



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the online meeting held via Zoom
at 10am on Thursday 22 April 2021

XX = Council relevance

Present (Ex officio):

Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies

(Chair)

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Rachel Mary Mc Loughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology

Professor Mary-Lee Rhodes, Trinity Business School

Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry

Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Sarah-Jane Scaife, School of Creative Arts

Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science

Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education

Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering

Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English

Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities

Professor James Hadley, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies

Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law

Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences

Professor Manuela Kulaxizi, School of Mathematics

Professor Mary Hughes, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Hongzhou Zhang, School of Physics

Professor Ladislav Timulak, School of Psychology

Professor Daniele Pevarello, School of Religion

Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy

Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Ms Gisèle Scanlon, Graduate Students' Union President

Ms Abhiswetta Bhattacharjee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

In attendance for all items:

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, Head of Trinity Teaching and Learning, (TT&L)

Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

Ms Fedelma McNamara, Director of Internationalisation, TCD Global

Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education, TT&L

Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office



Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Ms Ewa Adach, Administrative Officer, Graduate Education – Zoom access support
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, TT&L): Secretary to the Committee
Ms Laoise Quinn (Academic Affairs, TT&L): Minute taking

Apologies

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Kumlesh Dev, School of Medicine

Professor Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences

Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Dean of Research: Vacant

In attendance for individual items:

Ms. Mary McMahon (Manager, Central Timetabling Unit) for item GS/20-21/088

Dr. Ruth Pritchard (Programme Director: Micro-Credentials) for item GS/20-21/089

GS/20-21/085 Minutes of 25 March 2021

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/20-21/086 Matters Arising

The Dean advised members that all *Actions* from the previous meeting had been attended to. *Actions* with more specific updates provided by the Dean are referred to below.

Action GS/20-21/044(i) The Dean will contact GSC members directly regarding membership of a working group on a postgraduate research teaching survey.

This is in hand and the Dean will continue to contact members as appropriate.

Action GS/20-21/064(i): Members to email the Dean if they anticipate difficulties with F2F deliveries and how the Dean could address them.

The Dean reminded members that it is important to let her know of any perceived challenges.

Action GS/20-21/064(ii): Members to email the Dean their suggestions on automated captioning of recorded lectures

The Dean noted that captioning has been implemented and is being applied retrospectively to recordings processed through Panopto for modules that started in the current semester. Captioning is not automatic and users need to actively click a button to turn it on.



Action GS/20-21/066(iv): *The Dean is to forward correspondence relating to VPN access from FSD to all Directors for information.*

Responses to the Dean's email regarding the issue of postgraduate students' access to Trinity VPN confirmed that many smaller Schools do not have a designated staff member with responsibility to process iExpenses on behalf of anyone outside core staff. The Dean has contacted Financial Services Division to indicate that their proposal for Schools does not currently work across all Schools. The Dean asked committee members to advise her of any further update outside the meeting.

Action GS/20-21/078(v): *The Dean will collate recommendations from GSC for inclusion in the Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report.*

The Dean noted that no immediate recommendations had been received from Committee members, but the topic will be discussed within this Agenda under Graduate Studies Annual Report.

Action GS/20-21/078(ii): *The Acting Director of the Academic Registry will forward GSC a link to the AR webpage that explains the structure of AR and associated contact details.*

Action GS/20-21/078(iv): *The Acting Director of the Academic Registry will forward a link to recent AR reports to GSC.*

Following the report from Academic Registry, the Acting Director of Academic Registry was to send details on web links to GSC.

Action GS/20-21/078(vi): *The Dean is to follow up with the Academic Registry with regards to forwarding links to recent AR reports and a link to AR webpage explaining structure of AR and listing associated contacts to GSC members.*

Action GS/20-21/079: *DTLPs to submit suggestions from their own Schools to the Dean in relation to planning for future PG Open Days.*

The Dean noted that PG Open Day will be on the Agenda for first GSC at beginning of the next academic year.

Action GS/20-21/080(i): *The Dean will forward GSC feedback in relation to the 'Draft discussion document for COLSAG 2 March 2021, Option for teaching activities Academic Year 2021-22' to the Vice Provost in advance of an upcoming Council meeting.*

The Dean noted that all suggestions were incorporated into the document which was brought to Vice Provost.



Action GS/20-21/080(ii): The DTLP of the School of Chemistry will liaise with the Dean in relation to difficulties being encountered by the School in relation to laboratory time constraints relating to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Dean noted that she has received contact from the DLTP of the School of Chemistry but can do if still required.

