**Trinity College Dublin**
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

# CONSOLIDATED ANNUAL FACULTY QUALITY REPORT 2022/23

# 1. Introduction

The Annual Faculty Quality Reports (AFQRs) were introduced in 2013/14 as part of the [Framework for Quality at Trinity](#). The Framework brings together the self-evaluation and monitoring elements that form the focus of quality assurance activity in Trinity. The development process is led by the three Faculty Managers (AHSS, STEM and HS), in consultation with the Faculty Deans, the Schools and the Quality Office. The draft reports are discussed at a designated Annual Faculty Quality Executive meeting before being submitted to the Quality Committee (QC) for consideration. Following Quality Committee, a Consolidated Quality Report is submitted to Council for approval. The AFQRs and the Consolidated Quality Report are published on the [Quality Office website.](#)

Key themes discussed at the Quality Committee on the 18 April 2024 include perennial issues such as:

    i.    low response rates to student surveys, including module and programme evaluations and the National Student Survey instrument;

    ii.    external examiner system issues specifically ease of access to the VLE for first-time users, and also the need for repeat access over a three-year term due to an audit requirement for six-monthly renewal of passwords;

    iii.    lack of interoperability across key systems (SITS, CMIS, VLE), which results in duplication of effort on the part of staff;

    iv.    quality of teaching and research space and the impact on the student and staff experience.

    v.    key infrastructure and critical equipment failure and lack of an income stream to repair and replace equipment required for capstone projects and research activity.

New themes that arose in 2022/23 include:

    vi.    difficulty recruiting elected postgraduate student representatives on Faculty and School Executive Committees; such positions are currently being filled on a volunteer basis.

    vii.    initiatives by Schools to address two priority areas (i) EDI and (ii) Artificial Intelligence and Generative AI.

The following initiatives were commended:

    i.    return to College-based exam venues for 80% of assessment was noted as providing a positive experience for students and staff;

    ii.    the positive impact of the Faculty Liaison Officers following the first full year of the implementation of these positions;

    iii.    the positive work of the Postgraduate Renewal Project and its impact across Schools;

    iv.    the strategic prioritization of module and programme evaluation functionality by the VLE Review Project, to inform the procurement of a new VLE.

# 2. Issues for escalation by the Faculty Deans to Council

The Faculty Deans identified the following key issues as having a negative impact on the ability of Trinity to deliver on its academic mission:

## 2.1 Issues in 2022/23
  i. Staff-Student Ratios.
  ii. Physical Infrastructure.
  iii. IT infrastructure and specifically interoperability of IT systems.
  iv. Tight turnaround times in Assessment in Semester 2.
  v. Postgraduate Representatives on Faculty and School Executives.

## 2.2 Contemporary issues of concern 2023/24
  i. PG application processing turnaround times for offers.
  ii. Academic Year Structure.
  iii. Fitness to Practice system is cumbersome and not fit-for-purpose.
  iv. Student Placements – reliability of placements from placement partners.
  v. Student social spaces at St James and Tallaght Hospitals and at the East end of campus.

# 3 Faculty-specific enhancements and challenges

## Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

### Key enhancements

**EDI -** nine out of the twelve AHSS Schools have a Bronze Athena Swan Award. The Schools of English and History and Humanities included statements in Module Handbooks and wording on modules in Blackboard on sensitivity to EDI issues in the curriculum.

**Academic Integrity and Generative AI –** the Schools of Psychology and Histories and Humanities developed policies that respond to AI, enhanced communication to students on related processes and amended assignment submission coversheets to respond to emerging practices.

**PhD Supervisor Matching –** the School of Social Work and Social Policy introduced a new procedure whereby prospective PhD students submit a proposal to the school, where it is reviewed by a panel, who then pair the student with a supervisor matching their research interests.

**Student Evaluation –** 100% of undergraduate and postgraduate modules were evaluated. Schools continue to innovate to engage students in evaluation and feedback mechanisms. For example, Linguistics, Speech and Communication Sciences has introduced an MS Form where students pose a question, and all questions are responded to on Blackboard.

**Retention –** the Faculty achieved a 98% student retention rate across all cohorts.

### Specific challenges

**IT Systems and lack of interconnectivity across key systems –** result in duplication of effort and increase the opportunity for human error in entry of student grades; non integration of Study Abroad into OME and between OME and timetabling (CMIS).

**Inadequate Physical Infrastructure** remains challenging across the Faculty- Foster Place, Pearse Street and School of Creative Arts.

**Staff Student Ratio –** particularly in the context of retirement of senior staff, in schools with a small cohort of academic staff or where large class sizes require a reliance on part-time/adjunct staff; and programmes with a requirement for a specific Staff: Student Ratio to retain professional body accreditation**.**

**Access to Blackboard by External Examiners –** was reported as an issue by the Schools of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies.

**Timeframes around Reassessment in S2 -** tight turnaround times place considerable pressure on examiners and External Examiners.

