

**The University of Dublin  
Trinity College**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**11:00, Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
Boardroom, Trinity Business School**

**MINUTES**

Prof. Sinéad Ryan (Chair); Prof. Brian Broderick; Prof. Padraic Fallon; Prof. Joseph Roche; Prof. Catherine Welch; Prof. Joanne Banks; Prof. Lindsey Earner-Byrne; Prof. Mary Rogan; Prof. Craig Sailor; Prof. Sonia Bishop; Prof. Carol Newman; Prof. Nicola Carr; Prof. Benjamin Wold; Prof. Tomás Ryan; Prof. Mathias Senge; Prof. Giovanni Di Liberto; Prof. Bidisha Ghosh; Prof. Frank Wellmer; Prof. Andrei Parnachev; Prof. Susan Murphy; Prof. Ortwin Hess; Prof. Sarah Doyle; Prof. Eilish Burke; Prof. Anne Marie Healy; Prof. Ed Lavelle; Prof. Mark Little; Prof. Rhodri Cusack; Prof. Martine Smith.

*In attendance:* Tadhg Caffrey; Dr Fiona Smyth; Doris Alexander; Elaine Sharkey; Emma Treacy Matunga; Dr Geoff Bradley; Helen Shenton; Michael Reilly; Dr Jennifer Daly.

*Apologies:* Prof. Marco Ruffini; Prof. Valentina Colasanti; Dr Sally Smith; Prof. James Hanrahan; Prof. Clare Clarke.

Section A – Items for Discussion and Approval	
<b>A.1</b>	<b>Minutes</b> Minutes of the meeting of October 7 <sup>th</sup> were approved as circulated.
<b>A.2</b>	<b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b> DOR advised the committee that following on from the discussion of the report of the Taskforce on Academic & Institutional Links that the next steps would be for the DOR to send a memo to the Secretary and Senior Dean summarising the committee’s feedback. The minutes from the meeting would also be noted at Council as usual. It was also noted that the memo would emphasise the urgency with which the working group should be established.
<b>A.3</b>	<b>Proposal to establish Trinity Science and Society Research Centre</b> Dr Mairéad Hurley and Prof. Joseph Roche <i>Dr Mairéad Hurley joined the meeting for this item.</i>  A proposal to establish a Trinity Science and Society Research Centre was circulated to the committee in advance of the meeting. The committee was presented with an overview of the proposed centre and its research focus and activity. It was noted that the mission of the centre is to place Ireland at the forefront of inter- and transdisciplinary research and practice in science communication, education and public engagement.  In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The proposal was for a research centre and it would not function as a support centre for all of Trinity. It was noted however that the centre was keen to collaborate with colleagues across College and had generated around a hundred positive response to the first wave of invitations to collaborate. It was noted that there was a lot of excellent work happening around Trinity and a centre like this would enable the university to better position itself for funding calls etc.</li><li>• Synergies with existing activities in a number of schools and institutes were noted as well as the opportunity for more. It was noted that there was already an established relationship with the EPE teams in all of the Research Ireland funded centres on which Trinity was the lead. The importance of not duplicating activity was noted. It was also noted that the centre as proposed would align or overlap with activity in TRiSS and the Trinity Long Room Hub. It was noted that discussions had been had with both as the proposal was developed.</li></ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The definition of “science” as it pertains to the centre was noted as needing some clear messaging when communicating with the wider college community. Members of the committee noted that it was important to clarify that this was the EU definition of “science” and would encompass research activity across all disciplines. It was noted that one of the centre’s aims was to find shared language so that all researchers could see themselves in it.</li><li>• It was noted in discussion with members of the committee around public engagement specifically that the centre could be a venue for knowledge sharing and surfacing good practice across Trinity.</li></ul> <p><i>Mairéad Hurley and Joseph Roche left the meeting for the discussion.</i></p> <p>Following brief discussion, the committee agreed to approve the proposal.</p> <p><i>Joseph Roche rejoined the meeting.</i></p>
<b>Section B - Items for Discussion Only</b>	
<b>B.1</b>	<p><b>Spotlight: AI Accountability Lab</b> Dr Abeba Birhane <i>Dr Abeba Birhane joined the committee for this item.</i></p> <p>DOR noted recent updates and discussions around College on the use of AI. The committee received a presentation on the activity of the AI Accountability Lab lead by Dr Birhane which was launched in November 2024. It was noted that the research of the lab was structured around three pillars: Ecosystem accountability, Algorithmic accountability, and Data audit, curation &amp; governance. It was noted that the lab aims to normalise transparency, accountability and checking AI systems before they are released into the world.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The lab was open to collaboration with other labs, groups, researchers etc across college.</li><li>• It can be overwhelming to keep up with the pace of change in the sector. As well as research, the lab is working to establish connections and relationships with other groups doing similar work to create a stronger voice in the conversation.</li><li>• Members of the committee welcomed the work of the lab and noted that it can be easy to feel disempowered when such huge corporations are involved.</li><li>• Members of the committee noted that there was a lot of debate around College about the impact of AI on students, educators etc and a polarisation of opinion. It was also noted that many members of the committee and the wider College community had serious concerns about the threat to research and the absence of any meaningful conversation in that regard. Dr Berhane noted that much of the uptake of IA is done without any evaluation of downstream impacts and suggested that there needs to be proper evaluation, vetting and testing of AI models before they can be released to students or incorporated into decision making processes. It was noted that the lab wanted to encourage a culture of evaluation and testing because it is essential to research but also to democracy and rule of law. It was noted as an example that medical devices and interventions are heavily regulated but there was no equivalent for AI. DOR noted an opportunity to join the dots on the lab’s work with the Senior Lecturer’s work on AI.</li></ul> <p>DOR thanked Dr Berhane for the presentation and noted the committee’s support for her work. DOR also noted that it was important for the committee to have an overview of the work that is happening in Trinity in AI.</p>