GS/20-21/077 New course proposal - MPhil/PgDip/PgCert in The Middle East in a Global Context:

This course proposal was brought to the March GSC meeting and the minutes (p.6, first paragraph) report on a discussion at that meeting on the process that the proposal had undergone before coming to GSC. The Dean has received communication from the Head of School for Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies formally noting her rejection of the assertion that due process was not followed with reviewing this proposal.

The Dean noted that the role of the minutes is to reflect the discussion. The DTLP for the School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies confirmed that the minutes were an accurate record of what was said. He noted that he would like to make it clear that his comment did not state that the process had not been followed. The Dean noted that it is the responsibility of GSC is to ensure there are rigorous quality assurance processes for course proposals across all Schools rather than to oversee the internal governance of any individual School. The Dean suggested an amendment to the minutes (second last sentence of first paragraph) - "The responsibilities of the Directors are considerable. Therefore, consideration may need to be given to ensure the rigour of the process of review of proposals across all Schools." This amendment was accepted by the meeting.

Decision: GS/20-12/077(i): The March GSC minutes will be updated to state, "The responsibilities of the Directors are considerable. Therefore, consideration may need to be given to ensure the rigour of the process of review of proposals across all Schools."

GS/20-21/023 COVID-19 and COLSAG Update (Mitigation Measures for Postgraduate Students):

A recent email circulated regarding mitigation measures for undergraduate students has prompted some postgraduate students to ask if they are to receive similar mitigation measures. When discussed at GSC 5 November 2020, it had been agreed to delegate that decision to Course Directors rather than have a blanket policy as postgraduate programmes are diverse and operate many different assessment approaches. Members at the current meeting agreed that this same process would continue for the current semester. Course Directors, with the support of the DTLP can make arrangements at School level in a way that meets the needs of the students and individual programmes. Records must be kept of any mitigation or adaptation measures that are put in place, in order to facilitate reporting to the HEA.



Action GS/20-21/023 (iii): The Dean will circulate an email re mitigation measures for postgraduate students to School Managers, for distribution to course directors, who, in turn, can respond to individual students.

XX GS/20-21/087 New course proposal (HCI 3): MSc in Smart Medicines

Due to unforeseen issues that could not be resolved for the current meeting, this item was postponed to the May meeting.

XX GS/20-21/088 Revised Timetabling Policy and Memo – Mary McMahon (Manager, Central Timetabling Unit) to present

The Dean welcomed Mary McMahon (Manager, Central Timetabling Unit, Academic Registry) to the meeting and noted that papers had been circulated and taken as read. The timetabling policy was first approved as part of the Trinity Education Project (TEP) in March 2019. It had been developed to support the introduction of the common programme architecture under TEP, the development of the central management of timetabling for UG & PG programmes and the procedures and responsibilities in relation to the annual production of the timetable and the use of all identified teaching and learning spaces.

Ms. McMahon listed the benefits of the timetabling policy. A holistic timetabling policy governing the timetabling of all teaching and learning activities, ensures a consistent and transparent approach across all timetabling units. The policy has brought about improved allocation and utilisation of teaching and learning spaces. It leads to a clear, well-enforced and informed communication of timetabling priorities, as well as improved data quality and enhanced student and staff experience. In addition, the timetabling policy supports performance measurement of timetabling metrics (e.g., space utilisation) and provides the foundation for the delivery of online module enrolment.

An overview of changes to the policy was brought to the attention of GSC. Original policy 'principles' are now included as 'policy statements' and have been re-aligned for greater coherence. A new appendix, 'timetabling performance metrics', sets out details of timetabling metrics to be captured to gauge timetabling performance in relation to the student experience, staff experience and space utilisation.

Ms. McMahon discussed changes in the timetable in relation to postgraduate students. The timetabling policy covers undergraduate and postgraduate teaching activities conducted centrally and/or locally. It is cognisant of the difference in nature of postgraduate teaching and in the timing of postgraduate teaching events held throughout and beyond the formal academic year structure teaching and learning weeks. It was noted that Schools and Programme Offices are responsible for the scheduling of all postgraduate teaching and learning activities. A finite set of teaching spaces are available for all undergraduate and postgraduate teaching activities, as confirmed by Space Planning. She noted that the timetabling system, CMIS, should



record all postgraduate teaching and reporting on timetabling performance is dependent on the quality of data within CMIS. It was further noted that performance metrics might be more focussed on undergraduate teaching initially but may be expanded in the future to include performance metrics for postgraduate teaching.

