

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 13 December, 2007
Conference Room, Arts Building

Present: Prof. Carol O'Sullivan, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Joe McDonagh, School of Business
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry
Dr Anne O'Connell, School of Dental Science
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Prof. Biswajit Basu, School of Engineering
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleaináin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Prof. John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Thomas Connor (Acting), School of Medicine
Dr Iain Atack, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English
Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, School of Social Work & Social Policy
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)
Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Gabriel Magee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology
Dr Philip Matthews, School of Education
Prof. Eunan O'Halpin, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Fintan Sheerin, School of Nursing & Midwifery

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

204.0 Minutes of 15 November 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 15 November 2007 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

204.1 Matters Arising

No matters arising were raised.

204.2 Structure of PhDs

The Dean noted that many academics had been working in College on new PhD programmes (including the recent GREP initiative) which incorporate some taught components, frequently to be jointly taught and co-supervised in collaboration with other Universities. Such programmes have revealed a number of administrative and academic issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure an appropriate level of regulatory consistency centrally at College while facilitating high quality academic standards with optimal flexibility at the School level. An additional precipitating factor for addressing these issues as soon as possible is a number of planned submissions to the Committee in early 2008 of new Integrated or Structured PhD programmes, in particular one on Texts, Contexts, Cultures (proposed by the Long Room Hub, in collaboration with all Trinity Arts & Humanities Schools and UCC and NUI Galway). The Dean has emphasised that a carefully structured and elucidated policy of dealing with such PhD submissions needs to be put in place as a matter of urgency to facilitate a proper assessment of the forthcoming proposal and any others in the months to come.

The main issues to be addressed are as follows: the standard length of delivery of 3 or 4 years; the appropriate level of taught components on the programme for it to retain its research classification; whether each new programme should be submitted for approval as a new course of study resulting in a new course code and a special annual fee or should students be put on the generic research register; whether any new PhD programmes should be presented in “an integrated PhD format”, and what that format actually is, or is it synonymous with the concept of a “structured PhD”; should students be allocated a supervisor from year 1 or should this be delayed to year 2 and what allocation policy should then apply. A discussion which followed has revealed significant consensus in that the Calendar part 2 regulations should contain essentially generic regulations as to what constitutes a TCD PhD degree, whereas the Schools should put all their local requirements in their research brochures/handbooks. It was recognised that it might be appropriate to deal with some regulatory issues also at the Faculty level.

The Dean has noted that the current 1 plus 3 model of an integrated PhD used in College for the 3 relevant courses of study (in Political Science, Molecular Medicine and Neuroscience) is currently under review, as students in Year 1 are being classified as taught, whereas they are actually spending the vast majority of their time on pure research activities.

The Committee supported the Dean’s proposal to set up a Working Party on the PhD Structure to include one committee representative from each Faculty, one representative of those academics who are currently developing a new PhD programme, a representative from the Bologna Desk, and from the ARAM Task Force. The WP will be expected to report its recommendations ideally to the next GSC.

204.3 An update on the November IUA meeting of the Fourth Level Network

The Dean updated the committee members on the IUA 4th level network meeting she attended on 26 November 2007. She advised she had brought the recommendations of the GSC, as per Minute 203.5 on the Feedback on an IUA Graduate Student Skills Statement, to the attention of the IUA members who shared them, and that the skills statement is now being considerably revised to reflect these views.

Under “GREPS and Graduate Education Funding”, the Dean advised that it had been strongly indicated at the IUA meeting that IRCSET would not be funding any new graduate research programmes, and that SIF would continue to provide matching support-enabling initiatives that involve reform of HEI administrative practices but that it will not support student stipends and fees. The Department of Education and Science had indicated to the HEA that support for further capacity building should take place within current structures. In particular, PRTL I V seems to render itself as the most likely channel for ring-fencing some funding for graduate education development. The IUA 4th level network had empowered Professor Michael P. Ryan, Dean of Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Training from UCD, to represent their interests at the forthcoming IUA meeting of the Deans of Research. Prof. Ryan undertook to pass on to that forum the agreement of the Deans of Graduate Studies of the 7 Universities that the IUA should advocate for the establishment of a National “PhD Funding Strategy Group” and immediately for some specific allocation of PRTL I V funds for the development of structured PhD programmes across the spectrum of disciplines.

Under “IUQB Review” of the adoption of the national *PhD Guidelines*, the Dean advised that Dr Padraig Walsh, the Chief Executive/Secretary of IUQB had attended the meeting to explore with the Network agreed terms of reference for the IUQB’s review of the adoption of the *IUQB National Guidelines for Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD programmes in Irish Universities*. In October 2006, the IUQB Board agreed to conduct a thematic review of PhD programmes in the seven universities, focusing on the adoption of the *Guidelines for Good Practice* and will conduct a second round of institutional quality assurance reviews commencing in 2009. The thematic review (consultation and terms of reference to be completed in 2007) will take place in 2008 and will involve the preparation of a self-evaluation report by each university, site visits by expert panels including international peers and the publication of a report in respect of each university.

The Dean invited Ms Ewa Sadowska, the Fourth Level Network Institutional Coordinator, to provide an update on the remaining agenda items of the IUA meeting.

Ms Sadowska advised that a representative from the Geary Institute had delivered a demonstration of a Student Feedback (Internet-based) Survey aimed to help the seven universities to collect information on a broad range of PhD student issues.

