

Thursday 13th March 2003

- In the Chair:** Professor P. Fottrell
- Also present:** Professor P. Cunningham; Mr M. Dempsey; Dr P. Flanagan; Mr D. Gleeson; Professor P. Hannon; Dr K. Kieran; Professor R. O'Regan; Professor A. Scott; Professor P. Whittaker.
- Apologies for absence:** Dr D. Dooley; Dr M. Fitzgerald; Professor C. Kelleher; Dr M. Lawler; Professor T. McGleenan; Dr P. McKenna; Ms M. Mulvihill; Dr N. O'Brien; Professor F. O'Gara; Mr A. Sheikh; Professor S. Strain.
- Also in attendance:** Dr S. O'Sullivan

Professor P. Fottrell expressed his thanks to Dr Michael Ryan for providing the Council with facilities at the Chester Beatty Library for the meeting. Professor Fottrell congratulated members of the Council Tony McGlennan and Mark Lawlor on their recent appointment as Professors in the University of Ulster and Trinity College Dublin respectively.

1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the previous Council meeting were adopted.

2. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising that are not already listed on the agenda.

3. **Report from the Scientific Director**

Dr O'Sullivan thanked Professor McGlennan for completing the declaration of interest form. She requested that members of Council who had not yet submitted their declaration of interests should do so at their earliest possible convenience. Dr O'Sullivan informed the group that various high profile individuals had been approached to give a public lecture on some aspect of Bioethics. It is hoped to hold the public lecture in the Autumn of 2003 pending availability of speakers. Dr O'Sullivan also informed the Council that a number of the University debating societies had been approached, in order to institute a series of debates on Bioethical issues. It is anticipated the debate series would be an annual event and would commence in October/November 2003. In order to assess public opinion on a number of key bioethical areas and in

order to aid the Council in selecting areas of public concern, it was decided to commission a public poll.

4. **Report from the Biological Material Working Group**

In the absence of Professor Mark Lawlor, Dr O'Sullivan reported on the progress of the Biological Material Working Group. Dr O'Sullivan reported that the Working Group had split into a number of sub groups, which, were currently examining specific issues such as informed consent, commercial aspects of biological material and legal and ethical issues pertaining to biological material. The intention of the group is to produce a set of recommendations with respect to obtaining, storing and disposing of biological material by the end of 2003.

5. **Report from the Genetically Modified Crops Working Group**

Professor Whittaker informed the Council that the Working Group on Genetically Modified Organisms had decided to concentrate on Ethical issues associated specifically with genetically modified crops. Professor Whittaker reported that the Working Group had decided to produce a document in which the ethical matters pertaining to GM crops would, be discussed in an informative way, which would be acceptable to the general public. Professor Whittaker stated that the aim of the group was to produce a document before the end of 2003.

6. **Report from the Ethics Committee Working Group**

In the absence of Professor Kelleher, Dr O'Sullivan informed the Council that the Working Group on Ethics Committees had met and had agreed terms of reference. These would include, identifying best practice in the area of Ethics Committees and producing guidance on the composition and operation of Ethics Committees in Ireland. The group hoped to produce a report by Spring 2004.

7. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

8. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Council will take place at **10.30am on Thursday, 12 June 2003 at the Royal Irish Academy.**

