

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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**Present:** Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education  
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering  
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English  
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Anne Fitzpatrick, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
Professor Alex Schuster, School of Law  
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology  
Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Stephanie Holt, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Megan Lee, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Mr Adam Hanna, Graduate Students' Union Vice President (*Ex officio*)  
The Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan, CAPSL Representative (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)

**Apologies:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Frank Barry, School of Business  
Professor Kevin Devine, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research (Ex officio)  
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance Ex officio)

Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office (Ex officio)

**In attendance:** Mr Dimitrios Paraskevas, Trinity Teaching and Learning,  
Secretary to the meeting (Ex officio)

Professor John Gormley and Professor Timothy Savage, for item  
GS/14-15/22

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**GS/14-15/20 Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015**

The minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated.

**GS/14-15/21 Matters Arising**

Following the last Committee meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015, the Dean provided an update on certain items that had been discussed. Specifically:

- GS/14-15/14, further to a member's query, the Dean clarified that the proposal to implement anonymous marking in postgraduate exams referred to the 2015/16 academic year. Also, it was clarified that this proposal did not apply to postgraduate dissertations.
- GS/14-15/15, the Dean informed members that the Advanced Radiotherapy Practice (P.Grad. Cert., P.Grad.Dip., M.Sc.) course proposal was under external review.
- GS/14-15/16, the Dean advised the Committee that the new Irish Survey of Student Engagement was currently running (Feb 16<sup>th</sup> to March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015). Members confirmed they had not received clear communication with details of the survey this year. The Dean agreed to ask the Quality Office to circulate an email to Schools containing an advertising banner for use in email signatures and a link to the survey.
- GS/14-15/18, the Dean reminded members that the Research Supervisor Development Programme was starting on February 26<sup>th</sup>, and informed the Committee that it had attracted a lot of interest. The Dean will request podcasts of the programme's workshops to be made available online.

**GS/14-15/22 Clinical Exercise (P.Grad.Cert.)**

The Dean invited Professor John Gormley and Professor Timothy Savage to present this item. Professor Gormley outlined the key aspects of the course proposal highlighting the fact that the course was developed over the last two years in response to feedback received from students and healthcare professionals. The

Committee heard that currently there are no other online courses in clinical exercise and demand was expected to be high. Responding to a query, Prof. Gormley explained that elements of the proposed academic content were covered in other face-to-face Masters courses, including the School of Medicine's own M.Sc. in Cardiovascular Rehabilitation and Prevention, but this would still be a unique course on the market in terms of length and focus on the particular specialisation. Regarding the Committee's concerns that there could be duplication in teaching between this and the School's M.Sc., members were told that the course would be reviewed within 24 months from first entry and any such issues, along with recognising the P.Grad.Cert. period of study for students wishing to proceed to the M.Sc. (which will not be the case initially), would be addressed accordingly. Furthermore, Prof. Gormley clarified that the Discipline chose a P.Grad.Cert. over a P.Grad. Dip. in response to feedback received from clinicians, and that entry requirements also allowed for evaluation of applications disciplines that were not immediately related, on a case by case basis. Asked regarding the chosen length of the course (2X15 week terms as opposed to the usual 12-week semesters) and whether the proposed closing date for applications was realistic, members were informed that the structure of modules dictated the length of the course and that there was already pre-planning in terms of its marketing. Finally, the Committee was informed that the proposal's finances were approved at the Faculty Executive Committee and provided for both the extra staff and the additional Library resources required. A discussion ensued after the presentation where members made the following points:

- The proposed course length of 15 continuous weeks (X2) and its intensity could be problematic as it exceeds the 12 week length of a semester, providing additional strain on staff resources and students' workload. The Committee was of the view that the length of the course should be reduced if possible. This is something that should be noted for online courses going forward.
- In the future, proposers should consider recognition of prior learning for students wishing to progress to the M.Sc., from the beginning of the course, particularly as there is shared content with the Masters.
- Proposing to request students to resubmit failed components before results were reviewed by a Court of Examiners could also be an issue, as past experience in other Schools demonstrated that this can lead to problems with students failing a second time before the Court of Examiners and/or before they could launch an appeal (which can only happen after the CoE). On this, the Committee agreed that as long as the failed assessment resubmission policy was clear and transparent to students it did not need to be changed. However, members suggested that a better practice would be to introduce an interim Court of Examiners, without the presence of an external examiner. This has become the recommended practice in Schools with similar failed assessment resubmission policies.

Following this discussion, the Committee approved the course proposal with the Dean agreeing to feed back the Committee's comments on the issues raised. A member suggested that the Committee might investigate if a formal College policy on resubmission of failed assessment exists. The Dean agreed to look into this and remarked that the Committee may review this and related policies in the future, particularly in the context of online courses.

**GS/14-15/23 Plagiarism – discussion following memo from Dean of Graduate Studies**

Following the preliminary discussion to the Dean's memo regarding Plagiarism (meeting of February 19<sup>th</sup>, minute GS/14-15/17), members were invited to respond to the questionnaire that had been circulated. The questions and the Schools' responses can be summarised as follows:

**1. On the basis of your experience, what do you consider to be the main types and causes of plagiarism amongst students?**

The responses given were a) Cultural differences, b) 'bad habits' carried forward from previous studies, c) self-plagiarism, d) similarities due to utilising the same web sources.

During the discussion, the Committee agreed that in terms of addressing plagiarism due to cultural differences, there was strong belief that closer supervision (as deemed necessary in each case) would largely eradicate the problem.

**2. Do you think plagiarism cases are increasing, decreasing or staying the same year-on-year?**

Members deemed that proportionally plagiarism cases remained the same for all Schools.

