



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 25th January 2018
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 Sinéad Roden, School of Business
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Richard Reilly, School of Engineering
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 Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
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 Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Agustín Benetrix, 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*)

Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub-Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative
(*Ex officio*)

Dr John O'Neill, Director of Academic Affairs, TT&L (in attendance)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (*Ex officio*)
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning),
Secretary (*Ex officio*)



Apologies:

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Ex officio)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor John Walsh, School of Education
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor David Shepherd, Confederal School of Religions, Peace
Studies and Theology

Dr Alison Oldam, Director of Services (in attendance Ex officio)

In attendance:

Prof. Joe Barry (School of Medicine) for item GS/17-18/148
Prof. David Taylor (School of Engineering) for item GS/17-18/149
Prof. Kevin O'Kelly (Dean of Students) for item GS/17-18/150

The Dean welcomed new committee members, Professor Sinéad Roden from the School of Business, Professor Agustín Benetrix from the School of Social Sciences & Philosophy and Dr John O'Neill, Director of Academic Affairs from TT&L.

GS/17-18/146 Minutes of 7th December 2017

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/17-18/147 Matters Arising

Re: GS/17-18/138 A new course proposal: Postgraduate Certificate in Biological Psychiatry: The Dean advised that the course proposal had been sent out to an external reviewer.

Re: GS/17-18/139 Credit weighting for Masters dissertation: The Dean advised that the issue had been noted by Council at its last meeting in the context of the GSC minutes. Council requested to be informed of any proposed re-calibration of the dissertation module on existing courses and of any new proposals especially those containing a dissertation module counting for less than the standard 30 ECTS.

Re: GS/17-18/141 A new course proposal: MSc in Electronic Information Engineering: The Dean advised that the course proposal had been sent out to an external reviewer.

Re: GS/17-18/142 A new course proposal: Dental Public Health strand of Doctorate in Dental Surgery (D.Ch.Dent.): The Dean advised that the course proposal had been sent out to an external reviewer.



Re: GS/17-18/143 Reasonable Accommodation Policy for Students with Disabilities: The Dean advised that Council had approved the policy.

Re: GS/17-18/144 New Academic Year Structure (AYS): A concern was raised that the new AYS, which would see the academic year starting earlier than in the past might mean that the culturally embedded final date for submitting either postgraduate taught dissertations or postgraduate research theses (end of August) might also need to be moved back by two weeks (with a knock on effect for the application of Dean's Grace). It was noted that in many postgraduate courses this would not have serious impact in that the final date for submission of dissertations was earlier than the end of the calendar year of study. The Graduate Students' Union President expressed unease about such practices, already in place on some courses, to which students were not reacting positively. The Dean undertook to consult the Vice Provost about the issue and report back to the committee at its next meeting.

XX GS/17-18/148 A new course proposal: MSc in Addiction Recovery

The Dean welcomed Prof. Joe Barry (School of Medicine). In line with the new approach the Dean briefly summarised the proposed course, taking the proposal as read. He explained that the proposed new Masters course is to provide high-quality training for health and social care practitioners in the theoretical and practical aspects of addiction recovery, and will have a strong component of action learning in the workplace. The course aims to address a gap between the production of evidenced based treatment in the field of addiction recovery and its application. The course is unique in its emphasis on the recovery model as courses on addiction studies available in Ireland are limited to counselling and psychotherapy or social policy. The teaching staff will include clinicians and service providers who are at the forefront of addiction recovery treatment, research and policy in Ireland. The course will be based on an intense collaboration between academics across Trinity and leading clinicians from the Health Service, Addiction Services. The broad curriculum allows for the necessary comprehensive upskilling to be both clinical and evidenced based best practice. The course will be based at the Institute of Population Health in Tallaght established in 2015, which has excellent teaching facilities. Three of the proposed teaching staff (Prof. Barry, Dr Ivers and Dr Keenan) are members of a wider addiction team since 2009, and Prof. Barry also works as Specialist/Consultant in Public Health in the Health Service Executive.

In response to a query from the floor about the zero minimum number of non EU recruitment target referred to in the course proposal, Prof. Barry clarified that he would be keen to recruit non EU applicants, and hoped to successfully attract as many as five, or more whenever possible, striving to match the College target of 20%, but noted that, because the target market would be HSE practitioners, there was therefore a limited capacity to attract non EU students, nor could the operation of the course be made contingent on doing so.

With respect to a query about entry criteria (Section 3.1), Prof. Barry noted that graduates from disciplines other than in a health or social care-related area, but with at least 3 years' professional experience, would also be considered.



The Dean underlined that the course proposal was very strong and that, whereas provision was made for an exit postgraduate diploma, equally the course might be attractive as a stand-alone postgraduate diploma. Prof. Barry explained that the intention was to advertise the course as a Masters programme but that should not preclude participants from taking it as a postgraduate diploma. The Dean indicated that, at the request of Prof. Barry, he was already looking into a possibility of offering individual modules as stand-alone extramural units for external practitioners.