The Dean thanked Ms. McMahon for her presentation and facilitated questions from the committee. Page 3 of 7 in the 'Timetabling Policy Review Paper, v2.5' noted that the schedule of commission of timetabling procedures and the delivery of information will be agreed. Ms. McMahon clarified that this happens annually in January or February for the following academic year. It was suggested that School Managers and Course Directors could also be included in arranging the agreed timelines as they are involved in subsequent postgraduate planning.

Ms McMahon confirmed that there is no formal approach to PG timetabling established as yet but it would be part of future strategic planning. She further confirmed that the block and pillar structure related to undergraduate timetabling and does not refer to postgraduate timetabling.

Responding to a query whether the principles and policies are based on pre-COVID norms, it was confirmed that the policy is expected to operate under normal teaching conditions and the current situation required an amount of deviation and special treatment. Asked if there was an expectation that there would be some transitioning from face-to-face to online as a general evolution of curricula, it was noted that this would be dealt with separately and the policy would refer to guidelines given. The need to block out appropriate lab time to give a proper level of education for both undergraduate and postgraduate students was highlighted by GSC.

Other comments were made that the Dean noted relate to future planning for timetabling. It was noted that the availability of postgraduate teaching staff may be limited and also it was noted that postgraduate programmes often take place on a recurring cycle with no break between cycles. The Dean thanked Ms. McMahon for her contribution to the meeting.

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GS/20-21/089 Micro-Credentials Pilot 2020-2024: Draft discussion paper from Patricia Callaghan (Academic Secretary & HCI Lead): Dr Ruth Pritchard (Programme Director: Micro-Credentials) to attend

The Dean welcomed Dr Ruth Pritchard (Programme Director for Micro-Credentials) to the meeting. A discussion paper on the Micro-Credentials pilot programme had been circulated. The Academic Secretary gave a presentation to accompany the paper, the purpose of which was to initiate a discussion on an approach to recognise micro-credential modules as stackable towards a formal major and/or minor award.

The project is funded by the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) and Trinity has committed to the pilot, with four Schools involved – School of Engineering, School of Nursing and Midwifery, School of Social Work and Social Policy and Trinity Business School. As micro-credentials are new both in Europe and USA, a working definition exists. The



proof of a micro-credential is a certified document. Micro-credentials can be shared and are portable and may be combined into larger credentials or qualifications.

A number of examples of Trinity's proposed micro-credentials within the pilot programme were given. It was noted that a micro-credential can be set at 2.5 ECT credits, although all current proposed micro-credentials within the pilot programme are worth 5 or 10 ECTS.

The Academic Secretary explained Major, Minor and Non-Major Awards. All Major Awards are registered on the National Framework for Qualifications (NFQ) and are the principal class of awards made at Level 8 and 9 at Trinity. The NFQ defines Minor awards as for "partial completion of the outcomes of a Major Award", e.g. Certificate at Level 9.

Non-Major Awards at Trinity are normally classified as 'Special Purpose' and the ECTS value varies depending on the subject. No particular convention guides ECTS values for this award type and there is currently no national framework for non-major awards. The NFQ defines Special Purpose Awards for "relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement." In addition, the Supplemental Award is defined by the NFQ as "for learning that is additional to a Major Award". There are no supplemental awards currently in Trinity.

The Academic Secretary noted a number of areas to consider in relation to micro-credentials. As stackability is a key element of micro-credentials, the type of award offered and the micro-credential pathway architecture need consideration. It was noted that there may be some concern that admissions criteria for micro-credentials stacked towards a Master or standard award could lead to the award being devalued. Time limits (e.g., 5 years or other) for credit accumulation credit from the first to the last module need discussion and agreement. The credit and recognition of external micro-credentials will be discussed at Irish Universities Association (IUA) level.

The Academic Secretary noted that Council recognises in principle that Trinity micro-credentials may be stackable towards a formal award. She further noted that if approved, a Micro-Credential Pathways Architecture will be developed, mapping eligibility for each award type, as appropriate, which may be either an established or a new award. The architecture would also ensure micro-credential pathways do not lead to double counting of credit. Regulations relating to, among others, admissions, progression, stackability, time-limits and recognition of prior learning would be developed in line with the Micro-Credential Pathways Architecture. She noted that recommendations relating to micro-credential pathways and award types will be brought for consideration by the University Council in Michaelmas term 2021.

