The University of Dublin
Trinity College

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting, 24 February 2015

Present:

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research (DoR) and Chair
Dr Diarmuid O'Brien, Director of Trinity Research & Innovation (TR&I) and Secretary
Professor Martina Hennessy, Associate Dean of Research (ADoR)
Professor Andrew Loxley, Director of Research, School of Education
Professor Paul Scanlon, Director of Research, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Professor Blanaid Clarke, Director or Research, School of Law
Professor Lorraine Leeson, Director of Research, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Andrew Pierce, Director of Research, School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Professor Daniela Zister, Director of Research, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Director of Research, School of Chemistry
Professor Carl Vogel, Director of Research, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Aoife McLysaght, Director of Research, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Mike Peardon, Director of Research, School of Mathematics
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences (for Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences)
Professor Martin Hegner, Director of Research, School of Physics
Professor Gary Moran, Director of Research, School of Dental Science
Professor James O'Donnell, Director of Research, School of Medicine
Professor Gabrielle McKee, Director of Research, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Juergen Barkhoff, Director, Trinity Long Room Hub
Dr Michael Cooke, Chair, Trinity Research Staff Association (TRSA)
Ms Megan Lee, President, Graduate Students Union

In attendance:

Mr David O'Shea, Acting Research Acc. Manager, Financial Services Division
Mr John Murphy, Director of Information Systems Services
Mr Ciarán McEvoy, Trinity Research & Innovations (Minutes Secretary for Dr Fiona Killard)

Apologies:

Professor Ruth Byrne, Director of Research, School of Psychology
Professor Martin Adams, Director of Research, School of Drama, Film & Music
Professor Aileen Douglas, Director of Research, School of English
Professor Micheál Ó Siochrú, Director of Research, School of Histories and Humanities
Professor Paul Coughlan, Director of Research, School of Business
Professor Balazs Apor, Director of Research, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies

Professor Jane Stout, Director of Research, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Lorraine O'Driscoll, Director of Research, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Shane O'Mara, Director of Research, TCIN
Professor Carol Newman, Acting Director of the Institute for International Integration Studies (IIIS)
Ms Doris Alexander, Research Development Manager, Trinity Research & Innovation
Dr Fiona Killard, Research Strategy Officer, Trinity Research & Innovation and Rapporteur to the Committee and (item RS/14-15/38)

Not present:

Professor Stefano Sanvito, Director of Research, CRANN
Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies
Professor Luke O'Neill, Director of Research, TBSI
Professor Trevor Spratt, Director of Research, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Luiz Da Silva, Director of Research, School of Engineering

RS/14-15/43   Minutes of 20 January 2015

The minutes of last meeting were accepted.

RS/14-15/44   Matters Arising from the Minutes

The DoR reported meeting apologies.

The Dean informed members that consultation on College policy on dual-use research (item RS/14-14/34) was still in progress. The policy would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Dean informed members that the College's IP policy (item RS/14-15/34) had been approved by Board at the 28 January sitting (BD/14-15/136).

The Dean informed the members that the Finance Committee had requested a review of the policy regarding outside earnings.

The Dean informed the committee that an Expression of Interest (EoI) was submitted towards the rolling call for the SFI Targeted Research Professorships Programme 2014 (item RS/14-15/35). The EoI was accepted by SFI. The application is in the area of Innate Immunology & Inflammation.

The Dean informed the members that more volunteers were required to be involved in the Rankings Strategy group/academic focus group (item RS/14-15/36). Furthermore, the Dean informed members that additional visibility of the Ranking Strategy within individual School would be beneficial.

Action: Additional nominations/volunteers required for the Rankings Strategy group/academic focus group.

The ADoR informed members that all Research Ethics Committees (RECs) have now been approved by Council and are operational (item RS/14-15/37). The ADoR also informed members that every School must have a policy in place and advertised in terms of ethics approval. The Dean indicated the need for an overarching Ethics website, as a central venue for all ethics related information.

The Dean informed members that at final count, 110 Pathfinder applications were received (item RS/14-15/40). A review strategy is in place and 46 evaluators have been identified. It is intended that each proposal will be reviewed by three evaluators. After initial review a shortlist of applications will be drafted. A final selection regarding successful applications will be made by the Faculty Deans or their nominees. It is hoped to fund a minimum of 10 projects.

