



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 18 April 2019
Global Room, Watts Building

XX = Council relevance

- Present:** Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Joseph McDonagh, Trinity Business School
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, School of Religion
Professor Thomas Chadeaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
- Dr Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Mr Oisin Coulter, Graduate Students' Union President (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Dr Gogoal Falia, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning) Secretary (in attendance *Ex officio*)

Apologies:

- Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:



Professor Rachel Mary McLoughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering
Professor Philip Coleman, School of English
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Library (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer (in attendance *Ex officio*)

In attendance:

Prof. Katja Buisch (School of Histories and Humanities) for item GS/18-19/285
Lorraine Shiels, Learning and Development (Human Resources) for item GS/18-19/286
Orla Bannon, Director of Careers from Careers Advisory Service for items GS/18-19/287 and GS/18-19/288

At the start of the meeting, the Dean welcomed Prof. Nigel Stevenson due to replace Prof. Rachel Mary McLoughlin until the end of Michaelmas Term as the DTLP in the School of Biochemistry and Immunology.

GS/18-19/283 Minutes of 28 March 2019

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/18-19/284 Matters Arising

Re: GS/18-19/275 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2017/18: The Dean advised that the report would be submitted to Council at its meeting in May.

Re: GS/18-19/276 The 1252 award scheme update: The Dean advised that the concerns raised would be considered by the Vice Provost's Planning Group on the 3rd of May. He clarified that the proposed changes to the 1252 awards would not be in place in time for them to impact on the 2019 intake, given that these will be advertised as they are rather than as they might be and allocated in May. The 25th award would spread over three years and would be allocated to a continuing student. Members were encouraged to apply for the award to the Dean on behalf of students in financial need in their Schools.

Re: GS/18-19/278(iii) The Dean noted that he had received only limited feedback on amendments to the next iteration of the PPA scheme which he took to mean that members were generally happy with the format of the scheme. He undertook to advertise the scheme more widely on the website of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.



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GS/18-19/285 A new course proposal: MPhil in Environmental History

The Dean welcomed Prof. Katja Bruisch, prospective Course Director from the School of Histories and Humanities. He clarified that the proposal had gone through the external reviewer's process and received a very positive assessment. He then provided a brief outline of the new course noting that this is a 1 year full time or 2 year part time course aimed at applicants whose undergraduate degree was in the sciences (at the recommendation of the external reviewer) as well as in history, archaeology, and the humanities. The course will focus on the need to provide competencies and insights in relation to environmental issues from humanities perspective i.e. exploring the connection between culture, history and nature with underlying environmental issues such as climate change. Students will be introduced to the areas directly relevant to the professional workplace. Knowledge partnership identified this as a growth area within AHSS. The proposed course would be the first of its kind in Ireland although there are a few similar courses in Europe and around the world. Trinity's course will be distinguished by a strong methodological component and interdisciplinary orientation. It aims to attract in particular applicants from North America where environmental history is increasing in prominence in American UG curricula. The course will draw on the resources of the Trinity Centre of Environmental Humanities (TCEH). The Dean emphasised the strong interdisciplinary component of the proposed course not least because its links in some of its modules with four Masters programmes in the School of Histories and Humanities and two Masters programmes in the School of Natural Sciences. In terms of course requirements, there are four mandatory environmental history modules (totalling 40 ECTS), two optional modules from a choice of 13 (totalling 20 ECTS) and a 30 ECTS dissertation/individual research project. One optional module is a trip to Iceland in the summer. The course has usual progression routes including pass by compensation. Finally the Dean noted the characteristically excellent work of Ms Ewa Sadowska in ensuring that the course proposal was as strong as it was.

The Dean invited Prof. Bruisch to address the committee. Prof. Bruisch underlined the interdisciplinarity of the course as its particular strength further enhanced by the unique trip to Iceland aimed to increase Trinity's international visibility in environmental history which is a particular growth area. Prof. Bruisch referred to the relationship of the course with the TCEH by explaining that the link would be very beneficial to students and would open up further collaboration between the humanities and the sciences. DTLPs from the Schools of Histories and Humanities and Natural Sciences confirmed that their Schools were firmly in support of the new course, and that both Schools encouraged cross-Faculty interdisciplinary collaboration. It was suggested that the course might fit into the context of the E3 and academic inter-linkages created in that space.

The committee approved the course proposal.

Decision GS/18-19/285.1: The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to removal of the reference to "blended" learning from the cover page.

