



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 26th October 2017
Boardroom, Provost's House

XX = Council relevance

- Present:** Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Rachel Mary McLoughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor James Quinn, School of Business
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, 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 John Walsh, School of Education
Professor Philip Coleman, School of English
Professor Eunan O'Halpin, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Lorna Carson, 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 John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor David Shepherd, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy
- Mr Shane Collins, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Madhav Bhargav, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (*Ex officio*)

Apologies:

- Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:



Professor Richard Reilly, School of Engineering
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub-Librarian for Teaching, Research and User
Experience (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative
(*Ex officio*)

In attendance:

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Trinity Teaching and Learning), Secretary (*Ex officio*)
Prof. Sarah O'Brien (School of School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication
Sciences (C.L.C.S.)) for item GS/17-18/133
Ms Theresa Logan-Phelan, Manager (eLearning) and Mr Kevin O'Connor, Learning
Technologist (CAPSL) for item GS/17-18/134

GS/17-18/131 Minutes of 28th September 2017

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/17-18/132 Matters Arising

Re: GS/16-17/101 A new MPhil course proposal in International History: The Dean advised that the course had been approved by Council.

Re: GS/16-17/95 Postgraduate Studentship Model: The Dean advised that the applications were currently under review to identify successful applicants towards the end of November and advertise places shortly afterwards.

Re: GS/16-17/122 Quality Review of Postgraduate Procedures: The Dean advised that the self-assessment report would be re-focused, and the review had been deferred until April.

Re: GS/17-18/124 A new MSc course proposal in Energy Science: The Dean advised that the course proposal had been sent out for an external review.

Re: GS/17-18/125 Flexibility in the Dissertation space: The Dean advised that Council had approved the committee-endorsed proposal about alternatives to dissertation, and the approved new regulation would be inserted into Calendar III Section 3 "General regulations for taught graduate courses" in 2018/19.

Re: GS/17-18/126 Dissertation Options for MSc in Entrepreneurship: The DTLP from the School of Business advised that the issue was in progress, that he was consulting with CAPSL, and would make submission to the committee in December.

XX GS/17-18/133 English language competence for postgraduate students



This item was a follow on to the discussion at the September meeting (GS/17-18/128). The Dean articulated a particular concern raised by one of the Heads of School in one of the FEMS disciplines, to the effect that, because linguistic competence might be less important in some schools than others, the Dean should, in exceptional circumstances, have discretion to waive the English language competence requirement if a strong argument for such a step could be made by a course director (PGT) or supervisor (PGR). Currently this is not possible, though the Dean does have a discretion to admit a student who has not hit the required standard of language competency to the register, on condition that they sit an approved test and obtain the necessary result within a defined time period. The Dean also raised a more general issue whether the current metrics used to measure English language competence (IELTS examination score or its market equivalents – TOEFL etc.) were adequately determining if the language capacity of a student was appropriate for their course of study, and whether alternative or parallel metrics internal to Trinity could be adopted.

The Dean welcomed Prof. Sarah O'Brien, Director of Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (CELLT). Prof. O'Brien explained that CELLT runs (a) an intensive "pre-sessional" summer course for potential postgraduate students and registered students and (b) an extensive "in-sessional" course for registered students during the academic year. Both courses were currently not credit-bearing. The 'pre-sessional' course is examined, and Prof O'Brien said that her extensive research indicated that that exam was a better indicator of whether a student might have the necessary language competency to succeed at postgraduate level than the existing tests (IELTS etc.) which Trinity relies on currently. Thus in her view if a student scored a 2.1 in the CELLT exam, this was, in fact, a more reliable indicator of language competency than was, for example, a 6.5 IELTS score.

In response to a query, she clarified that in order to join the "pre-sessional" course the participant had to have achieved at least an IELTS 6 score. The "pre-sessional" summer course was predominantly attended by applicants conditionally or unconditionally accepted onto taught programmes. The course was fee-based and very intense of around four teaching hours daily with an additional two hours of research-based contact hours over eight week.

