UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 5th April 2012
Boardroom, Provost’s House

Present:  Professor Veronica Campbell, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Martin Fellenz, School of Business
Dr Claire Healy, School of Dental Science
Dr Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Conor McGuckin, School of Education
Dr Sam Slote, School of English
Dr Joseph Clarke, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Jurgen Uhlich, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Dr Jeffrey Kallen, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor Anna Davies, School of Natural Sciences
Ms Anne-Marie Brady, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Dr Gillian Wylie, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Stephanie Holt, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Ms Mary O’Connor, Graduate Students’ Union President (Ex officio)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Graduate Students’ Union Vice-President (Ex officio)
Ms Alex Anderson, CAPSL Representative (Ex officio)
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers’ Services (in attendance Ex officio)
Ms Lee Mills, Information System Services Representative

Apologies:  Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Isabel Rozas, School of Chemistry
Professor Simon Wilson, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Timothy Foster, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Dr Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics
Dr John Gormley, School of Medicine
Dr Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

In attendance:  Ms Jennifer Hill, Graduate Studies Office, Secretary to the meeting (Ex officio)
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office

GS/11-12/036  Minutes of 7th March 2012
The minutes of the meeting of 7th March 2012 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

GS/11-12/037  Matters Arising
The Dean thanked the Graduate Students’ Union for organising the inaugural Postgraduate Week. The GSU updated the Committee on how they had partnered with a number of the academic and pastoral support services to host activities and seminars for postgraduate students. The week was very successful and will hopefully run annually in future.

**GS/11-12/038 Certificate in Nursing (Nurse / Midwife Prescribing)**

The Dean introduced Dr Brian Keogh and asked him to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Keogh explained that this is a one-year part-time 30 ECTS postgraduate certificate. The modules taught as part of the certificate will be Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications. The course is aimed at registered nurses and midwives to equip them with the requisite knowledge, skills and competence to prescribe medicinal products safely and effectively.

Students accepted on the course will be financially sponsored by a Health Service Executive initiative.

Students will undertake three compulsory modules (each worth 10 ECTS) to fulfil registration requirements for An Bord Altranais. The modules are in: Physical Assessment, Prescribing Medicinal Products and Developing the Professional Role. Two of the modules will in part be shared within the M.Sc. Nursing (Advanced Nurse Practitioners strand) but will have new module codes as they will have different assessment for a Level 8 course.

In answer to a query regarding the assessment of Module 3 comprising just one 1500 word essay, it was clarified that the clinical portfolio also plays an important role in the assessment. However, the Dean confirmed that she would seek the external reviewer’s views on this.

It was clarified that the supplemental period of examination is at the regular supplemental exam period in August and will take place within the year of study.

Clarification was also provided regarding the composition of the Course Committee.

The Committee approved the course for submission to the University Council subject to the above amendments to the proposal and any additional amendments that may be required following the external assessor’s report.

**GS/11-12/039 Harmonisation of Assessment Regulations**

The Dean introduced Professor John Scattergood and asked him to speak to the circulated document.

Professor Scattergood explained that the Advisory Group on the Harmonisation of Assessment and Progression Regulations has been tasked with exploring the possibilities of establishing equitable, transparent, consistent, simplified and practical assessment and progression regulations throughout College.

While much of the consultation has been in relation to undergraduate degrees, some discussion has taken place with Schools regarding taught Masters degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas. The Committee had now been circulated with assessment and progression regulations for consideration.

Following Professor Scattergood’s summary of the proposals outlined in section 1.4 of the circulated document, a comprehensive discussion took place with many points being raised and clarifications provided, including:

- Some Schools expressed satisfaction that a decoupled version is provided as one of the two assessment models.
- Some Schools expressed a preference for using a pass / fail option of recording marks, while other Schools supported numerical marks for modules with pass / fail for the dissertation component.
- A number of schools endorsed allowing both a 40% and 50% pass mark.
- It was confirmed that assessment options may vary across disciplines within a School.
- It was confirmed that awarding a distinction will not be made mandatory for taught Masters or Postgraduate Diplomas and those Schools that previously did not award distinctions will not be required to do so now.
- The Advisory Group will have further discussion with some Schools who offer professional courses in relation to the limit of 90 ECTS.
- There were queries about the timing for resubmission of a failed dissertation and also about permitting a student to repeat one failed module in a subsequent year, as current regulations state that the student must register for a full year to repeat the course.

It was agreed that the document would be amended and brought back to the next Graduate Studies Committee meeting. The members of the Committee were asked to consult with their colleagues and should email any further comments to assessment@tcd.ie

It was recognised that the deadline for submissions of changes to Calendar Part II entries would need to be extended and further clarification would be provided to the Committee by email.

GS/11-12/040 Global Relations Strategy
The Dean deferred this item to the meeting of 3rd May 2012.