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GS/18-19/286 Lynda.tcd.ie: online learning website



The Dean welcomed Lorraine Shiels, Learning and Development from Human Resources to discuss the Lynda.tcd.ie resource. Ms Shiels explained that the facility had been acquired by LinkedIn in 2015 but founded in 1995. It is a subscription-based online learning site with thousands of courses covering a wide variety of creative, technology, education and business topics. Each course is professionally-produced and acted by experts and is broken down into chapters and individual videos of around 5 minutes in length. A subscription licence gives users access to the entire library of courses on a PC, laptop, tablet or mobile. Trinity initially acquired a licence in 2016 only for 3000 staff users on a one-year trial basis. This was to provide staff training to support the rollout of Windows 365 a major IT project. From August 2018 the licence has been extended to 20,000 users for all staff and students under a three-year contract. Much work was done by IT Services to enable student access and a soft launch was completed in December 2018. The plan is now to roll out Lynda On-line Training Resource to students in a way that optimises the value for students, Schools and the College. HR are working to develop an implementation plan and identify how Learning & Development of HR can best support the academic community and Schools to maximise the benefits of Lynda.com for their students. The purpose of this presentation was to inform committee members on Lynda.tcd.ie in order to highlight its availability in College free of charge to all users, and to identify potential opportunities to maximise the benefits for both staff and students. Users can receive certificate of completion relevant for their CPD training. Ms Shiels noted that the most popular courses by students were excel ones followed by Python.

The Dean thanked Ms Shiels for her presentation and undertook to email students about this training site. Some members had used the courses on the site and shared their views and appreciation for their usefulness. It was noted that courses such as Python could, in the future, form part of the routine training under the structured PhD generic component especially catering to the needs of science students. Ms Shiels advised that the site would further develop its functionality and move away from its current dominant corporate American emphasis towards a more academic one to better fit the European market. She drew members' attention to the potential of the Lynda site to set up bespoke "playlists" as learning paths for individual academics and their students in various Schools displaying Trinity-associated ethos and values. Ms Shiels undertook to work with individual academics to assist in the development of such bespoke playlists. Some members suggested that the current basic 5 ECTS module format should be changed to a 2.5 ECTS norm for PGR students in order to allow them to have wider opportunities to sample diverse skills and to develop broader learning experience. In response to a query Ms Shiels explained that there are twenty thousand licences available of which three thousand are currently being used by the staff and only six hundred by students. In other words, there was plenty of capacity for greater utilisation of the service by postgraduate students. However, that extra capacity could not be allocated to alumni who are not eligible under the current licencing agreement with the provider.

Action GS/18-19/286.1: The Dean to email details to students to promote the facility.

XX GS/18-19/287 Graduate Outcomes Survey Report: Class of 2017 and Careers Service Activity Statistics 2017/8



The Dean welcomed Orla Bannon, Director of Careers from Careers Advisory Service. The Director of Careers explained that the Careers Service reviews and reports on the statistics resulting from Trinity's involvement in the annual HEA *Graduate Outcomes Survey*, which is carried out approximately nine months after student graduation to provide insight into what graduates do after they graduate. An updated and expanded survey was rolled out nationally by the HEA for the Class of 2017. In addition, the Service analyses its own annual activity statistics to review its service provision and inform its future direction. The Director of Careers invited members to consider and comment on the circulated Graduate Outcomes Survey Results – Class of 2017 and Careers Service Activity Statistics 2017/18.

After the presentation, the Director of Careers took questions from the floor. She commented that the roll out of the facility *Mycareer* in 2017 as part of the Careers Service online site was very helpful to the office in terms of enhancing the office profile and its use by the students, and enabling the staff to gather vital data about students' career paths. She noted that the 2017 report contains high-pitched data, but the office has more granular data for individual Schools and degree programmes which would be made available on request. In order to increase the response rate to the survey, a member suggested that graduands could be alerted to the need to participate in the survey as part of the information package circulated for graduation, and Director of Careers undertook to look into it. Another member suggested that in addition to the forward looking survey there should be an annual "back" looking survey asking for graduands' views on their experience as students in Trinity. The Director of Careers also commented on the need to nurture College relationships with employers by way of sharing data with them and providing information about new degree programmes at UG and PG levels. The Careers Service can package up data in different ways for different employers in order to make them more user friendly. The Dean thanked the Director of Careers for her informative presentation and invited her to continue on the next agenda item.

XX GS/18-19/288 Draft Policy on Internships and Placements

Ms Orla Bannon, Director of Careers from Careers Advisory Service explained that the circulated draft policy on Internships and Placements was developed in consultation with Schools as part of the work of TEP Subgroup 5 – Internships & Careers, Student Exchanges/Mobility & Co-Curricular Activities (Employability) in 2018. She noted that internships and placements at postgraduate level also come within the scope of the new policy. She explained that the insurance aspects of the policy had required additional clarification, which has now been received and incorporated into the circulated document. She invited members to share their views on the draft.

After the presentation, the Dean opened the floor for questions. He noted that the policy was long in the making and is very significant for PG students. Internships have become an ever more frequent component of the PhD course of study and were getting even more traction in Europe as funders were becoming increasingly more determined to see them as part of not only academic but also professional career-readiness. He noted that only a small number of PGT students participate in internships but suggested that that number should increase in the future. In response



to a query the Director of Careers clarified that the policy is high level but it applies to all new and existing UG and PG programmes including clinical and is GDPR-compliant.

