



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 24 January 2019
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 John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering
Professor Philip Coleman, School of English
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy
- Mr Oisin Coulter, Graduate Students' Union President (Ex officio)
Dr Gogoal Falia, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (Ex officio)
Dr Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent (in attendance Ex officio)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (in attendance Ex officio)
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Library (in attendance Ex officio)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies)
(in attendance Ex officio)
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning)
Secretary (in attendance Ex officio)

Apologies:

- Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Ex officio)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Sinéad Roden, Trinity Business School
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law



Professor John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences

Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine

Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics

Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, School of Religion

Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

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

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

In attendance:

Prof. Ronan Lyons (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy)
for item GS/18-19/253

Prof. Cliona O'Farrelly and Prof. Jerrard Hayes (School of Biochemistry and Immunology)
for item GS/18-19/254

GS/18-19/251 Minutes of 6 December 2018

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/18-19/252 Matters Arising

Re: GS/18-19/230 A new Postgraduate Certificate course proposal in Innovation and Enterprise Development: The Dean advised that Council had approved the proposal at its meeting in January leading to a special purpose award.

Re: GS/18-19/231 (iii) Postgraduate Entry Requirements: The Dean advised that he had been in discussions with Academic Registry staff with a view that the January start day for IRC-funded research candidates should be coming on stream shortly.

Re: GS/18-19/232 Working group on PhD and publications: The Dean advised that last Council had approved the recommendations from the working group and conveyed thanks from the Provost to the committee.

Re: GS/18-19/240 A new MSc course proposal in Implementation Science: The Dean advised that Council had approved the proposal at its meeting in January.

Re: GS/18-19/241 A new Postgraduate Diploma course proposal in Healthcare Innovation: The Dean advised that the proposal was still under external review and would be submitted to Council in February.

Re: GS/18-19/242 A new MPhil course proposal in Identities and Cultures of Europe: The Dean advised that the proposal was still under external review and would be submitted to Council in February.



Re: GS/18-19/244 Postgraduate student mental health and wellness: The Dean reminded members that the February seminar for research supervisors would be on mental health and wellness and that it would be open to all staff dealing with the issues in College. He asked members to advertise the seminar widely in their Schools. He also indicated that the issue of all PhD students having a 'thesis committee' would be coming up on the agenda shortly.

Re: GS/18-19/245 Recognition of foreign qualifications for admissions: The Dean thanked members for having considered his email circulated after the December meeting *re* the four universities from the Philippines that although not NARIC-approved could be acceptable for PGT entry purposes. He noted that members had responded positively to the proposal and therefore he took the issue as approved and advised the Global Relations Office accordingly.

XX GS/18-19/253 MSc in Economics: a new strand proposal in International Development

The Dean welcomed Prof. Ronan Lyons (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy), the Course Director of the "parent" Masters course. Firstly, he noted that the strand's rationale was that, whereas previously Masters courses in Economics were useful as lead-ins to PhD, now most Economics Schools apply the US model and build rigorous training, including general theory modules, in the first semesters of PhD so there is less demand for core theoretical Masters programmes aiming to train students for PhD programmes, and Masters programmes in Economics had therefore become more applied in nature.

The Dean then briefly summarised the strand, taking the proposal as read. He noted that the new strand would lead to the same degree award as the existing "parent" MSc course, would have the same course structure, duration and delivery formats, admissions criteria, assessment model, fees, the same external examiner, Quality Assurance arrangements, course director and would be coordinated by the same course committee. It was for that reason that the Dean recommended that the proposal could be regarded as a strand (rather than a new course) and would not need to be submitted for an external review. He further noted that the strand structure would comprise 40 new credits allocated to four new taught modules in the area of International Development, i.e. Development I, Applied Macro I, Development III and Applied Macro III. The modules were new both on the course and on the proposed strand while all the other modules were already in delivery however students on the new strand would only have to do 30 ECTS of new mandatory modules sharing the others with the "parent" course.