Following the presentation, the Dean facilitated questions and comments from GSC in relation to micro-credential awards. The Dean also thanked the Directors within GSC that sit on the sub-committee to approve modules for micro-credentialing purposes – Profs Owen Conlon (Chair), John Boland and Mary Hughes.

It was queried whether there would be an expectation that all Schools would engage with micro-credentials. The Academic Secretary emphasised the close link between



micro-credentials and industry and noted that if the criteria for a micro-credential could not be met, it would not be forced on Schools.

It was confirmed that the aim of micro-credentials is that they are portable and stackable among different institutions and the Academic Secretary noted that it is important that Trinity has a clear understanding of the award structure it wishes to have.

It was noted that this is an exciting and challenging area and it was suggested that it would be worth looking at the success of TEP as a basis for considering the formation of a Trinity lifetime project. This project could give more people access to upskill in conjunction with the current government initiative of apprenticeship programmes. An example was given of the drive to retrofit houses with insulation and heat pumps and it was noted that Trinity could add value to the apprenticeships by offering additional skills in the areas of climate, climate change and solar technology etc. It was noted that it would need much consideration in terms of whether the stacking could be on top of existing degrees and/or to create Certificates, Diplomas and ultimately Degrees. The admissions criteria would also need to be considered and while the integrity of the award structure must be preserved, there is a huge opportunity to also reach out to a rapidly developing space.

The Academic Secretary confirmed that 18 micro-credential proposals that are under review are due to be rolled out from September 2021 and it is anticipated that more micro-credential proposals will be received for later in the year and for subsequent academic years.

The DTLP for Nursing and Midwifery noted that theirs is a relatively new profession with approximately 15 years of graduate education. Therefore a large cohort of potential applicants have many years of professional experience but may not fulfil the criteria for a Major Award. She noted that it would be important therefore to have some flexibility to allow for distinct requirements in some Schools.

The Dean thanked both the Academic Secretary and Programme Director for Micro-Credentials for their presentation and also thanked GSC members for their input and noted that the topic of micro-credentials is evolving and will undoubtedly be a part of future GSC meetings.

XX GS/20-21/090 Closing dates for admission to PGT programmes for 2021/22

The Dean asked the meeting to confirm the date by which the application system for PGT programmes would close for 2021/2022 programmes. This would be the final date to allow the processing time needed for AR, Schools and students. As per circulated memo, the proposed date was 31 July 2021 and this was agreed by the meeting. The Dean noted that the date would be confirmed with Academic Registry directly after the meeting and if Schools needed an earlier application date this could be accommodated by liaising directly with Academic Registry.



Decision GS/20-21/090: GSC agreed that 31 July 2021 as the closing date for admission to PGT programmes for 2021/22.

Action GS/20-21/090: The Dean will confirm 31 July 2021 as the closing date for admission to PGT programmes with Academic Registry.

XX **GS/20-21/091 Calendar Part III changes for 2021/22**

The Dean advised that the full set of Calendar changes would be presented under Agenda B. However, she wished to highlight some changes and receive feedback from GSC.

Current Calendar regulations (p.25, para 75) stipulate that students who are in receipt of College awards are treated differently to students who are externally funded in terms of an income limit. College regulation for income threshold for students in receipt of College awards is set at €18,000 after payment of fees. It was confirmed that the threshold is not mandated by Revenue but is set by the university and likely has an historical basis. The Dean noted, however, that it presents some difficulties, including that it sets these students at odds with peers who are permitted to have stipends of up to €21,500 without penalty. It also applies to earnings from within the university and therefore potentially pushes these students to take paid work outside the university. This work would be of potentially less value to their studies and may be paid at a low rate thereby requiring them to work additional hours. Some Schools operate a standard stipend for all PGR students and so request a waiver from the Dean for permission to exceed this income threshold, thus creating unnecessary bureaucracy. In addition, the recent cost of living uplift to the PPA scheme means that almost all students in that scheme will exceed that income threshold.

The Dean therefore proposed that reference to income threshold be deleted from the Calendar and that instead, issues related to stipend limits be aligned to Revenue requirements and handled by Human Resources. Students who earn in excess of the Revenue limit for a tax-free stipend should be required to pay tax on additional earnings, but this limit would be determined by Revenue rather than by Trinity. The Dean noted that it is likely that this change would require approval from Finance Committee before going to Council.