The committee endorsed the draft policy

Decision GS/18-19/288.1: The committee recommended the new policy for Council approval.

XX GS/18-19/289 Working Group on Thesis Committees

The item was carried over from the previous meeting (GS/18-19/277). The Dean noted that at the meeting in March members approved in principle the report of the working group on thesis committees. However, a decision was taken that this was subject to a caveat, that it would be necessary to establish what the new committee would entail in terms of its brief. In line with what he had undertaken at the last meeting the Dean prepared a draft proposal as a starting point for members to discuss. He further noted that he had to accommodate competing concerns in his draft: on the one hand the recognition that especially in understaffed Schools academics were already overburden but on the other hand vital interests of students would have to be constructively supported. He stressed again that this model was standard in LERU universities, and manifestly represented best practice in so far as research supervision is concerned. Finally, he suggested that, should this model be approved by GSC, he would be proposing to Council that it would come into force for all incoming students from September 2019 onwards. He noted, however, that this should not disturb equivalent practices in Schools that were analogous to the proposed new thesis committee model.

The document circulated to members outlined the suggested role for the thesis committee namely that, in the student's first and third year, the committee would meet with the student prior to signing off on annual progress reports. In the second, it would act as the student's confirmation panel. Following a suggestion from the floor, it was agreed that, in advance of these meetings, the student should submit her or his annual progress report to the committee. In the fourth and at the request of the student, it would meet with him or her to discuss progress once per semester. A question arose as to whether it might be possible for the thesis committee only to have one rather than two non-supervisor members. It was noted, however, that a confirmation panel requires two non-supervisor members, and as this committee would also act as the confirmation panel, it would therefore have to have two non-supervisor members. Finally, a query was raised as to whether it would be possible for students to organise these meetings (rather than increasing the workload for the DTLP). The Dean said that, provided that meetings occurred and that the student was benefiting, he was, in principle, keen to preserve the logistical autonomy of Schools. Equally there could be significant risks in requiring students to organise such meetings and thus, like confirmation hearings, they should be organised by the DTLP or her/his nominee.

Membership of the committee would be at the discretion of the School. The committee would be acting in the best interests of the student and therefore people who would not be qualified to act as principal supervisors (senior post-docs, part



time and adjunct lecturers, persons from cognate disciplines, external representatives etc) could appropriately be invited to be members of thesis committees. In response to a question the Dean confirmed that it would be perfectly appropriate for the student to be involved in the choice of who was to be on the committee. He also clarified that there would be no objection to any of the meetings, other than the confirmation hearing, being conducted through skype or an equivalent messaging service - for example when one of the members of the committee was not a Trinity staff member. The Dean confirmed that the committee had an overseeing rather than a supervisory or pastoral role. Its function was to assess academic progress and, where appropriate, to make recommendations on this basis.

The Dean noted that the proposed new model would inevitably represent an increased work burden for colleagues and that it was imperative that this fact be recognised both in School workload allocation models, and also in senior and junior promotion evaluations. Following a suggestion from the floor he undertook to contact the Vice Provost, to alert him to the fact that the thesis committee proposal would be coming to Council and to seek assurances that, if it were endorsed by Council, membership of such committees could be reflected in promotion application forms.

A question was raised as to whether this model should also apply in the case of professional doctorates. Of specific concern was the DEd because its thesis component was similar to a PhD thesis. The Dean undertook to discuss this with the DTLP from the School of Education.

On this basis the Committee approved the proposal which the Dean will bring to Council in May.

Action GS/18-19/289.1: The Dean to link with the VP/CAO to ensure that, should Council endorse the thesis committee model, membership of such a committee would be reflected in promotion application forms.

Decision GS/18-19/289.1 The committee recommended the new thesis committee model for Council approval.

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GS/18-19/290 AOB

- (i) The Dean advised that the next meeting will discuss the issue of whether pre-examination research thesis submission should be electronic rather than hard copy as a norm (unless a hard copy is requested by examiners).
- (ii) The Dean advised that Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, is organising a one-day conference on the 9th May in the Long Room Hub to mark the 10th anniversary of the Postgraduate Student Support service in College. He invited members to advertise the event amongst PG students and encourage them to attend it. The key speaker will be Prof. Ronald Barnett from the University College London.
- (iii) The Dean advertised what would be a very entertaining event *Postgrads' Got Talent* to be organised for PG students on the 21st May and invited members to encourage students to attend it and indeed to attend themselves.. Members will be bombarded with further correspondence about this.



- (iv) Committee members made a presentation to the Dean to mark the impending end of his three years in the office and warmly congratulated him on his exceptional success in the role emphasising his continual commitment to PG students and their academic issues and wellbeing concerns. When he rediscovered the ability to speak some time later, the Dean expressed his profound gratitude to all members and noted that it was a privilege and pleasure to work with them.

XX Section B for noting and approval

There were no issues.

XX Section C for noting

There were no issues.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.50am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 18 April 2019