



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the online meeting held via Zoom at
10am on Thursday 7 October 2021

XX = Council relevance

Present (Ex officio):

Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)

Professor Wolfgang Schmitt, Dean of Research

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 Sarah-Jane Scaife, School of Creative Arts

Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science

Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education

Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering

Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English

Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Isabella Jackson, School of Histories & Humanities

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

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 Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences

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

Ms Gisèle Scanlon, Graduate Students' Union President

Ms Abhisweta 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 Laoise Quinn (Academic Affairs, TT&L): Secretary to the Committee

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



Apologies

Professor Frank Barry, Trinity Business School

Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry

Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

In attendance for individual items:

Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry and

Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning, the Academic Registry, for item

GS/21-22/019 PGR Progression

The Dean welcomed all to the first official meeting of GSC in 2021/22. She also formally thanked the outgoing DTLPs, Profs Mary-Lee Rhodes, Biswajit Basu, Matthew Campbell, Ashley Clements, Deirdre Ahern, Kumlesh Dev, Cristin Ryan, Thomas Chadeaux and Prof. Daniele Pevarello who undertook the role on a short-term basis for Prof Gillian Wylie during the past academic year. The Dean also formally welcomed the new DTLPS, Profs Frank Barry, Sarah McCormack, Russell McLaughlin, Isabella Jackson, Blanaid Clarke, Lina Zgaga, Carlos Medina Martin and Tara Mitchell. She also officially welcomed Prof Wolfgang Schmitt, Dean of Research.

GS/21-22/012 Minutes of GSC of 20 May 2021 and 23 September 2021

Both sets of minutes were approved as circulated.

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GS/21-22/013 Matters arising

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

With respect to the GSC May 2021 minutes the following actions were referred to:

Re **Actions GS/20-21/044(i)** and **GS/21-22/006** The Dean informed the meeting that the working group membership for PGR student workload is now almost complete, with three Directors from AHSS, two from STEM and one from HS: Profs Bernice Murphy, Tara Mitchell, Kathleen McTiernan, Hongzhou Zhang, Sarah McCormack and Carlos Medina Martin, the GSU President and Vice-President and a School Manager nominee (still to be confirmed). The Dean noted that it was hoped that the first meeting would take place within the coming weeks. It was agreed that a Teaching Assistant representative should join the working group.

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 **Action GS/20-21/093:** The Dean confirmed that the UniCov project was well underway although the response of Trinity staff/students was lower than other participating universities.

Action GS/20-21/093(i) The Dean requested that members continue to encourage participation in the UniCov project.



Re **Action GS/20-21/106**: The Dean noted that she was not aware of any GSC member following up on the Erasmus+ focus groups.

Re **Action GS/21-22/117(i)**: Micro-credential received GSC approval by email and was approved by Council under vacation procedures. An update from sub-committee Chair is to take place during the meeting. The Dean commented that a huge amount of work has been undertaken by all involved in the project. She thanked all committee members, MC proposers, and colleagues in Academic Affairs.

With respect to the GSC September 2021 minutes the following actions were referred to:

Re **Actions GS/21-22/001**: The Dean confirmed dates for the agreed meetings of small groups of Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) (DTLPs) with the Dean to discuss School-related postgraduate issues. It was conceded that proposed priority slots may not align with preferences in each Faculty.

Action GS/21-22/001(i): DTLPs are to contact Catherine Allen DeanGradSecretary@tcd.ie to indicate their ranked preference for small group meetings with the Dean.

Re **Actions GS/21-22/007**: The Dean noted that as a result of the strong views expressed at the September meeting, the Dean and the Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education liaised with the Research Integrity module coordinator and with the Academic Registry to review the proposed assessment. The revised proposal was that the Student Development Plan would remain part of the module and supervisors would be encouraged to engage with the associated activities in their supervision sessions, but the assessment of the module would be based solely on student performance on the MCQs linked to each section of the module. Therefore, Schools would not need to forward marks to the module coordinator. It was noted that the module had originally been set up for PhD research students but it is planned that it will be broadened out to other student cohorts.

Action GS/21-22/007(i): DTLPs with specific queries regarding this Research Integrity module and research students other than PhD students willing to partake in it are to contact the Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education.