The committee approved the proposal for an external review without any changes to the proposal.

XX GS/17-18/149 A new course proposal: MSc in Mechanical Engineering

The Dean welcomed Prof. David Taylor (School of Engineering). In line with the new approach the Dean briefly summarised the proposed course, taking the proposal as read. He explained that the proposed new course is a development of the existing MSc in Engineering by Module which will be unavailable for entry as a separate course when the new course commences. The new course will be different to the MSc in Engineering by Module as it will have a new title of MSc in Mechanical Engineering reflecting a new focus on mechanical, biomedical and energy engineering, the Dissertation module will have an enhanced research project volume of 40 ECTS. The course will incorporate modules relevant only to mechanical, biomedical and energy engineering without those related to electronic engineering. The MSc course in Mechanical Engineering will be delivered in the main by the staff associated with the Discipline of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering. All the modules on this new course are going to be shared with the MAI degree already in place in Engineering ensuring synergy across the School in the discipline. It is envisaged that any future modules will also be shared with the integrated five year Master in Engineering (MAI) degree in Engineering and Engineering with Management programmes and other MSc courses within the School and the wider E3 initiative.

The discussion which ensued concentrated mainly on the fact that, under the course proposal and whereas provision was made for the award of an exit postgraduate diploma in various circumstances (either where a weak student was nudged in this direction or where a student chose the option), it was expressly stated that a postgraduate diploma could *not* be awarded if the student failed the dissertation module. This is because that module carried 40 ECTS, and thus a student who failed would only have 50 ECTS of taught modules, and it would be too late for him or her to obtain another ten credits of modules as the course would have completed. A discussion ensued as to arrangements which might be put in place to enable students who failed dissertation to gain 10 ECTS to be eligible for an exit postgraduate diploma award worth 60 ECTS. Some members expressed the view that once there was a clear regulation stating that a postgraduate diploma award was not available to students who failed dissertation, (as they were short of 10 ECTS), there was no problem. Other members felt that it would not be fair to leave such students without any recognition of their efforts especially when they had passed the taught component of the course albeit only worth 50 ECTS. In the end, it



was agreed to recommend that an accommodation might be possible for students failing dissertation on the understanding that some equivalency be established between the 10 ECTS engineering project module, listed in the course proposal and the dissertation module, and a regulation be adopted that if a student satisfied the research project learning outcomes in the course of his or her work on the dissertation, this would be worth the 10 ECTS to justify the award of a Postgraduate Diploma should the student end up failing the dissertation module and therefore not qualifying for the award of a Masters degree. Prof. Taylor clarified that from past experience in the School students did not normally fail their dissertations as they were supervised very closely (rather they were more likely to have their work published), and he envisaged the failed dissertation scenario as unlikely.

In response to a query from the floor about part-time students, Prof. Taylor recognized a heavy workload on the course, especially its emphasis on labs, which might be difficult for part-time students to cope with since they would normally be in full-time employment. He noted that the part-time option might be better suited to those students who have private businesses allowing them flexibility of working hours. He reassured members that supports would be put in place to accommodate part-time students especially around time-tabling of labs.

The Graduate Students' Union President expressed concern about the proposed significant increase of the non EU fees for the course over four years but acknowledged that the increase was openly stated.

The committee approved the proposal for an external review subject to a change to be made to the proposal incorporating a new regulation for equivalencies between the research project and dissertation modules and ensuing changes to the learning outcomes of both modules.

XX The Dean confirmed that from the next meeting in February the committee will be dealing only with new proposals for courses to commence from September 2019.

XX **GS/17-18/150 Fitness to Study Policy**

The Dean welcomed the Dean of Students to speak to the circulated new *Fitness to Study Policy*. The Dean of Students explained that Statutes make provision for such a policy. It sets out how the University may respond to instances where a concern is raised regarding a student's fitness to participate in College life, including potential fitness to study, and the type of actions that may be taken to manage the matter and measures available to support the student. The Dean of Students underlined that as there was no Fitness to Study Policy at present, these matters were currently addressed by the Dean's Consultation Group which advises the various College Officers but the current practice had limitations in that it did not provide for student representation and right of appeal. The proposed policy was the result of the work of the Fitness to Study Working Group over the past two years and includes input from a number of administrative and academic areas and external legal advice. This policy had been approved by the Student Life Committee in May 2017 and Undergraduate Studies Committee in October 2017.



The Dean of Students responded to a number of queries. He explained that with respect to specific professional courses, such as in dentistry, students must comply both with the “fitness to study” and “fitness to practice” regulations, and demonstrate fitness in both. He also clarified that where it was difficult for academic staff to articulate their particular concerns *re* the student’s fitness to study, the advice would be not to escalate but first to deal with the student informally, and then go through the levels stipulated in the policy, and refer the matter to the professionals to formalise the concern and escalate if necessary.