**3. What do you do when you suspect plagiarism?**

Responses amongst members ranged between a) applying School policy, b) following the Calendar regulations, c) determining whether it was intentional or accidental, d) involving the Director of Teaching and Learning, e) escalating case to the Junior Dean.

**4. Do you consider current College online resources to be sufficient in explaining plagiarism and how to avoid it? Do staff and students know where to go to find this information?**

Some members thought they were sufficient and others did not know where to find this information.

- 5. What information do you include in your course handbook/s on plagiarism? Do you restrict yourself to information available from College sources or do you include additional information? If the latter, please outline briefly what this comprises.**

Schools include regulations in course handbooks. Members unanimously agreed that they should be clear and transparent.

- 6. Of existing plagiarism regulations and procedures, what works well and/or what changes would you make?**

Members felt that the following steps to deal with plagiarism work well: a) issues being tackled quickly, and from year to year b) discussing case with student(s) and explaining gravity of situation, c) making penalties clear and transparent in order to demonstrate that attempting to plagiarise would not be worthwhile, d) carrying through sanctions as communicated, e) making students aware of self-plagiarism, f) students attending Library's HITS programme on plagiarism, g) Schools offering other related training courses, h) instigating formal disciplinary procedure as per Calendar (instead of implementing local policies) seems to be more effective for repeat/more serious offences.

In general, members expressed the view that plagiarism was less of an issue in postgraduate courses, as most cohorts were relatively small, and the duration of the courses was also much shorter compared to undergraduate courses. This resulted in any issues arising being tackled quicker and well before the next cohort of students commence the course. Furthermore and during the discussion, the GSU President suggested that they could also include a component on plagiarism in their orientation programme for PG students. The proposal was welcomed by all members, who agreed to provide useful links that the GSU could incorporate into the GSU handbook.

- 7. Identify plagiarism 'grey areas' encountered in your subject area.**

One member suggested that publishing work with co-author(s) where a Dissertation/Thesis consisted only part of the publication, before formal examination presents potential difficulties. Members recommended that a

formal declaration regarding plagiarism at the beginning of the Thesis may help address this.

Furthermore, and not identified as a grey area but rather a case that is difficult to detect/prove, was students using paid services for the preparation of assignments.

**8. How appropriate you think the prescribed penalties are? Are there cases which are not covered by the existing penalties?**

In general, members agreed that the existing procedures (i.e. being applied as appropriate depending on the seriousness of each case) were sufficient to tackle the issue.

**9. How do you promote scholarly, academic practices within your classroom?**

Members responses were: by making appropriate references in the course handbooks, talking to students, and covering plagiarism on related critical reading and writing training courses. On the latter, some Schools reported that students were being asked to sign a declaration at the end of these sessions.

**10. What measures do you adopt to make students more aware of plagiarism? E.g., use of Turnitin, delivery of academic practice module/content ...**

Schools use Turnitin and other measures as described above.

**11. Should all courses in College make specific reference, in their programme learning outcomes, to good academic practice/avoidance of plagiarism?**

Responses to this question varied, with members being divided on whether this was necessary or not. It was generally felt that guidance in the Course Handbook is appropriate.

**12. Provide examples of plagiarism based on experiences in your subject/course area in the online context (noting that the online context**

**can range from technology enhanced teaching and learning to full online courses).**

A specific example mentioned was group work being flagged by Turnitin, with the School having to fail all four students involved, as no one was admitting responsibility.

**13. Comment on any particular plagiarism issues pertinent to your subject/course area, not already covered.**

A member commented that Turnitin is not particularly efficient for certain subjects such as Mathematics.

The discussion concluded with the Dean referring to feedback on the issue provided from the Keeper of Readers' Services, and specifically about the proposed trial of Epigeum, a resource with online course modules covering many areas of interest to PG students and their supervisors, which also has a module on plagiarism. The Committee was of the view that TCD could develop an in-house course on plagiarism if required without needing to refer to such overly expensive external sources.

**GS/14-15/24            AOB**

The GSU President circulated a memo in relation to the Postgrad Week 2015, and informed the Committee of the events planned. Members agreed to share the week's events with their Schools and courses.

The GSU Vice-President raised the issue of student fees (EU/Non-EU) being determined by the students' ordinary residence and not by their citizenship. The Dean explained that she had no power over it as the rules on the matter were very clear.

**Section B for noting and approval**

1. The Committee noted and approved the proposed School of Engineering Calendar Part III changes for 2015/16 (noting that the M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip in Bioengineering will be offered on a full-time basis only from 2015/16, and also that the two-year full time M.Phil. course in Music and Media Technologies will be converted to a one-year full time M.Phil., with discontinuation of the one-year full time Postgraduate Diploma in Music and Media Technologies (as noted and approved at the GSC meeting of January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015)).
2. The Committee noted and approved the proposed addition of a part-time option to the current M.Phil. in English Language Teaching (in order to bring this course in line with the other M.Phil. courses offered in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences), and the related Calendar Part III changes.

3. Following consideration of the Committee's feedback on the proposed new Postgraduate Legal Research module for students taking a postgraduate research degree at the School of Law (discussed at the meeting of December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2014), the School of Law submitted an updated module descriptor. The Committee noted and approved the document as circulated.

4. Professor Murchan explained that the proposed new modules for the Master in Education (M.Ed.) were developed in response to demand from school teachers, Bachelor in Music Education graduates, and other applicants interested in following a Music-related specialty as part of pursuing an M.Ed. Responding to a related query, Prof. Murchan re-assured members that the School had ensured they had the capacity to supervise Music related dissertations. The Committee noted and approved the proposed new modules for the M.Ed.

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015