Under “US-Ireland Alliance and Fourth Level Ireland”, a request from Mary Lou Hartman, Director of the US-Ireland Alliance’s George Mitchell Scholarships Programme was discussed. The US-Ireland Alliance intends to develop web pages on its website providing details of high quality Masters programmes available at Irish universities and is inviting the Irish universities to provide information on the most interesting and/or innovative Masters programmes they would like promoted in North America. These pages will be operational by April 2008. Queen’s University Belfast has accepted this

invitation. The audience for these pages will be George Mitchell Scholarship applicants and others interested in postgraduate education in Ireland, including the National Association of Fellowship Advisors. There was a strong feeling amongst the members of the Graduate Studies Committee that it would not be appropriate for College to promote centrally such a selection of “flagship” masters courses for the intended website.

Under “Update on Chinese Scholarship Council-IUA Scheme”, it was confirmed at the meeting that a number of PhD-registered students from China had already arrived to take up the one year “sandwich-year” in the Irish Universities this academic year, and that there is designated SIF funding available from the HEA for the Universities to apply for. More information on that application process will be sought for the next GSC meeting.

Under “DOC-CAREERS project”, a report was provided on the outcomes of a November workshop in Paris to do with the development of new PhD programmes on the Continent in collaboration with industry and involving work placement schemes. It was established at the meeting that currently no Irish university is in the process of developing such a programme but that it will be useful to consider the potential for Irish participation in the project.

The next meeting of the IUA 4th Level Network will take place on the 29 January 2008.

204.4 An update on the PAC system

The Dean invited Ms Helen Thornbury, Administrative Officer from the Graduate Studies Office, to report on the PAC system. Ms Thornbury explained that a pilot had been conducted this year to include on-line admissions to 8 postgraduate courses in three areas of medicine, pharmacy and engineering and attracting nearly 200 applications. The feedback from all participating course directors has been positive as the on-line process speeds up the admission process significantly. Ms Thornbury has taken the members through the various stages of the on-line process and explained its workings in considerable detail, and responded to a number of practical queries with respect to late applications and applicants from countries with restricted access to Internet and/or credit card facilities, and industry-sponsored applicants.

A designated Steering Committee is in charge of the project in College, and having reviewed the pilot is happy to recommend that it be rolled out for the next year’s admissions. Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager, advised that the MIS had also concluded its additional review and will be happy to confirm that the PAC facility – operated by an outside company called the Postgraduate Applications Centre in Galway – is sufficiently functional to continue its operations but some security issues linked to the PAC site have been identified and would need to be addressed within the next few months before the full roll out. The committee expressed their appreciation for the work done on the project and hope that once all taught masters will be on-line, staff resources will be freed up in the Graduate Studies Office to deal more effectively with research applications which will continue to be paper-based for now.

204.5 A Research Open Day 4 March 2008

The Dean invited Ms Helen Thornbury, Administrative Officer from the Graduate Studies Office, to report on a Research Open Day. Ms Thornbury advised that there has been support from School Administrators and DTLP to hold an open day specifically to target prospective research students during the cycle of recruitment fairs on 4 March this year. This is the first time that the Graduate Studies Office has been involved in an initiative targeting research applicants. It is intended that each school will host a stand in the Examinations Hall (already booked for the event) and will display up to date information on the research opportunities and areas of expertise that it has to offer. Where schools have lab facilities etc they could also ensure that tours are available for the prospective students to take on the day of the event. The GSO will produce a booklet promoting research in Trinity, will set up a designated additional website on research in College and will advertise the event in Ireland and internationally in Europe. The committee members were asked if they could consider sharing ideas of possible target markets in Europe and venues for placing ads to ensure that the event is given the best promotion possible. It was agreed to consider moving the Open Day to an earlier date in February in the following year to accommodate peak admission enquiries in Science.

204.6 CAPSL representation on the GSC

The Committee considered a request from Dr Brian Foley, Director of CAPSL, to extend its membership to include a CAPSL representative on the grounds that the paths of the Graduate Studies Committee and CAPSL are sufficiently intertwined to warrant the presence of a CAPSL representative on the Committee. After a brief discussion, it was decided to approve the request and accept Dr Foley’s nomination of Dr Jacqueline Potter for the current academic year to act as the CAPSL representative in attendance.

204.7 Journal of Postgraduate Research

The Dean advised that she supports the continuation of the JPR in 2008 but would be keen to ensure that the profile of the Journal launch this year will be considerably raised to match the expectations of the funding Trinity Foundation. She noted that the Journal will continue to be a showcase for TCD research students and that an earlier idea of opening it up to submissions from outside College has been abandoned. The Dean invited Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students’ Union

President, to provide further feedback on the Journal 2008. Mr Frenda advised that the 8th volume of the Journal will be published this year, and that the editorial board is in the process of identifying suitable names for high-profile speakers for the launch. He also explained that the Journal goes to all copyright libraries and is on display in the 1937 Reading Room and in the Graduate Students' Union Common Room. It will also be uploaded in pdf on the GSU website for the first time this year. The Dean has joined the GSU President in asking that the DTLP actively advertise with their research students in the Schools the call for publication which is currently out and the closing date is 1 February 2008.

204.8 Any Other Business

- a) Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President, advised that the Extraordinary General Meeting of the GSU, held on 13 November 2007, elected Gabriel Magee to serve as Vice President of the Union for 2007/08 following the resignation of Molly Doros. The Dean welcomed Mr Gabriel Magee as a new member.
- b) The Committee noted and approved the items in Section B on the agenda.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.25 am.



Prof. Carol O'Sullivan

Date: 24 January 2008