The Dean further informed members that there was a hope that a mechanism similar to that used to employ locally based Research Programme Officers (RPOs) could be used to fund in excess of 10 projects. To make this work, a co-funding mechanism would need to be agreed with individual Schools in the event one of their staff members was successful. In addition, Schools may decide to fund projects not funded by the Research Committee. Such co-funding could be on a 50/50 basis and be dependent on funds being available.

RS/14-15/45   Dean of Research Update (DoR)

The Dean updated the members on final European Research Council 2014 Starting Grant, Consolidator Grant and Proof of Concept applications and successes (RS/14-15/38). College was awarded 3 of the 8 ERC Starting Grants secured by Ireland. College was awarded 4 of the 7 Consolidator Grants secured by Ireland. The Dean informed members that this was an excellent achievement and exceeds in one year College's complement of ERC grants in FP7.

The Dean further informed members that such good results reflect very well on College in terms of the national debate surrounding research funding. It also reflects favourably on College's investment in early stage researchers.

The Dean finished the item by noting that he hoped the results of the ERC 2014 call would act as motivation to other College researchers to replicate the successes of ERC 2014.

RS/14-15/46   Research Ethics Policy Committee Working Groups

The ADoR requested the removal of the Anti-Bullying Centre from the College calendar entry 2015/16. The request was approved by the Committee.

The ADoR presented the proposed nominees for the Data Retention/Bio Banking Working Group, and the Stem Cell Research Working Group. Each group will be chaired by Professor Orla Sheils, Chair of the Research Ethics Policy Committee. The Dean will be represented on both working groups by the ADoR, Professor Martina Hennessy.

The ADoR sought approval from the Committee for the proposed Working Group members, as presented. Professor Aoife McLysaght indicated two members of the Stem Cell Research Working Group were from the School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology. Professor Aoife McLysaght was reassured that the members of the School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology provided complementary expertise, from different perspectives. Professor Jurgen Barkhoff informed the members that the proposed School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology nominees were two of the foremost ethics specialists in College. Professor Carl Vogel indicated the affiliation of Professor Mary Sharp, nominee for the Data Retention/Bio Banking Working Group was the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

The nominees for both Working Groups were approved by the Research Committee.

The ADoR informed the members of the discussion at the recent Forum of Research Ethics Committee Chairs. The ADoR highlighted the proposed IT system to support the work of Research Ethics Committees processing and handling ethics applications.

The ADoR informed members that the Forum also discussed the issue of on-line ethics training being available. Possible on-line ethics training tools were discussed at the Forum, most notably those available through the Medical Research Council (UK) and the National Institute of Health (US). Research Ethics Committee Chairs were asked to test available on-line resources and provide feedback regarding their usefulness. Professor Lorraine Leeson asked whether such on-line tools had adequate ease of access, specifically in terms of the hard of hearing. The ADoR undertook to investigate this matter.

Action: ADoR to investigate the access to on-line ethics training tools for those hard of hearing and others with limiting conditions.

ADoR opened discussion on the Lone Worker Policy. The ADoR indicated that she considered the document rather generic, but full of common sense. Concepts such as home visits and sensible advice around security, safety, etc. are contained within the document. Professor Gary Moran commented that the policy document does not spell out what can and cannot be done, e.g. weekend work with hazardous chemicals. There should be zero tolerance for such a scenario. The ADoR agreed with this point, but commented that the Lone Worker Policy was only the first step in the development of a rigorous Lone Worker Policy, and that a more detailed document would be required to build on the existing policy document.

The Research Committee raised the question of whether ethics issues needed to be contained in the Lone Worker Policy. There was further discussion as to whether lone workers were to be classed as vulnerable groups. The argument was made that lone worker subset of ethics would not capture all lone worker scenarios. Furthermore, an argument was forwarded as to whether such issues would be more appropriately dealt with by relevant Safety Committees.

Action: ADoR to discuss these issues with the Research Ethics Policy Committee and revert to the Research Committee.

RS/14-15/47 Any Other Urgent Business

No other urgent business was discussed.

RS/14-15/48 "Broadening the Scope of Impact" document

The Dean opened discussion regarding the "Broadening the Scope of Impact" document disseminated by SFI. The document presents information on defining, assessing and measuring impact of major public research programmes, with lessons from 6 small advanced economies. The 6 countries include are: Ireland (SFI), Denmark (Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation), New Zealand (Tertiary Education Commission, Royal Society of New Zealand, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment), Finland (Academy of Finland), and Israel (Planning and Budgeting Committee of the Council for Higher Education). The Dean informed the members that the document was written by research funding agencies, and provided an insight into research funding agency thinking. The Dean conveyed to the members that Chapters 3 and 4 of the document contained ways to articulate Impact, which may be important for future SFI funding applications. Furthermore, the Dean informed members that content in the document regarding informing impact statements were quite interesting. Whilst the document was primarily from the point of view of research funding agencies, it was nonetheless important for researchers to be aware of the contents of the document and how the document could be used to the advantage of researchers.

