



**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the online meeting held via Zoom at  
10am on Thursday 4 November 2021

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**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 Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science

Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education

Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English

Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Isabella Jackson, School of Histories & Humanities

Professor Blanaid Clarke, School of Law

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

Professor Manuela Kulaxizi, School of Mathematics

Professor Lina Zgaga, School of Medicine

Professor Mary Hughes, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor Carlos Medina Martin, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Hongzhou Zhang, School of Physics

Professor Ladislav Timulak, School of Psychology

Professor Gillian Wylie, School of Religion

Professor Tara Mitchell, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy

Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Ms Gisèle Scanlon, Graduate Students' Union 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 Laoise Quinn (Academic Affairs, TT&L): Secretary to the Committee

Ms Ewa Sadowska Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

*Apologies*

Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Dean of Research

Professor Frank Barry, Trinity Business School

Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry

Professor Sarah-Jane Scaife, School of Creative Arts

Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering

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



Professor Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences  
Ms Abhiswetta Bhattacharjee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

*In attendance for individual items:*

Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing, TCD Global, for item GS/21-22/027

The Dean welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies.

#### **GS/21-22/025 Minutes of GSC of 7 October 2021**

There was one correction to the minutes. Under **GS/21-22/015**, the original minutes stated, "The Trinity Excellence in Teaching Awards Scheme did not take place in 2020/21 but nominations for the current year were to be submitted from Schools in the coming weeks." and were corrected to "The Postgraduate Teaching Award Scheme did not take place in 2020/21 but nominations for the current year were to be submitted from Schools in the coming weeks".

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#### **GS/21-22/026 Matters arising**

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

Re **GS/21-22/006(i)**: The Dean noted that this action remained outstanding.

**Action GS/21-22/006(i)**: The GSU President will arrange for a Teaching Assistant representative to join the working group on PGR student workload.

Re **GS/21-22/001**: The Dean reminded members of remaining dates for meetings between Directors and the Dean to discuss School-related postgraduate issues: Monday 15 November, 4-5pm; Thursday 25 November, 1-2pm and Monday 6 December, 9-10am. The first of the meetings had taken place on Monday 1 November 2021.

Re **Actions GS/21-22/007**: The Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education confirmed that the module coordinator for CA7000 will circulate an FAQ document to DTLPs on her return from leave the following week. He noted that since the last GSC he had emailed all PGR students informing them of the new mandatory module and of the single email account for queries. He noted that the email account is managed by both the module coordinator and an administrator. He further noted that 70 students had responded, stating that they had not previously been enrolled on the module. These students would undertake the module early in Semester 2.

Re **Action GS/21-22/002**: The Dean confirmed that hard copies of the PGR Student Handbook had been printed and were available from the Graduate Studies Office. This was in addition to the previously printed PGR Revised Supervision Guidelines.

Re **GS/21-22/017**: The Dean advised that the LERU position paper on doctoral supervision was



undergoing substantial review and therefore would not be available for some months.

Re **GS/21-22/018**: The Dean confirmed that slides from the presentation given by the Director of the Academic Registry had been circulated to GSC members and noted that she would also attend the December GSC meeting.

Re **GS/21-22/020**: The Dean stated that much of the focus of discussions at COLSAG had been on the work conducted primarily by the Central Timetabling Unit team in relation to finding suitable teaching space. Appreciation for these efforts and the impact on the abilities of Schools to deliver face-to-face teaching was highlighted by the Director for Computer Science and Statistics.

**XX GS/21-22/027 Postgraduate Virtual Open Day 2022**

The Dean welcomed Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing, TCD Global, to the meeting. The presentation slides had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Trinity's Virtual Postgraduate Open Day was held on Saturday 6 March 2021, from 11am to 3pm. The Director of Marketing expressed disappointment with the level of interaction from the 2,640 registrants with the academic staff present at the open day. In planning for future events, she suggested a number of possible solutions: (a) changing the format to a two-hour event held on a weekday with one academic per School available, (be) ensuring that the 'ask a question' functionality would be highlighted on the website and registrants would be encouraged to post questions in advance, and (c) including a staff-driven Q&A based on the previous year's volume of questions.

The Director of Marketing advised that postgraduate admission was open for the academic year 2022/23 and a selection of videos from the Postgraduate Virtual Open Day 2021 that had not been time-stamped had been uploaded to the applications webpage. She stated that it would be best when creating videos, if details of academic years were not included so that the videos could be reused in subsequent years unless there was a change in course content or staff.