After his summary, the Dean invited Prof. Lyons to take questions from the floor. In response to queries, Prof. Lyons clarified that the strand had been designed as a response to declining numbers in the current MSc in Economics and the change in landscape for taught postgraduate courses in Economics. He expected that the introduction of the strand will allow the School to restore student numbers. In terms of targeted marketing, Prof. Lyons explained that the School has a good track record with admitting Irish undergraduates and attracting non EU applicants and would use the established channels for intensive marketing of the new strand both nationally



and internationally. With respect to a query *re* a possible overlap with the existing Masters in Development Practice in the School of Natural Sciences, he clarified that Heads of both Schools had satisfied themselves that such an overlap would be minimal and that the two courses would not be competing for the same applicant category as those applying to the new strand would have a specific economics background. Prof. Lyons acknowledged that the strand modules could, in the future, be open to students studying on Masters Courses in other Schools.

The notion of sharing modules between postgraduate courses was then taken up as a separate issue. It was proposed that there should be a financial model set up in College to incentivise Schools to share modules across disciplines and Schools.

Finally, Prof. Lyons clarified that for students on the International Development strand, their dissertation topic will be in the field of international development and that the strand proposal would be amended to reflect this reality.

The DTLP from the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy confirmed that the School welcome the new strand.

The committee approved the strand proposal and recommended that the strand be submitted for approval directly to the next University Council by means of committee minutes without being submitted for external review.

Decision GS/18-19/253.1: The committee approved the new strand and recommended the new strand proposal for Council approval by means of GSC minutes without sending it for an external review.

XX GS/18-19/254 A new course proposal: MSc in Immunotherapeutics

The Dean welcomed Prof. Cliona O'Farrelly (Head of the School of Biochemistry and Immunology and prospective Course Director) and Prof. Jerrard Hayes (prospective Course Coordinator). He then provided a brief outline of the new course noting that it was of one year full time duration worth 90 ECTS comprising 60 credits of taught modules covering basic, clinical and cancer immunology, immunotherapeutics, bioprocessing, computational biology and statistics, entrepreneurship and research skills. Students will also undertake a 6-month research placement in relevant industries or academic research laboratories. The Dean noted that the new course would offer the only national postgraduate degree in immunotherapy aimed at science, medical, veterinary and engineering graduates as well as employees in the pharmaceutical/biotech sector, who wish to develop industry-relevant research skills, extend their research experience and acquire advanced knowledge in immunotherapeutics and biomanufacturing sciences. It shares modules with the existing MSc in Immunology but also plays to Trinity interdisciplinary expertise taking input from academics in chemistry, medicine, pharmacy, engineering, genetics, education and natural sciences. Letters of support from the last three Schools were forthcoming. The course will have solid connections with industry both in terms of using industry practitioners for guest lectures and industry placements for students. Industry links are supported by letters of commitment from individual companies. The contribution from industry is essential as the course provides excellent opportunities



for developing industry-related research skills aimed at attracting high quality graduates from diverse relevant backgrounds who intend to work in the biopharmaceutical companies. The course will be supported by an industry advisory committee, chaired by the Course Director involving representatives from industry, which will ensure that the course remains industry-relevant.

After his summary, the Dean invited Prof. O'Farrelly and Prof. Hayes to take questions from the floor but there were none as members were satisfied with the completeness of information in the course proposal. The DTLP from the School of Biochemistry and Immunology confirmed that the School welcomed the new course proposal. The Dean noted that the course proposal had already been sent out for an external review.

The committee approved the course proposal subject to a positive external review.

Before withdrawing Profs O'Farrelly and Hayes took the opportunity to thank Ewa Sadowska for her assistance with the course proposal.

Decision GS/18-19/254.1: The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a positive external review.

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GS/18-19/255 The 1252 award scheme

The Dean reminded members that the committee had decided the previous year (GS/17-18/200) that it would be appropriate for each School to have in its disposal one of the twenty five 1252 awards and that the remaining 25th award would stay with the Dean's Office to be allocated on the basis of exceptional financial need. Applications for the 25th award would be sought, from Schools, by the middle of May. The Dean then raised a specific concern with the award's current low stipend level of 6.5k and its perception by award holders. He remarked that some incoming, especially non-national, students might think that the stipend would realistically represent a living wage in Dublin which was not the case. He therefore advised members that that would need to be made clear in any correspondence with successful applicants.