In so far as the 'in-sessional' course is concerned, Prof. O'Brien noted that many registered students with 6.5 IELTS score found it difficult to succeed academically due to linguistic challenges bespoke to their academic discipline. As a result of ongoing participants' feedback, the CELLT "in sessional" courses had been divided up into discipline-specific areas tailored to participants' needs, and the tutors were sourced from relevant disciplines and from the graduates from the MPhil in English Language Teaching. The uptake for these courses was dominated by FAHSS students and there was only a minimal participation from FHS students. In response to a comment made from the floor that students from health sciences based in St James's and Tallaght hospitals might find the campus-based location in the city centre an access impediment, Prof. O'Brien undertook to discuss with relevant staff in the health sciences about organising break away courses in alternative locations to accommodate medical students. She appealed to all DTLPs to raise awareness



amongst students in their Schools about the courses. She also undertook to popularize the courses at the forthcoming postgraduate orientation week in February and requested to be sent an email to ensure that she knew when these orientation sessions were taking place.

Comments were made about poor level of written English and the need to enhance the academic literacy (rather than language competency *per se*) of many PhD students. It was suggested that both courses should therefore be made credit-bearing and offered as part of the structured PhD.

The Dean outlined a number of proposals, that had been laid out in a memo circulated in advance of the meeting, for members' comments. After a short discussion the following decisions were taken

- (a) The committee agreed that the "in sessional" course should become a 5 credit structured PhD module (while also remaining available to PGT students). A stand-alone module proposal would need to be submitted for consideration at the next GSC meeting.
- (b) The committee supported the idea that achieving a 2.1 mark in the exam on completion of the "pre-sessional" course should be written into the College Calendar as one of the metrics by which a student could display language competency (that is, as an alternative to IELTS/Cambridge etc.) for application processes, such that, if an applicant hits this standard, s/he does not need also to submit for example an IELTS certificate.
- (c) The committee rejected the possibility that on application from a supervisor of a PhD/Research Masters student and the relevant DTLP, the Dean may have the discretion to waive the requirement that the student display language competency.
- (d) It was re-confirmed instead that, whereas the Dean retains the discretion to admit a student to a register on condition that s/he produce a certificate of language competency within a prescribed time period, such a student would now also be required to participate in the 'in sessional' course. PhD students in such circumstances may (but do not need to) choose this as part of their taught structured PhD credits.

GS/17-18/134 Technology-enhanced learning for postgraduate students

The Dean welcomed Ms Theresa Logan-Phelan, Manager (eLearning) and Mr Kevin O'Connor, Learning Technologist (CAPSL) who had prepared a presentation on what technologies were available in the postgraduate space and how they could be used in teaching and learning. Mr O'Connor spoke to the presentation and provided a brief overview of eLearning and blended learning, described technologies for teaching and learning, and resources and supports available on postgraduate courses and concluded by referring to the potential technology-enhanced learning initiatives for postgraduate education. The Dean congratulated Mr O'Connor on his clear presentation and invited members to contact the eLearning staff directly about



opportunities that could be developed in their Schools. The DTLP from the School of Business paid a special tribute to the team for their interesting presentation before an accreditation panel some time ago where they were especially commended for their ability to demonstrate how technology could be used in practice. He also referred to the colloquium for MBA staff and appearance before the Business School Committee where Ms Logan-Phelan popularised the possibilities of technology-enhanced learning. In response to a query Ms Logan-Phelan explained that take up was gradually expanding. The Dean encouraged members to share the presentation with the staff in their Schools to illustrate how digital skills can be successfully advanced.