The Dean noted that in February 2020 Council approved electronic submission of PhD theses and the electronic version of a final thesis was now the version of official record, as uploaded into TARA. The Calendar regulation continued to reference the paper version, however. Therefore, the Dean proposed inserting “A thesis which has been examined and in which all necessary corrections have been completed, *if submitted in hard copy*, must be securely bound...”.

The current regulation for co-supervisors (Section II, p.30, para 9) stipulated that where a co-supervisor was drawn from outside academia, there is no remuneration. Based on discussions and feedback from GSC during the current year, the Dean proposed inserting ‘normally’ to capture the practice in some Schools where remuneration is critical – “The co-supervisor will not *normally* be remunerated.”



The Dean noted that although the majority of research students register for a full-time degree, there was a significant number of part-time students and for this cohort, proposed regulations that presume a full-time basis created some specific challenges. These related to submission of progress reports, permission from the Dean to register as a part-time student, completion times set for research degrees, revision times and arrangements for remote viva voce examinations.

The current formulation of the requirements for the submission of progress reports is “In the first, third and subsequent years of a student’s period on the PhD register”. However, the Dean proposed that rather than specify the year, a progress report should be submitted annually for all students and in the year in which students also complete a transfer of confirmation report, that could be submitted in lieu of or in addition to the progress report. The proposed Calendar change is that “A satisfactory progress report must be submitted annually as a condition for progression to the next year of study”.

The Dean proposed deleting the requirement of permission from the Dean to register as a part-time student. Instead, she proposed that decisions on part-time or full-time status on registration should be delegated to the School. She noted that this change does not change the constraint on switching from part-time to full-time but refers simply to entry on the register.

Page 33, para 34 sets out the maximum time for completion of research degrees. The Dean proposed noting the adaptation required for part-time students - “three and six years respectively for students on the part-time register”.

The Dean noted that the regulation on revision times could be amended in order to bring the part-time revision period into line – “(i) ...two months are allowed from the time of notification (*three months for students on the part-time register*), (ii) ...six months are normally allowed from the time of notification (*nine months for students on the part-time register*)”.

As a result of experiences over the previous year, the Dean proposed retaining the option of conducting viva voce examinations virtually, if that is the option that is acceptable to the student and the examiners. This would lead the omission of “such applications will only be favourably considered in the most exceptional circumstances”.

The Dean also proposed that permission for such a format should be delegated to the DTLP, who would retain responsibility for ensuring that no pressure is applied to students to participate in a remote viva voce examination, if their preference is for a face-to-face experience. The proposed change is “Application must be made to the *Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate)*” rather than “...to the Dean of Graduate Studies”.

The Dean also gave the caveat that she is aware that there are many aspects of the physical presence that add greatly to the experience and that it is easier to support students, particularly if the outcome has been less favourable than would have been hoped. She noted that there can be opportunities for external examiners to engage with



a wider group of staff and perhaps to engage with other students. She further noted that although there may be good reason to set the default option as face-to-face, it would seem likely that remote viva voce examinations will never again be “exceptional” and the proposal is intended to reflect that reality.

The DTLP of the School of Dental Science noted that students had indicated to him that the Academic Registry seemed to be asking students for hard copy of theses as well as the electronic copy. The Dean suggested that this could be followed up offline.

Action GS/20-21/092(i): The Assistant Secretary, Graduate Studies will liaise with the Academic Registry to confirm the electronic version of a final thesis, as uploaded into TARA, was now the version of official record.

Action GS/20-21/092(ii): GSC endorsed the proposed eight substantive changes to the regulatory provisions from the Calendar III – Sections I and II.

XX **GS/20-21/092 Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report for 2019/20**

The Dean gave a presentation to accompany the Graduate Studies Annual Report which had been circulated to members. She noted that the latter half of 2019/20 was very different due to the impact of COVID-19. She acknowledged that, as this is her first year as Dean, the report reflects a period when she had little involvement and so she wished to acknowledge the work done by others.

Section A of the Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report was a commentary on and an interpretation of the Academic Registry (AR) report. Section B was a summary of other ongoing developments and Section C looked to the future. Some statistics to note from the AR report included continued growth in PG numbers to 29% of students, a 13% growth since 2015/16. Most PG students (70%) are registered for taught programmes and 25% are registered for a research doctorate programme. There has been a reduction in the percentage of EU students (84% in 2015/16 to 72%) and 62% of the students were female.