He outlined a number of concerns that DTLPs have expressed to him in relation to the current 1252 award scheme:

- (a) there are only twenty five of such awards
- (b) the award stipend is negligible and, apart from the concern expressed above that students might misguidedly think that it represents a 'living wage' in Dublin in 2019, it is also insufficient to attract top students
- (c) the award only runs for three years whereas the Trinity PhD is officially of four years' duration. Although students can complete in year 2, given the demands of the structured PhD it is increasingly difficult to complete in fewer than four years. Thus there is an inconsistency in the message transmitted by the awards.

The Dean noted that some Schools with higher resources (or supervisors who had their own grant funding) would raise the stipend to roughly 16k annually whereas others could not afford that. In particular, in many AHSS Schools, where PhD



students are traditionally self-funding, these awards can be regarded only as a contribution to the student's overall 'bill'. Finally, it was noted that the negligible nature of the stipend was compounded by the fact that it is a condition of the scheme that recipients provide free teaching or demonstrating within their School.

A number of possible ways to reform the scheme were then discussed:

1. Keep the awards as they are;
2. Make the awards of four years' duration and fund the fourth year from the 19.5k currently paid as stipend;
3. Let the awards only cover fees (for four years) and use the money currently paid as stipend to increase the number of such awards. In such circumstances, recipients would be paid to act as TAs/Demonstrators;
4. Let the awards only cover fees (for four years), don't increase the number of awards, but give Schools the monies that would have been spent on stipends to fund TAs/Demonstrators;
5. Attempt to make the awards operate by analogy with the benefits received by a student who was awarded a foundation or non-foundation Scholarship in his or her second undergraduate year. This would require discussions with the Registrar of Chambers but, in principle, would mean that the recipient would receive fees for three (or possibly four) years and a choice of College accommodation or a stipend for three. It was recognised that this was obviously not a decision that could be taken by the committee but it might be proposed to the Registrar of Chambers. It was accepted that this might be an attractive option for incoming students.
6. Reduce the number of awards and use the money so that the stipend would be increased to 16k annually.

A number of views were expressed to include:

- Paying only fees without a stipend would be hard on students as it would force them to take up part time jobs and thus reduce their time for research. Equally it was accepted that this is the unfortunate reality for many students, especially in the AHSS faculty, who are self-funding;
- Non EU fees are exceptionally high and year 4 should be funded on the 1252 awards;
- Perhaps the most distinctively attractive aspect of the current scheme is that it, like the Provost's Project Award Scheme covers both EU and non EU fees;
- The 1252 awards are critical for some Schools especially in AHSS where there is a huge problem attracting students and this award is an opportunity to get them started on the PhD and enables them to progress their research to the level when they are sufficiently competitive to apply for an Irish Research Council (IRC) award;
- Currently it is not possible to draw from the IT systems information showing how many of the 1252 award holders were successful in receiving IRC awards as the 1252 award holders are recorded manually;
- Since the award covers only three years of fees, the funding for year 4 often comes from the balance of awards originally awarded to students who subsequently received IRC awards; otherwise the 4th year fees are paid by the student, or the PI or the School; the lack of the 4th year fee cover is *de*



facto questioning the four year Trinity PhD model; any award scheme should cover the full duration of the PhD programme;

- The stipend awarded under the 1252 scheme should be characterised (when Schools are advertising the awards) as merely a contribution to research costs rather than as any kind of a living wage;
- If the stipend were to be replaced by entitlement to College accommodation, it was suggested that the majority of recipients would choose the latter over the former. Indeed it was suggested that the attractiveness of this option might dissuade award holders to apply for an IRC award;
- Finally, it was questioned whether the fourth year fees of 1252 award recipients could simply be written off. This is the approach which is adopted in other Irish universities; the Dean would need to raise the issue with the Vice Provost.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion and asked them to source further feedback from their Schools. He undertook to discuss with the VP whether it might be possible to have fees discounted for the fourth year for students on the 1252 award scheme. He further asked members to check with their Schools if they have any convention of using its own resources to increase the stipend paid under these awards.