It was queried what was expected in terms of the video as the website contained a mix of short sales pitch-style videos and longer detailed videos. The Director of Marketing confirmed that Schools had been asked to submit a 10min video to include an overview of courses on offer within the School, to give some academic detail and to explain career opportunities that would follow in addition to the type of student that might consider applying. She noted that some Schools had created shorter marketing-style professional videos which would also be suitable. The decision is for Schools to make in determining the style of video that best suits their needs.

**Action GS/21-22/027(i)**: Members can contact the Director of Marketing with any issues or queries in relation to videos promoting their courses.

The Director of Marketing declared that 75 attendees who had not been known to Trinity via various databases had become registered students in 2021/22. She asked GSC to consider another virtual open day for 2022 as a virtual event allows for potential applicants outside of Ireland to attend and/or engage with course presentations via the website after the event. She confirmed that all contact details of registered participants would be shared with Schools should they wish to follow up



with registrants after the open day and that Schools were welcome to give input on suggested ways to target specialised applicant groups if necessary.

**Action GS/21-22/027(ii):** Schools that have information on specialised applicant cohorts that should be targeted in relation to their courses can contact the Director of Marketing.

Members suggested that an open day in March might be too late in the academic year to attract high quality applicants. It was agreed that a poll would be created where members would give their preference on when the Postgraduate Open Day should take place. The Dean suggested that DTLPS might liaise with their School colleagues before responding to the poll.

**Action GS/21-22/027(iii):** The Graduate Studies Office will set up a poll among GSC members asking for their preference, following consultation with School colleagues, on their preferred time of year for a postgraduate open day (January/February/March), and specifically for the Postgraduate Virtual Open Day 2022.

The Dean thanked the Director of Marketing for attending the meeting and engaging with members in relation to Postgraduate Virtual Open Days 2021 and 2022.

## **XX GS/21-22/028 Assessment and Academic Progression Policy**

The revised policy had been circulated to members. The Dean advised that the information in the policy had been restructured to be clearer and more concise. There were no comments from members in relation to the suggested amendments and the Dean stated that members could submit feedback to her by Tuesday 9 November and that otherwise the amended policy would be considered as approved by GSC.

**Decision GS/21-22/028:** GSC approved the amendments to 'Assessment and Academic Progression Policy' with any additional feedback to be sent to the Dean by Tuesday 9 November 2021.

## **XX GS/21-22/029 Excellence in Research Supervision Award Proposal**

The Dean had introduced the proposed Excellence in Research Supervision Award at the October GSC meeting and advised members that the Provost welcomed the initiation of the award. She informed members that she had liaised with Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Head of Academic Practice on the structure of the award, aiming for a process that was rigorous, yet not overly onerous. The Dean sought suggestions from members on the criteria and process for nominating and selecting candidates and on the roles DTLPs and Schools would play in their short-listing, remaining cognisant of importance of including the DTLP and School without over-burdening them.

It was suggested that as postgraduate supervision of dissertations are not included in the award criteria, the title of the proposed award could be amended to 'Award for Excellence in Supervision of PhD Research Students' to make a clear distinction between the two. Members recommended that both former and current PhD students should be permitted to make a nomination and as such, it would be important that students are made aware of this award and the award process. It was further suggested that nominees could include supervisors who had stepped in on behalf of



colleagues to take on challenging situations and therefore School colleagues and DTLPs should give input on nominations. It was also suggested that looking after students' well-being should be an important element to the award and it was noted that this aspect was included in the evaluation criteria.

It was proposed that the award structure should take the career level of the nominated supervisor into account. It was agreed that a nominee should have supervised at least one candidate to PhD completion. It was also agreed that professional criteria such as involving a student in research networks and introducing them to conferences should be included.

It was noted that a situation might arise where a supervisor might provide excellent supervision support to some students, but at the expense of other students under their supervision. It was further noted that assessment of such situations could be challenging and that guidance to Schools might include a request to consider the supervisor's contribution in the wider context. It was further suggested that other students in the supervisor's chamber could also be consulted before submitting a final nomination. Following discussion, it was agreed that the first iteration of the award will focus on supervision of PhD students, noting that the award may be broadened in the future to include supervision of taught doctoral students.

**Action GS/21-22/029:** Members can send further feedback on the proposed Excellence in PhD Research Supervision Award to the Dean as soon as possible with a view to ensuring a proposal can be brought to Council before the end of the term.