Under Section A, the Dean noted that the number of PGT applications increased by 22% ($N=1741$) and 54% converted to offers (up from 41%), but only 52% of offers converted to registrations (down from 77%). 95 countries were represented with 54% of students having Irish nationality, and there was a 12% growth in non-EU students on PGT programmes. However, PGR applications decreased by 3%, in line with trend (FEMS increased numbers slightly but not to previous levels). There was also a decline in new PGR registrations since 2015/16: AHSS: 157-136, FEMS: 151-120, HS: 82-34. The Dean noted that this was an area that would need to be examined to gain an understanding of the reasons for these decreases.

Regarding PGR assessment, there was a slight increase in proportion of theses approved without amendment (11%), with most requiring minor corrections (81%) and



a smaller proportion (7%) referred for major revision. The duration of exam process varied, averaging 9 months, but ranging from 3 to 22 months.

Postgraduate student cases had an increase of over 18%, with almost as many PG requests logged (2,312) as were for undergraduate students (2,722). In reviewing the breakdown of the requests, requests regarding withdrawal pre-registration increased 122%. Requests for extensions to submit increased by 69% and requests related to open progression increased by 160%. However, the vast majority (78%) of requests were processed within one week, with 15.35% required longer than one calendar month. The Dean noted that COVID-19 had a significant impact on these increases and predicted that this would continue into 2020/21. The Dean gave a particular mention to the PG Cases team and PG Advisory Support Services.

Within Section B, the Dean noted staffing changes with Marie McPeak took over the Administrative Officer role in September 2019 and Cormac Doran joined the Graduate Studies team in June 2020. A large number of initiatives were progressed during this period, namely the policy on remote supervision of research students, implementation of thesis committees as part of the Structured PhD, development of a proposal for Non-Resident PhD model, e-thesis submission, pre-viva and post-viva voce examination reports, 19 major course proposals were considered and submitted as well as other smaller PgCert and PgDip courses and initial consultation began on postgraduate renewal.

The response to COVID-19 was documented. In the case of PGT courses, there was a delegation of decisions on adaptations to teaching, learning and assessment to the Dean, in consultation with Course Directors and extensions on submission dates for dissertations and for Courts of Examiners were automatically granted on request. For PGR students, six-month extensions free of fees was automatically applied to all students. The Dean of Research and Dean of Graduate Studies liaised with regard to rapid audit of lab-based research activities to enable resumption of research. All viva voce examinations took place remotely.

Other activities included the second round of the Provost PhD Project Awards: 149 applications, 40 awards (AHSS: 18, FEMS: 15, HS: 7). The Dean thanked colleagues across the university for the large amount of work involved - Profs. Eoin O'Sullivan, Paul Coughlan, Monica Gale, Celia Holland, Sinead Ryan, Stephen Connon, John Gilmer, Cecily Begley, Louise Gallagher and Prof Anthony Maciocia, University of Edinburgh. School achievements were collated by the Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education as submitted by DTLPs. Trinity was successful in a bid to host the LERU Doctoral Summer School *Reasserting the Role of the Expert*. However, the event did not take place due to COVID-19 and was postponed to the coming summer. Other external activities were involvement with the IUA 'Guidelines on Establishment of Collaborative Research Degrees', 'Response to Covid' and the Human Capital Initiative (HCI).

Some highlights from the preliminary consultation on postgraduate renewal included a lack of cohesive sense of identity, the importance of system enhancements to support effective processing of applications, assessment, progression, the critical need for flexibility and a bespoke postgraduate focus as part of 'student cases'. The



consultation also highlighted a need for facilities such as postgraduate space and supports, including the consideration of part time student needs. Financial issues, including fees for PGR students were raised, as was the need for a cultural shift within the university to include focus on PG community as well as the UG community when making plans.

Section C looked to the future and included a proposal regarding postgraduate renewal sent to Council for consideration. GSC was also working towards the formalisation of the supervision enhancement programme and the initiation of an award for excellence in supervision. A number of PGR plans were listed, including review of internal awards, removal of the income limit of €18,000, consideration of the fee implications of charging only EU fees for PGR students and a focus on PGR students' space needs and availability.

