services), Mr Andrew Burgess (representative, Scholars' Committee).

In attendance: Ms Cristina Boccardo (Secretary)

The Dean of Students welcomed everyone to the first Student Life Committee meeting of 2024/25.

SECTION A: Policy and Implementation Matters

SLC/24-25/01

A.1 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes dated 21 May 2024.

SLC/24-25/02

A.2 Matters Arising

The Dean of Students opened the meeting by introducing the terms of reference and outlining the scope of the SLC to all attendees. The Dean also reported on the progress made since May on items previously considered by the SLC, including: the completion of the Atrium space renovations over the summer; the awarding of prestigious accreditation to the Student Counselling Services by the International Accreditation of Counseling Services (IACS) in June; and advancements following a proposal from the Postgraduate Student Representatives regarding bespoke services for PhD students. Claudia Peroni, Joven Jeromela, Martin McAndrew, and Eimear Rouine collaborated to introduce several useful innovations aimed at enhancing PhD student engagement, particularly during orientation, and a practical guide for PhD students has also been developed.

SLC/24-25/03

A.3 International Education Mark/ TrustEd

Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Academic Affairs, spoke about the International Education Mark, branded TrustEd, and presented a memorandum and slides to the SLC. The Committee was also provided with the initial TrustEd document from the College, which is intended to be submitted in its final form by May 2025. The TrustEd mark certifies that the College meets specific standards related to the recruitment, admission, information, integration, and support of international students. Of the 63 criteria, only four are not applicable to Trinity College, with a minimum compliance threshold of 80%. However, there is confidence that the College will be successful in its application. This has been a significant undertaking, with contributions from many colleagues.

A Committee member asked about the purpose of the accreditation, and Ms Fitzpatrick explained that it is a QQI requirement, enabling the College to maintain and expand international student recruitment. Another member enquired about the validation process in September 2025, questioning whether site visits would take place and what might happen in subsequent years, particularly regarding quality reviews and the potential risk of the College losing the accreditation. Ms Fitzpatrick clarified that there would be no site visits, but the reviewers would analyse data produced by the College, supported by a dedicated staff member. Some Committee members raised concerns about international students accepting course offers without fully understanding the implications of studying at TCD—such as accommodation, finances, healthcare, and services. While acknowledging the importance of these needs, Ms Fitzpatrick noted that the TrustEd accreditation focuses on other standards, which are regulated by QQI.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Trust/Ed accreditation draft, memo and presentation by Ms Fitzpatrick.

SLC/24-25/04

A.4 Revised Student Mental Health Policy

Mr Mark Robinson, Student Counsellor, presented the newly revised Mental Health Policy to the Committee. The policy aims to provide greater clarity on the university's approach to supporting student mental health, encompassing a continuum from general wellbeing to mental health difficulties and mental illness. It acknowledges the dynamic and complex factors affecting the mental health of Trinity students.

The revised policy emphasises a whole-campus approach, promoting proactive and responsive engagement with student mental health needs. The university's duty of care, particularly towards students experiencing mental health challenges, was highlighted as a key focus.

Additionally, the policy will support the university in fulfilling its pastoral, educational, and legal obligations, including its responsibility to reasonably accommodate students who disclose a mental health disability, in line with Trinity's Reasonable Accommodation Policy. The policy had already been submitted to the Executive Officers Group (EOG) and received positive feedback.

The SU representative commented that the policy should take into account the diversity of the student body and offer differentiated treatments to address the mental health needs of

students from diverse and minority backgrounds. One Committee member suggested that the revised policy should explicitly state that the College supports all minority groups and various representations equally.

Mark Robinson and other Committee members affirmed that all students are treated equally across College services, with those registered with the Disability Service receiving additional resources. However, the principle remains that all students can access services in the same way.