# Health Sciences

## Key enhancements

**EDI –** Two of the four FHS Schools are in receipt of a Bronze Athena Swan Award. In 2022/23, students in the FHS received funding from the Equality Fund to conduct a racial justice project addressing racism in healthcare education. Actions on the outcome include a 'one-stop-shop' website for students, sign posting College mechanisms, and also designated School-level staff for issues that arise on clinical placement. An EDI related question was included in all student surveys and the Faculty aims to develop a toolkit to support staff in their EDI efforts.

**New Appointments –** a new Clinical Academic Lead position in the School of Dental Science facilitates a better feedback system around clinical feedback to students. A new Student Welfare Officer position was established in the School of Medicine.

**MoU Project** – the School of Medicine completed a project where they instituted a MoU with each placement provider that covers the roles and responsibilities of the school and the placement provider.

**Enhanced and streamlined processes -** the School of Nursing and Midwifery introduced a new process using Blackboard to allow SF and JS students submit their elective module choices, replacing Qualtrics/Survey Monkey, and streamlined and improved the process for the production of academic transcripts.

**No Teach Mondays** – the School of Pharmacy no longer schedules formal teaching on Mondays, this has been welcomed by students and staff alike and allows for self-directing learning activities.

## Specific challenges

**Physical Infrastructure -** suitability of teaching space is a constraint on plans for expansion for the Schools within the Faculty: Dental Science, Pharmacy, and Nursing and Midwifery.

**Lack of student space and amenity –** a lack of student space and sequential timetabling of classes do not allow students time to commute to cafes for lunch or breaks. The withdrawal of eating/break-out facilities at the Trinity St James Centre and Tallaght Hospitals adversely impact the student experience and wellbeing.

**Major Equipment Failure -** equipment at end of life and difficult to repair or replace, is impacting competitiveness in teaching and research.

**Access to VLE by External Examiners** was reported by the School of Nursing and Midwifery as a persistent problem.

**Retention –** Faculty report Progression and Retention by Programme details internal transfers across programmes and withdrawal from programmes. The School of Pharmacy explained that CAO entry marks approximated those of Medicine and with the addition of HPAT scores resulted in 8 students transferring to Medicine. Four HS programmes – Pharmacy, Nursing, Medicine and Human Health and Disease - had between 11-15 students withdraw from each programme. The Faculty is committed to exploring further the reasons for non-retention and particularly relating Non-EU in future years.

# Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics

## Key enhancements

**EDI** – two of the Faculty's eight Schools have a Silver Athena Swan Award, while a further five have a Bronze Award.

**Academic Integrity/ Artificial Intelligence** – The School of Computer Science and Statistics have established a Generative AI Working Group to review implications for teaching and provide guidelines and best practice information to staff. The School of Engineering introduced a new Plagiarism protocol for undergraduate students and new tracking system for postgraduate plagiarism cases. The School of Natural Science has redesigned curriculum elements and reviewed assessment to address the risk of AI software.

**Demonstrator and Teaching Assistant System -** The School of Computer Science and Statistics developed a web-based Demonstrator and Teaching Assistant Allocation (DAS) system to improve the process and communication with stakeholders.

**Enhanced Disability access -** The School of Genetics and Microbiology benefitted from the conversion of a room to provide a new lecture theatre with wheelchair access. The School of Maths also benefitted from the provision of the Maths Help-Room in the Printing House, facilitating access by student with disabilities to the service on a weekly basis.

## Specific challenges

**Quality of Physical Infrastructure -** inadequate teaching space, including access to lecture, classrooms and computer rooms for large classes, is impacting timetabling. This is compounded by the delay in the E3 Learning Foundry and access to suitable venues in other buildings where access is restricted to one school e.g., Trinity Central. Investment in physical infrastructure is urgently required if STEM is to remain competitive with national and international universities.

**Equipment repair and renewal** – lack of a mechanism to repair or replace equipment required for Capstone projects and research, some of which are beyond end-of-life due date. A full list of equipment needs is included in the Faculty Report by School (refer pg. 56-58)

**Funding for Fieldtrips and Capstone Projects** remains a challenge for STEM Schools e.g., School of Natural Science, School of Genetics and Microbiology.

**Postgraduate Student Representation on Faculty and School Executives** – for the second year running 2021/22 and 2022/23 the Faculty Executive and many of the School Executives have no elected PGT student representative, which impacts the student voice. Where positions are filled, it is on a volunteer basis.

**Capping on Reassessments-** the Institute of Physics made recommendations on the removal of capping on reassessment introduced under TEP requiring action by the Schools of Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry.

# Analysis of quantitative data (Refer Table 1)

## Module evaluations

Undergraduate module evaluation rates in 2022/23 varied across the Faculties, with 100% evaluated in AHSS, 98% in HS and 84% in STEM. The rate of postgraduate evaluations was 100% in AHSS, 93% in HS and 92% in STEM.