GS/11-12/041 BAI / MAI Integrated Engineering new stream proposal – Biomedical Engineering
The Dean noted that, as with the previous strands of this degree (GS/10-11/060), this new stream has already been discussed and approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the external review and submission to Council will be coordinated by the Senior Lecturer. The Dean introduced Dr Martin Burke and asked him to speak to the circulated proposal.

Dr Burke explained that there is a growing need for highly qualified biomedical engineers in Ireland and worldwide. There are 200 medical technology companies in Ireland and the industry is undergoing rapid development and growth. There is a need for engineers with experience not only in Mechanical/Manufacturing and/or Electronic/Electrical Engineering, but also with a strong grounding in the aspects of anatomy, physiology, cell biology, biomaterials, biomechanics, tissue engineering, bioamplifiers, medical transducers and instrumentation that are central to the development of convergent products and devices and the delivery of 21st century healthcare.

The proposed stream will be similar to the existing main undergraduate programmes in the Disciplines of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering and Electronic and Electrical Engineering and will also use many of the modules in the existing M.Sc. in Bioengineering in the 5th year.

While there are similar programmes offered at other institutions, the proposed strand to be offered at TCD is unique in its balance of the mechanical and electronic aspects of biomedical engineering.
GS/11-12/042 Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Energy

The Dean introduced Dr Sarah McCormack and asked her to speak to the circulated proposal.

Dr McCormack explained that the Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering already provides six Postgraduate Diplomas specifically targeting the professional engineering market and this course is proposed as a seventh, following a recent reconfiguring of the courses and the ceasing of the Postgraduate Diploma in Highway and Geotechnical Engineering.

The proposed course in Sustainable Energy is in an area of strategic importance to College and of a need nationally and internationally to address issues in relation to energy efficiency, sustainable energy technology and energy management techniques.

At present there is only one other similar course available in Ireland, offered through distance learning by the Institute of Technology in Sligo but does not cover the breadth of topics included in the proposed course.

The course will be offered part-time and delivered at weekends to enable those in employment to take it as part of on-going professional training.

In answer to a query it was confirmed that the section on Progression would clarify that a distinction could only not be awarded if a student has failed a module (not an assignment or examination).

In relation to the number of contact hours it was clarified that students would also be in contact with academic staff during their personal study.

Contributions from external people from industry / external organisations have been approved.

The Committee approved the course for submission to the University Council subject to the above and any additional amendments that may be required following the external assessor’s report.

GS/11-12/043 Centralised Survey of Postgraduate Courses

The Dean explained that further to GS/11-12/012 the Quality Committee established a working group chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies to develop a postgraduate course survey and the associated workflow.

The Dean asked for comments in relation to the circulated document which outlined draft survey questions and the process associated with the centralised online evaluation of postgraduate courses and the following was raised:

- Each question should have a space for further qualitative comment – while there is an option at the end of the survey for general feedback this should be incorporated into each question
- There should be a seven point scale and include a neutral response
- Consideration should be given to running the survey annually instead of every two years. The Dean agreed that all courses should be evaluated annually, however when this cannot be administered centrally the onus is on the School to ensure other models of student evaluation are employed
- When requesting additional comments from the students this should request information on how the students learning was supported as well as their more general TCD experience
- Some editorial changes to the questions were suggested
- It was suggested that clinical and other placements should be specifically evaluated where relevant and the Dean undertook to follow up with the Schools of Psychology and Dental Science on this
The Dean agreed to incorporate this feedback and bring the revised survey to the Quality Committee.

**GS/11-12/044  HEA Review of Doctoral Training**

The Dean drew the Committee's attention to the IUQB Guidelines (circulated electronically) regarding doctoral education and asked them to reflect on this in the context of their own School.

**GS/11-12/045  AOB**

A number of Committee members raised the issues with the new online postgraduate application system (SITS). It was suggested that a member of the GeneSIS project team attend the next meeting to inform the Committee of how these issues are being resolved. The Dean agreed to see if this could be facilitated.

The Vice President of the Graduate Students’ Union informed the Committee that due to a lack of financial support from the capitation committee the GSU will not be able to fund the second sabbatical officer next year and confirmed that they would be liaising with each School to consider alternative approaches to support postgraduate students as a result of this change. The Committee noted their concern about the likely impact of this on the student body.

**Section B for noting and approval**

1. The Committee noted and approved the introduction of a new core module “Movement Practices and Applied Performance Project” for the M.Phil. in Theatre and Performance from 2012/13

2. The Committee noted and approved the withdrawal of the M.Sc./PGrad.Dip. in European Employment Studies (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy).

**Section C for noting**

1. The Committee was asked to note the memo from Dr Tom Hayes regarding the upgrade of VLE and training.

2. The Committee was asked to note the memo from the School of Education regarding the M.Ed. strand in Aggression Studies.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.45m.

Prof. Veronica Campbell

Date: 10th April 2012