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### GS/21-22/030 Postgraduate Teaching Awards

The Dean reported on the Postgraduate Teaching Awards scheme, advising that nomination forms would be sent to Schools by the following week requesting nominations of up to three postgraduate research students who had contributed to a School's teaching activities in the calendar year 2021. The Dean encouraged all DTLPs to review the contribution of postgraduate research students to teaching in their School and to return nominations by the end of November.

**Action GS/21-22/030:** Directors are requested to submit nominations of up to three students who had taught in the 2021 calendar year for the Postgraduate Teaching Awards to [Dean.GradSecretary@tcd.ie](mailto:Dean.GradSecretary@tcd.ie) by the end of November.

The Dean informed members of proposed minor changes to membership of the Postgraduate Teaching Award review panel. Rather than two DTLPs as part of the group, she proposed that one DUTL and one DTLP should be on the review panel as the postgraduate students may contribute significantly to undergraduate teaching. She advised that other members include the Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair), the Senior Lecturer, Director of Academic Practice, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President and the Students' Union Education Officer.

**Decision GS/21-22/030:** GSC agreed the proposed minor change to the membership of the Postgraduate Teaching Award review panel, whereby one DUTL and one DTLP will be members rather than two DTLPs, as many postgraduate students teach on undergraduate modules.



It was suggested that support should be available and offered to those who are shortlisted but do not receive an award. It was noted that some students do not get an opportunity to teach and that Schools should consider how to give all students the opportunity to teach should they wish to do so. The Dean confirmed that this aspect of research student activity was under consideration as part of the focus of the Working Group on Postgraduate Research Student Teaching Contributions.

## XX **GS/21-22/031 Online or Remote Viva Voce Examinations**

The Dean introduced a discussion on whether online or remote viva voce examinations should remain post-pandemic, noting that policy change would also lead to a revision in Calendar III. She summarised three possible options outlined in the accompanying memo – to revert to the former practice of in-person viva examinations except in exceptional situations; to continue as per present practice of online examinations as the routine option, once all are in agreement; or to adopt a hybrid version where some, but not all participants are required to attend the examination in-person. She noted that some universities require the student to be on site and to be accompanied by either their supervisor or the Chair of the interview panel for both examination and pastoral reasons.

Members agreed that maximum flexibility was important, in order to reflect the individual circumstances of each student and School. It was stated that choice of examiner is influenced by the individual research project and the option of remote examinations allows for a broader choice of examiners. Environmental reasons were also cited as a benefit of remote or hybrid modes of examination. However, some members expressed reservations about a hybrid approach, preferring either fully face-to-face or fully online formats. One member commented on the importance of the presentations usually given by PhD candidates to the School in advance of the viva voce examination and expressed a hope that this element would remain part of the process.

It was queried who would be responsible for the decision on the format of a viva examination. There was a suggestion that student preference should be considered, but examiner preference and School finances should also be taken into account. The Dean stated that she would be satisfied for DTLPs to decide on the mode of examination following discussion with supervisors and with the input from the Dean if required.

It was also queried whether a change in the standard mode of viva examinations post-pandemic would affect guidelines for distance learning PhD candidates.

**Action GS/21-22/031(i):** The Dean will consider whether a change in the standard mode of viva voce examinations post-pandemic would affect guidelines for distance learning PhD candidates and she will liaise re same with the four pilot Schools concerned.

The Dean thanked members for their input and it was agreed that she would bring a proposal to Council for revised regulations on the conduct of viva examinations post-pandemic.

**Action GS/21-22/031(ii):** The Dean will bring revised guidelines for post-pandemic remote viva voce examinations to Council.



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**GS/21-22/032 COVID-19 and update from COLSAG**

The Dean informed members of updates from the COLSAG meeting that had taken place the previous day, including notice that an email would be circulated to provide clarity to staff and students in relation to staying off campus if feeling unwell, symptomatic or awaiting the result of a COVID-19 test. She reiterated that the group's message to students is to assure them that they would not be penalised for missed classes and that they should liaise with the module coordinator for support.

It was queried whether students could remove masks to partake in certain activities. The Dean confirmed that any specific queries should be brought formally to COLSAG as the response would depend on the reasons why mask-wearing might be exempt in particular incidences as well as various mitigating factors such as, proposed length of time for mask removal, noting whether students were in pods and confirming size of the room etc. All such requests are reviewed by the Health and Safety Officer and by Dr David McGrath in the first instance, before consideration by COLSAG and the Trinity Living with Covid Oversight Committee.

**Action GS/21-22/032:** Members should direct requests for permission to not wear a mask for certain activities to COLSAG, and should give clear details on mitigating factors.