The Dean of Graduate Studies asked that Footnote (4) stating that “In the case of postgraduate students, this [support available to the student] is to be taken as referring to the Postgraduate Student Support Officer or a postgraduate advisor.” be moved into the body of Regulation 7.6. The Dean of Students agreed that he would review the policy as a whole to ensure that it operated equally for undergraduate and postgraduate students rather than giving the impression that the postgraduate element was an add-on to a pre-existing policy.

The committee approved the policy to go to Council.

GS/17-18/151 AOB

- (i) The Graduate Students’ Union President expressed concern about delays with processing postgraduate student cases by the Academic Registry. The Dean explained that staff working in this area were changing which might explain the delays. He reminded members to advise students to forward their requests to Pgcases PGCASES@tcd.ie in the first instance. He explained that it was only in truly exceptional urgent circumstances that colleagues or students should contact his office directly.
- (ii) The Graduate Students’ Union President advised the committee that numerous, especially non EU, students had been recently contacting him about their financial difficulties impacting on their wellbeing and ability to cope with their studies. On arrival in Ireland, many non EU students experience a shock with the high cost of living in Dublin for which they seem unprepared. The Dean advised that he was familiar with those difficulties through his recent work on the Hardship Fund. He stated that he would liaise with the Global Office to ascertain what obligations Trinity has to being upfront *re* the high cost of living in Dublin during marketing and recruitment as well as the difficulty in obtaining part-time work, and how prospective applicants were being advised on the issue.
- (iii) The Dean asked members to check with their course directors whether they had any outstanding new non EU applications to postgraduate courses that had gone over the Council-approved ten day time limit. He reminded members that course directors could mark on the file that further information had been sought and/or further assessment required, but that it was vital that the form was actually processed. He asked that his regards be passed on to all involved in the recruitment process in the Schools.
- (iv) The Dean stated that a question had arisen as to whether it made sense to have a physical postgraduate open evening in Dublin given that the feedback to the one last year was not particularly positive. A possible alternative might be a



virtual open day with an emphasis on non EU recruitment whereas the physical open day would target Irish applicants. Members were of the view that it was important to aim at both target groups. The Dean asked that members' view from their schools' perspective be emailed to him to enable a decision to be made given that the open day was due a month from now.

- (v) The Dean noted apologies from Dr Alison Oldam, and stated that the January GSC meeting was her last as she was finishing up by the end of the month. The Dean emphasised that Dr Oldam combined in her attitude and work an incredible blend of vision and sensitivity, and was pleasure to work with.

Section B for noting and approval

XX GS/17-18/152 A new proposal for Trinity-based MSc in Development Practice replacing Joint Master in Development Practice

The Dean explained that this course had been originally approved as a joint one with UCD but would be now offered as a single Trinity-based course leading to a new award of Master in Science (Studies) [Magister in Scientiis (Studia) [M.Sc. (St.)] instead of Magister in Scientiis (Conjunctim) with UCD.

He further noted that the document circulated under Section B was not a new course proposal but rather a summary of the changes that were being made to the original course proposal which remains as the grounding document. In other words, there was no question of the existing course being suspended or dropped, rather it was being amended.

The document for Section B was an indicator of the changes to be made to the existing course proposal, which will be primarily in terms of the makeup of the course committee and the module changes which would involve the UCD-delivered modules being replaced by Trinity-delivered modules. The Dean emphasised that it is entirely usual for a Masters course to alter its module offerings from year to year (one would be worried if it did not), it is obviously unusual for this to arise because a partner has pulled out.

The committee approved the proposal for going to Council.

The Academic Secretary said that she would liaise with the School in relation to issues pertaining to the changes in the course.

XX GS/17-18/153 Introduction of 2 year part-time delivery format on MSc in Sports & Exercise Medicine

The committee approved a request from the School of Medicine to restructure the current one year full time MSc course in Sports and Exercise Medicine to introduce a 2-year part-time option with an exit postgraduate diploma award for 60 ECTS from September 2018.

XX GS/17-18/154: School of Law - Proposal for part-time Admission to Law Postgraduate Taught (LL.M.) Courses



The committee approved a request from the School of Law to introduce from September 2018 a part-time delivery format over two years for the following LL.M. courses:

Master in Laws (LL.M.)

Master in Laws (LL.M. (International and Comparative Law))

Master in Laws (LL.M. (International and European Business Law))

Master in Laws (LL.M. ((Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law))

Section C for noting

GS/17-18/155 The committee noted “Guidelines on Permitting Students with a Disability to Record Lectures” from Disability Service 2017/18.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.15am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 25 January 2018