Response to QQI White Paper on Statutory Guidelines for the QA of Research Degree Programmes

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the White Paper: Topic-specific Statutory Guidelines on the QA of Research Degree Programmes. Trinity has previously submitted feedback on an earlier draft of the White Paper in December 2016.

The feedback outlined below is submitted by the Dean of Graduate Studies, Trinity College Dublin, following discussion at Graduate Studies Committee on the 16 February 2017.

The white paper (like its previous iterations), while commendable in its efforts, tends to fall short in various respects:

1. It is, perhaps, overly prescriptive and indeed overly detailed as a 'minimum standards' document, but misses out on a number of salient points if it were to be seen as a challenging 'best practice' set of guidelines for research degree programmes.

    Having said that, there is nothing in the document which in principle is objectionable.

2. What remains deeply problematic is the failure to make an explicit statement that, necessarily, a HEI's capacity to deliver in terms of research degree progammes must, necessarily be resource constrained.

    This is especially important in that at various points (for example in terms of students being facilitated in attending conferences) the language which is used is mandatory (i.e. that it is *necessary* that students be facilitated in this regard) but may seek to requirements which, for an individual HEI, are simply impossible given the resource constraints under which they operate.

    The white paper needs to make it clear that what is at stake in many (though not all) contexts are ideals but that resource concerns may render it impossible for these ideals to be achieved.

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