The Dean noted that other plans included monitoring the success of the Non-Resident PhD model, evaluating the learning from the CHARM-EU model, building capacity for pastoral supports for postgraduate students and implementing HCI workstreams. It was also planned to exploit the learning from the change to online learning, assessment, supervision and meeting organisation to ensure that enhancements would be retained for future gain. Another large plan was the postgraduate renewal consultation process to map priorities and develop plans.

The Dean asked for feedback on the Annual Report from GSC. One comment was that it would appear that additional human power was required within the PG Cases team as the workload was quite significant for one person. The Director of Student Services confirmed that Trinity has allocated six extra staff to Academic Registry, an increase of 10%. She confirmed that two of the six staff may be allocated to the postgraduate section and further noted that a more automated system this would also help alleviate the issues.

The Assistant Secretary, Graduate Education noted that communication would be sent from Graduate Studies, in the following week, to note that any off books extension requests should be sent to the PG Cases email address only.

Decision GS/20-21/092: GSC recommended the GSO Annual Report to Council.

GS/20-21/093 COVID-19 and update from COLSAG

The Dean noted that there were a number of sectoral level discussions with both the HEA and the Department of Education and Skills and that the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, had outlined his preference for an agreed sectoral response to modes of teaching for 2021-22 with a single announcement made. The Minister had also stated that the hope for students to be able to return to campus in September 2021, noting that the ability to return to campus would be linked to the introduction of screening. The Dean confirmed that the TriniScreen initiative was ongoing, having begun in residences and subsequently



rolled out for lab-based students and staff. Following a call from Science Foundation Ireland, a funding application was being submitted from all IUA universities to review the effectiveness and efficacy of screening measures in place, comparing diagnostic accuracy of LAMP vs lateral flow testing. A proposal to run a pilot based on LAMP vs lateral flow testing across the sector was submitted, which would review the reliability and cost of these measures. The aim was that students' test results would be linked to the student identification card and any test suggesting COVID-19 would be flagged to the student and to Student Health for a diagnostic test. The student would not be able to access campus except for a specific purpose, such as visiting the health centre.

The Dean suggested, and GSC members agreed, that the students most likely to be candidates for the pilot, due to their being on campus during the coming summer months, were students from the Faculty of STEM who are completing dissertation work requiring lab access. The Dean noted that the numbers of potential students involved needed to be collated and that consent would need to be given to participate in this research project. Students would be tested twice per week which would allow them to protect themselves, their bubble and their peers. Other mitigation measures that are already in place (mask-wearing, social distancing etc.) would remain, however. The Dean noted that it would be best to involve as many students as possible and so noted that the pilot would not be restricted to STEM students.

Action GS/20-21/093: The Dean will liaise with DTLPs to gain an understanding of the approximate number of students that could be involved in the pilot screening for COVID-19 during the summer months in advance of Academic Year 2021/22.

GS/20-21/094 LERU update

The Dean thanked Profs Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology and Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences for reviewing applications from PhD students to participate in the LERU Doctoral Summer School. She noted that the shortlisting was complete and details sent to LERU, who make the final call on participants. Those not selected as core participants would be invited to be part of some aspects of the programme.

GS/20-21/095 PG renewal update

The Dean gave a presentation on the PG Renewal initiative to GSC which she had given to Heads of Schools the previous day. Core principles were outlined and the overall outcome of an enhanced experience for all was emphasized.

She noted that, to date, small preliminary focus groups with students and DTLPs and also desk-based reviews had taken place. Four draft action areas as part of the student experience were identified for consideration – PGT, PGR, Systems and Relationships.

A number of potential deliverables, subject to consultation, were outlined including a comprehensive review of taught postgraduate programmes. An enhanced Structured PhD (interdisciplinarity, intersectoral engagement and international connectivity) was also identified. Other potential deliverables included a blueprint for a seamless,



integrated, student-centred information management system and structures and processes that support Schools to ensure consistency, transparency and connectedness. The desired result should be an exemplary postgraduate student experience, supporting all aspects of a student's development and a robust and cohesive postgraduate community. It had been suggested at the meeting with Heads of Schools that staff experience should also be included.

The Dean highlighted a range of potential areas for consideration in relation to postgraduate taught and research activities. It was noted that a review of processes and systems would also be required. This could encompass a review and subsequent enhancement of the application system, with a seamless student-centred pathway. All aspects of postgraduate activity within SITS could be reviewed to leverage enhanced flexibility and efficiency and to reduce time leakage for staff. The automated student record system (prompts to supervisor/modules/confirmation etc.) would also be enhanced and a review of digital supports for postgraduate teaching and learning would take place to exploit in-person, blended and online learning opportunities.

