

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE
GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Draft Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 26 April, 2007
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Prof. Patrick Prendergast, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Prof. Paul Coughlan, School of Business
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry
Prof. June Nunn, School of Dental Science
Prof. Robert Holton, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Philip Matthews, School of Education
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Prof. John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Dr Helen Buckley, School of Social Work & Social Policy
Prof. Mark Lawler, School of Medicine
Dr Damien Brennan, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Ms Ruth Palileo, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Paul Laird, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Prof. Ian Robertson, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Henry Rice, School of Engineering
Prof. Eunan O'Halpin, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska, Graduate Studies Office, Secretary to the meeting (*Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office

200.0 Minutes of 22 March 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 22 March 2007 were approved by the Committee as circulated and signed by the Dean.

200.1 Matters arising

a) *Re 199.1 (b)*: Two course proposals M.Sc in Clinical Supervision (198.4) and M.Phil in Literatures of the Americas (198.7) had been approved by the University Council on 11 April 2007.

b) *Re 199.5*: The Dean confirmed that the University Council had approved the 14 graduate programme proposals for submission.

200.2 Professional Doctorate D.Dent.Ch. in Dental Surgery (3 yr f-t/5 yr p-t)

The Dean welcomed Prof. June Nunn (the proposed course director) to speak to the circulated proposal. Prof. Nunn explained that the School of Dental Science was aiming to introduce a three-year, full time taught Professional Doctorate in Dental Surgery with an option of 5-year part-time registration, in response to the changing professional and academic climate that now pertains in the specialist areas of dentistry. The proposal reflects the demand for more professionally relevant programmes and the recognition of the need for a high level of knowledge and skills of contemporary dental professionals who are expected to have the ability not only to generate evidence-based best practice through research but also to foster the capability to integrate research practice into the workplace. Prof. Nunn subsequently spoke in detail about the modular structure of the programme and its 6 streams, the programme accreditation and its eligibility criteria for entry. She also confirmed that the School would discontinue the current M.Dent.Ch course (Code 622) as of October 2007 for new admissions. The Dean thanked Prof. Nunn for this very well developed submission, which had also been

positively assessed by two external reviewers, professors from the University of Cardiff and the Karolinska Institutet in Sweden, and noted that the new programme would be a very important development for the School. Professional Doctorates were being introduced in many universities and TCD, which had always been a leader in the area of dental sciences, was set to continue to maintain that position with the approval of the present proposal.

In a discussion which followed a number of issues were raised including

- clarification that the allocation of ECTS has been made on a provisional basis as there are no official guidelines available for ECTS allocations for professional doctorates. It is intended that reference to ECTS will be removed from the Council submission;
- clarification that the course would primarily target EU applicants but non-EU applicants are also eligible to apply and would be considered once equivalencies of their qualifications have been established;
- that the proposed doctoral programme is markedly different to the current Masters in Dental Surgery in that it would incorporate an enhanced research component;
- that given that the new programme would operate in the context of both the School of Dental Science and the Dental Hospital it was appropriate to include the Chief Executive Officer as a member on the Course Committee and its Admissions Subcommittee.

After further more general discussion the Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council.

200.3 Discussion of award of taught Masters with Distinction

The Dean introduced this item by reminding the Committee that the issue of awarding Masters with Distinction had already been discussed three years ago. The reason for raising it again is to establish if there is now a significant measure of support amongst the members to take it further for consultation with various Offices in College which would be affected by such a change. In response to a question, the Dean noted that he had not received any complaints from postgraduate students regarding the lack of grading, or of a Distinction, for taught Masters courses, but that a significant number of external examiners in their reports had indicated their dissatisfaction with Trinity's present arrangement.

In a discussion which followed a number of issues were raised. Main arguments in support of the proposal were as follows:

- awarding Masters with Distinction would allow prospective employers, including academic departments if a Masters graduate applies for a PhD position, to better understand the abilities of the Masters degree holder; Distinction would be taken as a "marker" of student's exceptional research potential;
- other universities grade Masters degrees and the College may be disadvantaging its students in the competition for employment and or scholarship funding to undertake a research degree;

Main arguments against the proposal were as follows:

- students may choose differently from among available electives if the aim is to maximize marks (they may choose for example electives close to their undergraduate degree specialization);
- formal examinations/assessments of the kind giving the accuracy needed for grading would fundamentally change the experience of studying (and teaching) a postgraduate degree in Trinity. It could create competitiveness within the class that is detrimental to the kind of learning environment we wish to promote at postgraduate level;
- the new option of awarding Masters with Distinction would create more administrative work for the various offices involved in processing higher degree examination results;
- the new option of awarding Masters with Distinction may create an impression that graduates who completed the Masters course "only" at a Pass level are in some way of academically inferior research capacity than those who were awarded the degree with Distinction;
- the new option of awarding Masters with Distinction appears to create a particular difficulty for professional Masters creating the impression that graduates who completed the Masters course "only" at a Pass level are in some way professionally inferior than those who were awarded the degree with Distinction;
- that Diploma Supplement and an official College Transcript clearly reflecting the student's level of performance in all course modules should be put in place and this would then eliminate the need for grading, or the award of the Masters with Distinction.