The Dean also noted that SFI appear to have a stronger emphasis on impact than the other research funding agencies associated with the document. It is important for Trinity researchers thinking of applying to SFI to be aware of the level of emphasis on impact.

Professor Jurgen Barkhoff welcomed the broad definition of impact, particularly in the context of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Professor Barkhoff pointed out that there were some deficiencies in the document. The Dean replied that the document was a work in progress and that feedback to SFI was a possibility. The Dean volunteered to collate Research Committee feedback and provide it to SFI, if necessary.

The Dean also advised that the REF in the UK was a good source of information regarding impact. The REF website contains impact case studies for all participating UK institutions across a wide range of disciplines and maybe a useful source of idea on how colleagues can articulate their impact.

Action: DoR to collate feedback from members to SFI on the "Broadening the Scope of Impact" document

RS/14-15/49 "Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation" consultation

The Dean informed the members that the Irish government approved the Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation in 2006, which was scheduled to expire in 2013. The strategy has now formally expired and a consultation process is ongoing regarding a successor to the strategy. The Dean informed the members that the working document, SSTI2 appears to be strongly influenced by the Research

Prioritisation Strategy (RPS). The RPS has been very influential in the last number of years and underpins an increased emphasis regarding industrial engagement and Centres of scale.

The Dean informed the members that consultation on the contents of the document was now open. Whilst the level of influence was unclear, it was important for Trinity to participate in the consultation process.

The Dean outlined his opinion of the document and invited the Research Committee to provide feedback to the document. The Research Committee feedback should be informed by input from Schools within College.

Professor Aoife McLysaght indicated that the Research Prioritisation Strategy was not working well and needed to be revisited. Professor Jurgen Barkhoff informed members that the document was not very uplifting as it appeared to completely ignore the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Given that Horizon 2020 address AHSS, he questioned if there is any rationale for the exclusion of AHSS in the SSTI2 document. TR&I Director Diarmuid O'Brien noted that the proposed strategy appeared to contain a shift in economic policy from supporting tax-based to talent-based investment. Therefore, it is incumbent on the AHSS to convince the policy makers of the positive influence AHSS makes to the Irish economy and society.

Action: The Dean to collate feedback from the Research Committee and College to feed into the SSTI2 consultation process.

RS/14-15/50 Consultation on Research Infrastructures

The Dean informed the members that a consultation process regarding research infrastructure was ongoing and that the Irish Universities Association was tasked with providing feedback from the country's universities.

The Dean indicated that some of the major concerns for College are associated with the lack of space for expansion, the impact on structured PhD programmes, sustainability of existing infrastructure, need for new research infrastructure, and digital repositories.

The Dean requested feedback on all infrastructures issues to feed into the IUA response to government.

RS/14-15/51 Trinity Long Room Hub's Annual Report for 2012-2013

Professor Jurgen Barkhoff presented the Trinity Long Room Hub's Annual Report for 2012-2013 to the members. Professor Barkhoff expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to present the report. The Dean congratulated Professor Barkhoff on the report and especially the high quality of the work that underpinned the contents of the report.

RS/14-15/52 Any Other Business

The Dean briefed members regarding the ongoing Research Themes Review, stating that there are 19 themes requiring review. The Dean informed the members that the theme reviews were expected to identify area of research strength within College. One of the main aims of the review process was to identify areas of research strength operating at a world class level and emerging research themes. To

date, reviewers have provided feedback regarding how themes can evolve. The Dean noted that the expectation was for each theme to gain something from the review process.

The Dean informed members that College had received a letter from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine requesting feedback relating to Ireland's Knowledge Development Box, and how it could impact on Irish agri-food activity. The Dean requested feedback.

Action: Members asked to provide relevant feedback to the Dean.

The Dean reminded members that input to the Dean of Research Report was due by the end of February. The Dean informed members that each School was requested to provide research highlights for the academic year 2013-2014. The Dean furthermore indicated that 3 or 4 research highlights, each of half a page would suffice. The research highlights should be significant research achievements and those which the School would like to highlight and publicise to generate visibility for the School's research.