GS/17-18/135 AOB

- (i) The Dean confirmed that the next meeting would start at 10am.
- (ii) The Dean noted that controversy could arise in relation to the designation of a student as “non-EU” for fee paying purposes, and reminded members that the Dean had a discretion, where this was appropriate, to deem a student who had been designated as “non-EU” to be re-designated as EU for fee paying purposes. Typically this would arise where a student had had all of his or her education within the EU – and generally where, for further training or reasons of economic necessity, s/he had had to go outside the EU for an extended period of time, but had now returned to the EU on a permanent basis. The Dean asked members to publicise the fact to course directors. He stated that his office would be making changes to its website shortly, and the fact would be highlighted, but there was a risk that at least some incoming students were unaware of it.
- (iii) The Dean referred to the Trinity Education Project (TEP) and the Academic Year Structure (AYS). He noted that TEP applied only to the undergraduate space but the AYS which grew out of TEP and was designated specifically to accommodate undergraduate courses would also logistically affect the distinct postgraduate space. He suggested that the postgraduate space might not fit easily within the new AYS giving the example of the fact that, whereas undergraduate supplemental examinations would take place at the end of August (and thus this is recognised as an exam time within the AYS) postgraduate supplemental examinations would often have to take place much earlier before the summer as during the summer students work on their dissertations and should have already passed their taught module examinations. The Dean undertook to write directly to the committee members seeking issues for discussion and indicated that the item would be on the agenda at the next meeting. Leona Coady (Director of the Academic Registry) would attend for that item.

Section B for noting and approval

XX Re 6. Digital Scholarship Skills – a stand-alone research module from Centre for Digital Humanities via School of Histories and Humanities

The committee approved the 5 ECTS module “Digital Scholarship Skills” to commence in Michaelmas Term 2017. The module will be run by the Centre for Digital Humanities with a reporting line from the module co-ordinator to the Postgraduate Committee of the Schools of Histories and Humanities and the School



of Computer Science and Statistics, and thus to the respective Directors of Postgraduate Research and the Heads of Schools. The module will be owned by the School of Histories and Humanities and open for credit to PhD students across all disciplines in College. The workshops may be attended on either 'a la carte' basis (where participants have a particular interest in a single or multiple sessions), or for credit taken as part of the taught requirements in a structured PhD. A large percentage of the participants are expected to take part in it on a non-credit basis. Participants taking the module for credit must be Trinity-registered PhD students; others may take part on a non-credit basis.

XX Re 7. Advanced Nursing Practice – seeking permission for deferred admission in January 2018 and Calendar III changes for 2017/18 pertaining to 2018 January cohort

The committee approved a deferred entry on the part time 2 year Advanced Nursing Practice course to January 2018 as a one off arrangement necessitated by a recent successful tender to the HSE call. The course would run on a January to December basis for 2017/18 (Yr 1) and 2018/19 (Yr 2). The School of Nursing and Midwifery entered into a consortium arrangement with similar Schools in UCD, UCC and NUIG to secure this important course as part of the national tender. The consortium is currently working with the HSE to finalise arrangements and sign the contract in October and hence the request for the deferred entry to January 2018. The Advanced Nursing Practice course is of critical national importance in the upskilling and career development of nurses, and it is vital for the reputation of Trinity to be one of the HEIs chosen to run this course. The next cohort will run in September 2018 and will follow the regular academic year structure.

XX Re 8. Change of course title from “Cognitive Psychotherapy” to “Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy” (M.Sc. and P.Grad. Dip.) with accompanying Calendar III changes for 2018/19

The committee approved the proposed change of course title from “Cognitive Psychotherapy” to “Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy” (M.Sc. and P.Grad. Dip.) on the recommendation of the Course Advisory Committee, supported by the Head of School of Medicine, which deemed that the new title would more adequately describe the contents of the course specifically referring to the cognitive behavioural psychotherapy rather than other forms of psychological therapies including Cognitive Analytical Therapy or Cognitive Remediation Therapy. The committee noted that there were no changes to the course structure and learning outcomes.

XX Re 9. Altered entry requirements and resulting Calendar III changes from 2018/19 to M.D., M.Ch., and M.A.O. (School of Medicine)

The committee approved the proposed change to the Calendar III direction on entry requirements for the degrees of M.D., M.Ch., and M.A.O. removing the need for candidates to have been “*normally, for at least one year prior to **registration** a full-time or part-time member of staff of the College*” to “*normally, for at least one year prior to **submission** a full-time or part-time member of staff of the College*”. The grounds for the change fallout from the recent experience in the School where Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Committee vetting M.D., M.Ch., and M.A.O.



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

ITEM 1

applications have encountered a significant number of applicants who do not fulfil the criterion of registration whilst still practicing medicine in a Trinity hospital.

Section C for noting

There were no items.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.35am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 26 October 2017