Action GS/18-19/255.1: The Dean to discuss with the VP if 4th year PhD fees can be written off for holders of the 1252 award.

Action GS/18-19/255.2: Members to advise the Dean of their School feedback re the preferred way forward with the 1252 award scheme and about local practices of supplementing the stipend.

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GS/18-19/256 AOB

- (i) The Dean, referring to an issue previously raised at GSC in September, noted that for all PGT courses, the closing date for applications is the 31 July. Unlike in previous years, applications would *not* be accepted after this date. As he had in September, the Dean advised Schools to make this clear on their websites and in any discussions with external stakeholders and funders. Should there be any individual courses where, for very specific reasons, it was necessary that there be a later closing date for applications, or for the portal to be re-opened for a specific time period *after* 31 July, then Schools should apply to the Dean by mid February. On the other hand this would only be permitted where there was very good reason for it and not on the basis that, previously, applicants tended not to observe the specified closing dates. The Dean urged Schools to ensure that this closing date was respected in order to avoid the very significant problems connected with students not being registered in time that occurred, for example, at the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year.

Relatedly, the Dean referred to the situation where applicants who had received conditional offers did not fulfill the terms of these conditions (typically in terms of submitting transcripts or references) in time to enable them to be registered before the start of the semester. Previously, the communications sent to applicants in such situations did not set a time limit by which they must fulfill



these conditions. From now on, however, applicants receiving conditional offers would be told that they had until 31 July to comply with these conditions or else their offer would expire. Applicants who applied after 16 July and before 31 July would be told that they had two weeks to fulfill the terms of their offer or else it would expire. All applicants will be told that it was not possible for them to attend at class unless they were registered. No exceptions would be made to these rules. Again, the Dean asked members, where necessary, to work with applicants to ensure that they fulfilled the conditions of their offers in good time. Finally, in reference to an issue made, that for both PGR and PGT students, there may be exceptional reasons why they cannot submit certificates of language competency by the 31 July date, the Dean clarified that a request should then be made to the Dean to allow the student to be registered subject to him or her submitting language certificates within a defined period.

The DTLP from the School of Nursing and Midwifery advised that in her School there tended to be significant delays in applications. She is setting up an Admissions Committee to monitor and analyse the situation in order to constructively manage the recruitment process for 2019/20. The Dean thanked the member for this but stressed that it would be necessary for applicants to the School to comply with the above rules. He offered to work with the School in ensuring that this happened.

- (ii) In response to a query, the Dean clarified that supplemental exams for PGT courses are only permitted if this is specified in the regulations in course proposals and Calendar entries. There is not, in other words, a College-wide rule in this regard.

XX Section B for noting and approval

GS/18-19/257 New course entry/exit/progression routes: Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in Managing Risk & System Change (online) off existing MSc and Calendar III changes for 2019/20 (School of Psychology)

Decision GS/18-19/257

The committee approved the proposed structural changes to the course as outlined in the proposal circulated for the meeting, and the resulting Calendar III change for 2019/20.

GS/18-19/258 A new bespoke PhD research skills module (Category 3): Electronic and Photonic Materials and Devices (School of Physics)

Decision GS/18-19/258

The committee approved the new 5 ECTS bespoke PhD module (Category 3) to be delivered for student (ID No 18337002) in 2018/19 to support the student's development of research skills. The module will be accredited to the student's academic record as part of the structured PhD programme.

GS/18-19/259 A new bespoke PhD research skills module (Category 3): Plasmon-enhanced upconversion for biological applications (School of Physics)



Decision GS/18-19/259

The committee approved the new 5 ECTS bespoke PhD module (Category 3) to be delivered for student (ID No 14315118) in 2018/19 to support the student's development of research skills. The module will be accredited to the student's academic record as part of the structured PhD programme.

GS/18-19/260 Calendar III changes to the regulations section changes for 2019/20 from the Dean of Graduate Studies

Decision GS/18-19/260

The committee approved the proposed changes to the regulations Section in Calendar III for 2019/20.

XX Section C for noting

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.15am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 24 January 2019