Part of a review of relationships was an aim to develop an employer engagement strategy to ensure responsiveness to market needs and increase opportunities for internships and employment-based experience for PG students. The potential for joint PhD programmes and collaborations, building on the learning from initiatives such as CHARM-EU, would be evaluated and a robust alumni engagement strategy would be built.

The Dean noted that all of the above considerations are suggestions only and further consultation would take place before an agreement on the direction would be made. She noted that approval was sought from Council to progress to a stage of consultation where the above topics would be discussed more fully with stakeholders as well as other topics that may arise during the consultation process. She identified the next step within this process as being a university-wide consultation process, followed by design, implementation and finally review and forward planning.

The Dean confirmed that this was to have been a three-year project and had been due to begin in September 2020. Although COVID restrictions prevented this from happening at that time, she noted that the consultation period would be a priority for the next stage of this project.

It was suggested that a university-level decision could be made on an agreed number of teaching hours that would be required by postgraduate researchers to receive a micro-credentialing certification in demonstration. It was further noted that this would give validation to the huge reliance on postgraduate researchers to be involved in teaching.

GS/20-21/096 AOB

There was no other business.



XX Section B for noting and approval

GS/20-21/097 Change to new strand proposal (HCI 3) in Zero-Carbon Technology to restructured MSc/PgDip/PgCert in Mechanical Engineering – memo from Prof. Henry Rice (School of Engineering)

The Dean noted that when this module was approved at the March GSC, a question was raised as to whether 15 ECTS research methods for the PgDip students was excessive given that some students would intend to complete the PgDip only. In response to this suggestion, 'Research Methods' was reduced to 5 ECTS, with the additional 10 ECTS to be made up from optional modules already part of the course proposal.

Decision GS/20-21/097: GSC approved change to new strand proposal (HCI 3) in Zero-Carbon Technology to restructured MSc/PgDip/PgCert in Mechanical Engineering – reducing ECTS for 'Research Methods' from 15 ECTS to 5 ECTS, with additional 10 ECTS to be made up from optional modules already part of the course proposal.

GS/20-21/098 Change of course title from Prof Dip to PgCert in Sustainable Development for Business – memo from Prof. Mary Lee Rhodes (DTLP) and Michael Flynn (Director of Executive Education) in Trinity Business School

This original course proposal went to Council as a "professional diploma". However, as Council had not previously given approval in principle to an award for any professional diploma, it was unwilling to award approval of a specific professional diploma. In order to be permitted to run the course in September 2021, the title of the award has been changed to PgCert.

Decision GS/20-21/098: GSC approved change of course title from 'Professional Diploma' to 'PgCert' in Sustainable Development for Business

GS/20-21/099 Sub-Committee of USC and GSC on stand-alone modules for credit and micro-credentials – endorsement of decisions of 15 April 2021

GSC was asked to endorse the recommendation of the sub-committee to approve one module, 'Professional, Ethical, Legal and Communication Issues informing Nurse and Midwife Prescribing and Clinical Practicum' (School of Nursing and Midwifery), is subject to minor changes notified to the proposers. The amended version was not received at that time, and it was agreed by GSC that an email approval of the recommendation could be sought once the amended proposal was submitted, along with financial approval from the Faculty Dean.

Decision GS/20-21/099 GSC endorsed the recommendation of the Sub-Committee of USC and GSC on Micro-Credentials to approve one micro-credential module – 'Professional, Ethical, Legal and Communication Issues informing Nurse and Midwife Prescribing and Clinical Practicum (School of Nursing and Midwifery) to be brought to Council for approval and noting subject to minor amendments and financial approval from the Faculty Dean.



GS/20-21/100 Calendar Part III changes for 2021/22

The Dean noted that the Calendar Part III changes had been circulated. The Dean requested that DTLPs check their own Calendar entry for errors and any required corrections should be submitted by School Managers via email to genadgso@tcd.ie in order for Council to approve the final iteration.

Action GS/20-21/100 DTLPs to have their School Managers contact genadgso@tcd.ie with any Calendar corrections in order to be brought to Council for approval.

Decision GS/20-21/100 GSC endorsed the final Calendar III changes.

XX Section C for noting

There were no agenda items for Section C to note.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12pm.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 22 April 2021