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**B.2 Update from the Dean of Research**

Prof. Sinéad Ryan

DOR noted some recent success stories:

- Prof. Carmel O’Sullivan and the School of Education help secure the first ever Erasmus Mundus in applied drama and arts education in Europe. Worth almost €4.3 million, the award will fund the new international Erasmus Mundus Joint Master’s programme Theatre SPACES (Theatre in Social, Participatory Art, Community and Educational Contexts). Theatre SPACES will train future leaders in the use of theatre and performance as a tool for social change, inclusion, and community building. The programme will be coordinated by Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, with Trinity College Dublin and the University of Arts Târgu-Mureş (Romania), alongside associated partners University of Hamburg and the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.
- Prof. Karen Wiltshire was awarded the 2025 A.G. Huntsman Medal by the Royal Society of Canada for her innovative and interdisciplinary research in climate science, and for her significant contribution to international organisations, which has built capacity and brought new voices into the marine sciences.
- A three-year project, funded for €2.5 million via Call 7 of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund (DTIF), will be coordinated by Prof. Marco Ruffini from Trinity’s School of Computer Science and Statistics and the ADAPT Research Ireland Centre for AI-Driven Digital Content Technology, and his co-PI, Dr Merim Dzaferagic. The NAIRA project (Native AI for Energy Efficient and Sustainable Radio Access Networks) is a pioneering initiative that envisions a new generation of intelligent, energy-aware networks capable of learning, adapting, and optimising themselves in real time. Industry partners include Dell Technologies, Red Hat Ltd., Intel Research and Development Ireland Ltd., Software Research Systems Ltd., and Tyndall National Institute.

DOR provided the committee with a brief overview of the new College Strategic Plan and noted that the first commitment was to intensify research and innovation. DOR noted that it was heartening to see research and innovation being front and centre of the plan. DOR noted that each of the outcomes will have an implementation plan. DOR noted that the LRES consultations had informed the implementation plan. DOR noted that there was a Strategic Plan Management Group. It was noted that the implementation was a live document that can be reviewed and updated as College works through the strategic plan. DOR will come back to the committee with more detailed updates as the plan progresses.

DOR provided the committee with an update on the Research Ireland Global Talent fund. Trinity submitted 34 expressions of interest of which 20 have been shortlisted. DOR advised that the relevant schools had been notified and DOR would be liaising with schools to develop full proposals. DOR noted that Trinity has more candidates shortlisted than other HEIs, but did also submit more. DOR also noted that DFHERIS and Research Ireland have only committed to funding 15 positions nationally. It was noted that there was not much detail available about the review process or as to how successful proposals might be distributed across the sector.

DOR also noted that the Research Ireland Investigator Programme opened and closed in September for EOIs with more than 800 applications received. It was also noted that the Pathways programme had not yet been launched. It was expected that institutions would be restricted in the number of proposals they could submit so an internal procedure would be put in place.

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<b>B.3</b>	<p><b>The proposed new MFF, Horizon Europe/FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund</b> Doris Alexander</p> <p>The committee received an update on the proposed new Multiannual Financial Framework, Horizon Europe/FP10 and the European Competitiveness Fund (2028-2034). It was noted that the next budgetary cycle begins in 2028 but negotiations have already been ongoing for some time. It was noted that guiding principles were to focus on key priorities and to develop a simpler, more agile budget.</p> <p>The proposed Horizon Europe budget had four pillars: excellent science; competitiveness and society; innovation; and the European Research Area. It was noted that current proposals would see Horizon Europe “tightly coupled” to the Competitiveness Fund. The Competitiveness Fund will focus on four policy areas: clean transition and decarbonisation; health and bio-economy; digital transition; defence and space. It was noted that there was some concern that previously non-directional programmes such as the ERC would become directional as a result. It was noted that there was no explicit mention of EIT across any of the current proposal documents.</p> <p>It was noted that there was a move to allow the EIC to fund dual use and scale up with a focus on defence applications suggesting that it would be more pervasive in the next framework programme. EU Commissioner had initially said the new framework would be dual use by default but had recently clarified dual use calls would be flagged. It was noted that the EU’s own Defence Readiness Roadmap said the framework programme would be dual use by default so there is a lack of clarity at the moment. It was noted that this would have implications for associated countries in terms of what they could apply to and if they would be excluded from programmes they had previously been able to apply to.</p> <p>In discussion with the committee, the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members of the committee noted that suggestions to use AI in review processes were missing that AI was also fuelling massive over subscription to calls often with hundreds of applications beyond what would be normally expected, many of them not meeting the criteria but still requiring a review.</li> <li>• Members of the committee noted that the Horizon Europe/FP10 budgetary proposals were vital for research. It was noted that just before the last budget was agreed the amount allocated for research was cut significantly and a similar move this time around would be catastrophic. Members of the committee also noted that traditional sources of research funding are no longer available so Horizon Europe/FP10 was essential. DOR suggested that the committee have a more in depth discussion around this at a future meeting.</li> </ul>
<b>Section C – Items for Noting</b>	
<b>C.1</b>	<p><b>Items for Noting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee noted and approved the request to change the name of the <i>Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability</i> to the <i>Trinity Centre for Ageing and the Life Course in Intellectual Disability</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>C.2</b>	<b>Items for future discussion</b>
<b>C.3</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOR noted that a concern had been raised related to the upgrade from Windows10 to Windows11 and the impact this could have on IT capacity in some schools. DOR asked members of the committee to flag if similar concerns had arisen in their schools etc.</li> </ul>