Further views expressed were as follows:

- that it would not be appropriate to fully grade Masters
- that once Distinction is approved for taught Masters the issue was likely to be raised in relation to research Masters, Professional Doctorates and PhD awards
- that should the proposal be further supported proper consideration would need to be given to establishing what exactly is the Distinction awarded for (i.e. for excellent dissertation on its own or in conjunction with an excellent performance in all taught modules and course-work)
- that once such Distinction becomes established there is likelihood that it would lead to an increase in the number of student appeal cases with respect to their final results and appeals procedures would need to be reviewed to allow for that.

In summarizing, the Dean noted that the award of a Masters with Distinction seemed to have earned some degree of support from the Committee members whereas the option of a fully graded Masters did not, the Dean undertook to consult with the Registrar and make a further submission to the Committee on the issue of awarding a Masters with distinction.

200.4 M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip. (exit only) in Computer Science (Interactive Entertainment Technology) (1 yr f-t)

The Dean invited Dr Steven Collins, the proposed Course Director, to speak to the circulated document. Dr Collins explained that this new MSc course is designed to introduce students with a strong Computer Science or Computer Engineering background to the core technologies driving the future of the video game industry. The course exploits the existing portfolio of courses within the School including the MSc programmes in Networks and Distributed Systems (NDS), Mobile and Ubiquitous Computing (UbiCom) and Multimedia Systems. It does so by sharing existing modules and in the case of Multimedia Systems, promoting inter-disciplinary group work, with projects designed to involve students from both courses, collaborating on a shared goal, exposing students to the challenges of project management with real-world challenges. In addition, the School is currently a leading partner in the development of a proposal for the PhD programme in Visualisation, Graphics and Vision (VGV). The new MSc course is uniquely positioned to build on successful research groups within the School. The students will also have access to the latest hardware and facilities provided by these research groups (including advanced visualisation systems, a 10-camera motion capture suite and head mounted displays). Students who successfully complete the course will have many career opportunities open to them. These will include transferring to a PhD programme to contribute to the research success of the School, potentially contributing to research commercialisation projects (for example through the new National Digital Research Centre, NDRC, which the School has played a key role in the development of) or by taking up highly skilled roles in industry, both nationally and internationally. In addition to addressing the course background Dr Collins subsequently outlined the course structure and its admissions criteria.

In a discussion which followed Dr Collins explained that a significant number of the School staff would be realigned to teach on the new course as part of strategic staff redeployment undertaken by the School. The course will target primarily the EU market but will consider non EU applicants as well. It is anticipated that there will be a significant level of interest for this course as already undergraduate students have been enquiring about it. The only other similar course in Ireland seems to be oversubscribed, and considerable interest from applicants in Ireland is therefore anticipated. Dr Collins addressed also an issue of industrial involvement into the course curriculum via the Advisory Board and by means of a series of seminars with industry representatives which will enable the students to develop a better appreciation of how the industry works. Industrial mentorship will also be permitted in the supervision of dissertations.

After further more general discussion the Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

200.5 Graduate Research Education Programme (GREP) proposals: preliminary approval [part II]

The Dean noted that the current additional 9 submissions (*Re. 198.8 and 199.5*) have come in in an anticipation of a call from the IRCSET and IRCHSS Research Councils for GREP proposals, which is expected to be announced later on in May and that successful proposals would need to be assessed in full in June for approval by the University Council or under vacation procedures to permit an October intake. The Dean thanked all who had submitted these new outline proposal for approval in advance of the June deadline. A few further submissions are still anticipated to come in to the next Committee. The Dean briefly spoke to each submission. An issue of there being too few supervisors proposed in the outline on the "Bioinformatics and Evolutionary Genetics" from Vice-Deanery of Genetics and Microbiology, should this proposal become funded and approved for a course of study, was noted.