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**GS/21-22/033 Any other business**

The GSU President confirmed that the voting process for postgraduate student class representatives would conclude in the following week. The reason given for the delayed timing of the election was to ensure that late registrants would be included in the voting procedure. However, it was suggested by members that it would be preferable to hold the elections earlier in the academic year so that class reps were in place early in the first Semester, thereby meeting the needs of the majority of students rather than potentially disadvantaging the majority in order to facilitate the small number of students who are late registrants.

The DTLP for the School of Biochemistry and Immunology raised an issue of School nominations for the Postgraduate Renewal Process in her role as work package lead for the postgraduate research element of the process. She had sent out an email requesting that DTLPs nominate two supervisors, two MSc students and two professional staff who would participate in focus groups on postgraduate research in Trinity. Members were reminded to submit the nominations so that a cross-representation of relevant stakeholders across Trinity would be ensured.

**Action GS/21-22/033:** Members were reminded to respond to an email from the DTLP for Biochemistry and Immunology in her role as work package lead for the postgraduate research element of the Postgraduate Renewal Process.

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**Section B for noting and approval**

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**GS/21-22/034 HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials for approval**

A memorandum from Prof. Owen Conlan, Chair of USC/GSC USC/GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials, dated 18 October 2021, requested GSC consideration of five micro-credentials that had been recommended for approval by the sub-committee at their meeting of 22 September 2021 as follows: 'Advanced Spatial Analysis using GIS', 'Introduction to XR:



Applications and Technologies’, ‘Motion Picture Engineering’ and ‘Spatial Audio’ all from School of Engineering; along with ‘Equality Diversity and Inclusion – Policy and People’ from the School of Social Work and Social Policy.

**Decision GS/21-22/034:** GSC endorsed the recommendation of the USC/GSC Sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials for Council to approve the following five micro-credentials: ‘Advanced Spatial Analysis using GIS’, ‘Introduction to XR: Applications and Technologies’, ‘Motion Picture Engineering’ and ‘Spatial Audio’ all from School of Engineering; along with ‘Equality Diversity and Inclusion – Policy and People’ from the School of Social Work and Social Policy.

**XX GS/21-22/035 Membership of Sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials 2021/22**

A memorandum from Prof. Owen Conlan, Chair of USC/GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials, dated 18 October 2021, requested GSC consideration of the membership for the academic year 2021/22. The Dean thanked the sub-committee members for volunteering to take on this role.

**Decision GS/21-22/035:** GSC recommended for Council approval the membership of USC/GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials for academic year 2021/22.

**XX GS/21-22/036 Request from Trinity Business School to defer start date of two micro-credentials**

A memorandum from Michael Flynn, Director of Executive Education, Trinity Business School, requested GSC consideration to defer the start date of two micro-credentials, ‘Leading Digital Marketing Strategy’ and ‘Lean Operational Excellence’ - originally scheduled for first delivery in Semester 1 - first iteration now commencing 31 Jan and ending 18 Feb and a second iteration beginning 1 June and ending 29 June 2022; and ‘Lean Operational Excellence’ - originally scheduled for first delivery in Semester 1 - now proposed for delivery commencing 30 May 2022 and ending 16 June.

**Decision GS/21-22/036:** GSC recommended for Council approval the request from Trinity Business School to defer the start date of the two micro-credentials: ‘Leading Digital Marketing Strategy’

**XX GS/21-22/037 Request for change of course and award titles of Tangents’ PgCert in Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

A memorandum from Tangent requested GSC consideration for discontinuation of the joint award ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship’, replacing it with a single Special Purpose award, and for a change of course title from the original (jointly delivered PCIA-IENT-1P) ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Joint Certificate)’ to ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship’, also carrying 30 ECTS and unchanged course learning outcomes. The singly delivered Trinity course will have two entry points in SITS i.e. one for internal Trinity students/staff and one for applicants external to Trinity from 2021/22.

**Decision GS/21-22/037:** GSC approved the discontinuation of the joint award ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship’, replacing it with a single Special Purpose award, and for a change of course title from the original (jointly delivered PCIA-IENT-1P) ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship (Joint Certificate)’ to ‘Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship’.



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**Section C for noting**

GSC noted the following Minutes:

- (i) Minutes from USC/GSC sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials - April 2021**
- (ii) Minutes from USC/GSC sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials - May 2021**
- (iii) Minutes from USC/GSC sub-committee on HCI Pillar 3 Micro-credentials - June 2021**

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.40am.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 4 November 2021