A Committee member raised concerns regarding the unavailability of the Free Fees Initiative (FFI) for international (Non-EU fee-paying) students on a medical repeat year. While the value of this concern was acknowledged, the FFI is a government policy based on students' prior residency status, making it impossible for the College to extend it to the entire undergraduate cohort.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the revised Mental Health Policy and Mr Mark Robinson accepted the suggestion of including reference in the Policy to specific interventions to address the needs of minority groups, which will be incorporated to the body of the Policy itself.

SLC/24-25/05

A.5 Period Dignity on Campus

Ms Eimear Rouine, Transition to Trinity Officer, presented a memo from the Director of Student Services on Period Dignity, an SLC agenda item that had been discussed at previous SLC meetings. In particular, the update was that Trinity has been allocated €22,000 from the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to provide free period products for students in 2024. The allocation is based on the number of female and non-binary student enrolments for 2022/23 and is intended to ensure that no students are disadvantaged in their education by period poverty. It is proposed to use the fund to provide free products in a designated bathroom in each of the following locations:

1. Ussher Library
2. Hamilton
3. School of Nursing, D'Olier St
4. Trinity Sport Centre
5. College Health Centre
6. St James Hospital (old Stone Building)
7. Tallaght Hospital (location to be confirmed)

The assistance from Estates and Facilities staff was recognised and commended, as staff have been particularly helpful at the trial stage two years ago and are willing to continue to assist in checking and restocking distributors.

The Student Union, while recognising the efforts made in securing the period products commented that funds are very limited, much less than what was made available at the trial phase, which is disappointing, however they will continue to lobby for better intervention from the Government to reduce/eradicate period poverty. The ideal outcome would be to have period products distributed for staff and students in many more locations. One

Committee member suggested furnishing the higher Arts Block floors, as the lower-ground restrooms are used by external visitors too.

ACTION: Student Life Committee noted the Director of Students Services memo on period dignity on Campus.

SLC/24-25/06

A.6 Dean's Report – 2024-25 workplan and priorities

The Dean of Students is very much looking forward to the new academic year and proposes to concentrate his efforts on a variety of points:

- Working and supporting the Director of Students Services and all the respective Directors/Chairs to review students' needs and improve as much as possible the facilities available to the students' body.
- To team up with the Students Union, Estates & Facilities and the Bursar to make progress on Students Social Spaces and the proposed Student Centre.
- To discuss and progress new initiatives from students and Directors/Chairs to Council.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the Dean's report and workplan for 2024-25.

SLC/24-25/07

A.7 Any other urgent business

The SU Representative mentioned that there are two items they would like SLC to consider: the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms available, particularly in the Hamilton Building and the possibility of furnishing the breastfeeding pods on Campus with a small fridge to store milk. The Committee would be happy to discuss the items, but a memo devising the benefits and the costs of such intervention would need to be submitted to the Dean of Students for inclusion.

SECTION B: Reports from SLC Working Groups

SLC/24-25/08

B.1 Student Centre Working Group

The Dean of Students updated the Committee about the students' space, to say that progress has been made and a meeting had been held with the Bursar, while remaining optimistic, there are still some obstacles to overcome.

The SU Representative added that the space currently being considered in the Science Gallery presented a major issue, which is the presence of a plant room. The SU were advised by a Committee member that acquiring space is a very slow process in College and the best advice would be to secure the most suitable space and then think about all further details. It is unanimously recognised that students need to be allocated a space.

ACTION: Student Life Committee received the update on the SCWG.

SECTION C: Items for noting and/or approval

SLC/24-25/09

C.1 Student Life Committee Membership 2024-25

The Dean of Students welcomed and introduced to the Committee two new members ex-officio:

Ciaran Doherty Director, Careers Advisory Service
Katelin Williams Chairperson, Trinity (DU) Publications Committee

SLC/24-25/10

C.2 Student Life Committee circulation and meetings dates 2024-25

To note the remaining Student Life Committee dates for this academic year as follows:

<u>Circulation date</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>
29 October	5 November
10 December	17 December
11 February	18 Feb
11 March	18 March
22 April	29 April
13 May	20 May

Venue: Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

Meeting times: 11am – 1pm