The Committee approved all the submitted outline proposals which will go for noting to the University Council at its next meeting:

- (i) Bioinformatics and Evolutionary Genetics, Vice Deanery of Genetics and Microbiology
- (ii) HRB SMART programme-Immunology, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
- (iii) HRB SMART Programme-Protein Interactions in Health & Disease
School of Biochemistry and Immunology
- (iv) IRCSET GREP - Immunology, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
- (v) PRTLI 4 – Immunology, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
- (vi) PRTLI 4 – Structural Biology, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
- (vii) Graduate Programme in Transport and Environment, School of Engineering
- (viii) Texts, Contexts and Cultures, School of Histories and Humanities [The Long Room Hub]
- (ix) Nanoscience and Nano-scale Technologies Schools of Chemistry and Physics [Programme to be administrated through CRANN]

200.6 Higher Diploma in Midwifery (18 months f-t)

The Dean invited Ms Margaret Carroll, the proposed Course Director, to speak to the circulated submission. Ms Carroll explained that the Department of Health and Children have recently directed a change in the education of post registration midwifery in Ireland. The existing 2 year full-time Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery at level 9 - course 648 (which is

currently run with the Rotunda, Our Lady of Lourdes Drogheda (until Sept 2007), and the Coombe Women's Hospital (from Sept. 2006)) will be replaced a new Higher Diploma in Midwifery (level 8) as of October 2007. Students on the existing Postgraduate Diploma will continue on the course until complete, but entry to this programme will cease as of October 2007 to be replaced by entry onto the Higher Diploma from September 2007 to be concluded in March 2009. The next programme will commence in March/April 2009 and conclude in September 2010. The Department of Health and Children have approved and funded a minimum of 50 places for the September 2007 intake but it is anticipated that over the future years the numbers applying will gradually decrease. This new course is an 18 month (78 weeks; calendar) full-time programme delivered in conjunction with the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin 1 and the Coombe Women's Hospital. The Department of Health and Children has stated that it will review this programme in 2009. During the programme, midwifery students are employed in one of these hospitals. The status of the student of midwifery is unique in that the student is both an employee of one of these two hospitals and a student of Trinity College. This course complies with the standard ECTS total of 120 for a Higher Diploma. The Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council without requesting any changes.

200.7 Restructuring and the Graduate Studies Committee

The Dean welcomed the Senior Lecturer Prof. Colm Kearney and the Acting Academic Secretary Ms Patricia Callaghan who had been invited for this item. The Senior Lecturer outlined a background of the most recent changes under academic restructuring and noted that Board would be considering for approval four documents vital for subsequent implementation of the new three-Faculty structure in College. He described the proposal to create a Chief Academic Officer and a Chief Operating Officer. He also noted that there is a concerted effort to identify the most efficient way to align the current administrative structures to provide the most effective support for the three Faculties. He invited all Committee members to take an active part in the consultation process.

In a discussion which followed a strong preference was expressed by the Committee members to retain the Graduate Studies Committee as a central college committee for graduate education. Several members emphasised that the Committee had been working effectively and its direct links with all the Schools via the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) seems to be working well. Furthermore both representatives from the Graduate Students' Union (President and Vice-President) were strongly in favour of retaining the Committee in its current form. The Senior Lecturer confirmed that he had also received independent feedback that the Graduate Studies Committee had been operating very effectively, and therefore being so much collectively appreciated there seems to be grounds for retaining the Committee to ensure the unity and integrity of graduate regulations, policies and practices College-wide. In a further discussion issues were raised with respect to the title and the role of the Chief Academic Officer and also the likely timeframe for the implementation of further structural changes. The Dean thanked the Senior Lecturer and the Acting Academic Secretary for taking the time to come and talk to the Committee members.

200.8 AOB

a) Proposal to stimulate North-South research collaborations – submission from the Associate Dean of Research

The Dean spoke to the tabled document submitted by Dr David G. Lloyd, Associate Dean of Research. He explained that in the context of significant political change, Trinity College and Queens University Belfast have entered into a collaborative memorandum of understanding which is aimed at fostering academic research linkage between the institutions, and availing of incentives and initiatives for funding North-South collaborative research as they arise. This memorandum of understanding was publicly announced and witnessed at a state function with the Minister for Foreign Affairs on Tuesday last, 24th April. With this in mind, the Dean asked the committee to consider the Associate Dean of Research's proposal to reserve six postgraduate studentships for North/South collaborative projects. This would show the College's commitment, and serve to kick-start programmes of activity ahead of more structured funding streams via the exchequer. Several members spoke against the proposal as it would reduce further the already limited number of postgraduate scholarships available to students on the basis of their individual academic merit; others spoke in favour citing the opportunity for strategic use of these studentships. The discussion became quite animated, with the point being made that if this was so important strategically why is funding not made available separately. In conclusion the committee agreed a counter proposal that 3 postgraduate studentships (code 1252) could be allocated in support of this scheme on a pilot basis for 1 year as long as additional funding for 3 matching awards becomes available to the Dean of Graduate Studies from outside of the current pool of studentships in Colleges. The Dean undertook to communicate this to the Associate Dean of Research.

b) Calendar Part 2 changes for 2007/08

The Committee noted and approved the further Calendar Part 2 changes for 2007/08 as circulated under Item B1 a-f.

c) The Dean confirmed that the agenda item on the role of Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) will be deferred to the next Committee meeting for lack of time.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 24 May 2007.



Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast.

Date: 26 April 2007