All Faculties noted low student response rates as an ongoing issue. Schools continue to explore ways to engage students and enhance student feedback mechanisms. The VLE Review Project has prioritized module and programme evaluation functionality in the specifications to procure a new VLE. It is hoped that this will have a positive impact on improving response rates.

Open Module evaluation was only reported by STEM. FHS do not offer Open Modules, as the curriculum content FHS programmes are subject to professional body accreditation requirements. As reported in previous years the administration of separate module evaluation surveys in large classes with mixed cohorts of students is administratively difficult, e.g., some taking the module as core to their study programme, and others as an Open Module; and visiting students who are excluded from Open Module evaluation may also be present. Schools have opted to use a standard module survey for a module that does not differentiate the status of the module or the status of the student. Trinity Elective Modules evaluations, conducted in 2022/23, show 16% response rate in Semester 1 and 16% in Semester 2.

## Progression & Retention

In 2022/23, AHSS had a retention rate of 98%; HS had a retention rate of 97.44%, while STEM had a retention rate of 96.42%.

## External Examiner reports

Response rates for Undergraduate External Examiner (EE) Reports in AHSS were 98%; HS 92% and STEM 91%. Postgraduate response rates were slightly lower for AHSS 89% and HS 86%, however it was 96% in STEM. 2022/23 was the first year of the online External Examiner Report Form introduced by the Graduate Studies Office and it is anticipated that as new automation processes are embedded in Undergraduate and Postgraduate processes that the accuracy of response rates will increase. A majority of Schools (22/24) reporting responding to EE recommendations in writing.

Of interest is that twenty of twenty-four Schools report that they requested access to Blackboard for External Examiners. However, this may not be standard across all academic programmes offered by the School. It appears as reported at the FHS Executive Quality Meeting and raised at the Quality Committee meeting of 18th April 2024, that knowledge of the process to request access to the VLE for EEs is not widely understood across Schools. It is also not clear if the requests for access are for initial request at the start of the EE terms or repeat requests due to password renewal issues. The Quality Office has engaged with HR to attempt to address enhancement to the process.

## Accreditation

The number of Accreditation visits by professional or statutory bodies in 2022/23 increased, compensating for a downturn in such visits during the pandemic years. The Schools of Dental Science, Nursing and Midwifery, and Medicine (FHS), the Schools of Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science & Statistics (STEM), and the School of Education (AHSS) underwent accreditation reviews by their relevant professional bodies. Prolonged delays were reported in receiving the Accreditation Report by the School of Dental Science. The Institute of Physics made recommendations to reinstate capping on reassessment that was removed following the implementation of the Trinity Education Project.

**Table 1 – Overview of key metrics**

| Faculty | Health Sciences | Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences | Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Feedback from students** | | | |
| Percentage (and number) of UG Modules evaluated | 299/305 (98%) | 1,402/1,402 (100%) | 453/541 (84%) |
| Percentage (and number) of PG courses/ programmes evaluated | 54/58 (93%) | 80/80 (100%) | 31/34 (92%) |
| **External Examiner process** | | | |
| Percentage (and number) of External Examiner reports received | UG -50/51 (98%) PGT – 38/44 (86%) | UG 59/64 (92%) PGT 71/80 (89%) | UG 31/34 (91%) PGT 22/23 (96%) |
| Did Schools respond in writing to the External Examiner recommendations? | 4/4 | 10/12 (UG only) | 8/8 |
| Did the External Examiners have or request access to Blackboard | 4/4 | 9/12 | 7/8 |
| **Accreditation Programmes** | | | |
| No. of programmes accredited in 2022/23 and the accrediting body | • M.Sc. in Clinical Chemistry (SoM) (ACLSM) <br>• Bachelor of Dental Science (Dental Council) <br>• Nursing and Midwifery – various (NMBI) <br>• Human Nutrition and Dietetics (SoM) (CORU) | • School of Education (PME and B.Mus. Ed) Teaching Council | • BAI/MAI (Engineers Ireland) <br>• BA/MCS Integrated Computer Science (Engineers Ireland) <br>• BA Moderatorship in Physics, in Physics and Astrophysics; in Theoretical Physics and in Nanoscience (Institute of Physics) |
| **Retention data** | **Total No of Students  - 3,051** | **Total No. of Students - 4180** | **Total No of Students  - 3,807** |
| Progression & retention 2022/23 – all years | 2,325 or 76.2% progressed <br>26 or 0.85% repeated <br>25 or 0.82% transferred <br>957 or 19.6% completed their course <br>78 or 2.56% were not retained <br>Total retention rate = 97.44% | 3083 or 75% progressed <br>52 or 1% repeated <br>32 or 1% transferred <br>928 or 23% completed their course <br>86 or 2% were not retained <br>Total retention rate = 98% | 2,691 or 71% progressed <br>98 or 2.6% repeated <br>89 or 2.3% transferred <br>652 or 17% completed their course <br>136 or and 3.58% were not retained <br>Total retention rate = 96.42% |