Action GS/21-22/007(ii): The Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education is compiling a FAQ list and will forward it to DTLPs on completion for their review.

Re **Action GS/21-22/010**: The Dean noted that comments on the ISER were to have been sent to the Quality Officer by 5 October 2021.

Re **Action GS/21-22/002**: The Dean confirmed that the PGR Revised Supervision Guidelines were available on the Graduate Studies website and copies were also printed, and that the PGR Student Handbook would be completed in the near future.

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GS/21-22/014 PG renewal update

The Dean confirmed that the first Steering Group meeting had taken place and meetings with



individual Work Package Chairs and Leads were to begin. These meetings would determine both the most relevant questions as the consultative process begins and how best to reach target stakeholders.

Action GS/21-22/014: The Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education will speak with DTLPs in small groups to collate their suggestions for inclusion in PG Renewal and short and medium to long-term solutions.

XX GS/21-22/015 Teaching and supervision awards

The Dean gave a verbal update of a meeting with CAPSL on 6 October 2021 to discuss (a) Trinity Excellence in Teaching Awards Scheme rollout for 2021/22; (b) New Excellence in Research Supervision Award Scheme; (c) Recognition of contribution to demonstration by PGR students.

The Postgraduate 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. A new Excellence in Research Supervision Award Scheme is proposed, similar to the Teaching Excellence in Teaching Award, with an equally rigorous, but less onerous application process. It is planned that there will be one award per Faculty. The aim is to have draft documentation available for review by the next GSC meeting, with the awards to be rolled out from January 2022.

The Dean confirmed that evidence of commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has already been identified as important to include in the application process. The Trinity Excellence in Teaching Awards were student-nominated and the Dean asked for opinions regarding the nomination process for this new award. It was suggested that student nomination and endorsement should have a heavy weighting, but that supervisors who volunteer in difficult situations to help students that otherwise would be disadvantaged should also be acknowledged. This could happen perhaps via colleague nomination and the DTLP might have an oversight of same in addition to self-nomination. It was further suggested that involvement from the Dean of Graduate Studies would give gravitas to the award scheme.

XX GS/21-22/016 Summary of work of sub-committee of USC and GSC on HCI 3 Micro-credentials in 2020/21

The Chair of the Sub-committee of USC and GSC on HCI 3 Micro-credentials, Prof. Owen Conlan, spoke to his memo. He commended the constitution of the sub-committee in that the membership came from a broad group of areas. The sub-committee met three times in the last Semester due to time pressures related to the HCI commitments and 19 micro-credentials from the four pilot Schools were approved. He clarified that the remit was to review the proposals from an academic perspective, with some oversight of market need. He applauded the engagement of Academic Affairs, Academic Practice and Careers Advisory Service with the process and also commended the Academic Affairs website which was updated over the summer with excellent resources to support the development process. He gave special thanks to Laoise Quinn, Education Officer in Academic Affairs, and Dr Ruth Pritchard, Programme Director: Micro-credentials, for their work and also to Profs John Boland and Mary Hughes, DLTPs who are sub-committee members. He concluded by



stating that it was hoped that the sub-committee would only need to meet once per semester in 2021/22, as per terms of reference.

The DTLP for School of Engineering, who had submitted a micro-credential proposal, thanked the Chair and Laoise Quinn for their support to the Schools. The Dean thanked the Chair and the sub-committee for their work and reiterated that the submissions in the current term were greatly enhanced by the new resources developed by Academic Affairs and support given to proposers by the sub-committee.

XX GS/21-22/017 Update on LERU

The LERU Doctoral Group met on 23 and 24 September 2021. A number of items were discussed, including: differing practices on research supervision across the LERU universities; growing interest in the introduction of mandatory training in research supervision; a growing emphasis on professionalisation of research supervision; and the importance of recognising and appreciating excellence in supervision as a core academic activity linked to promotion opportunities and performance evaluation. Other topics discussed included size of the supervisory team, thesis committee responsibility and supervisors' role in developing transversal skills, as well as work-life balance for PhD students and an emphasis on mental health and wellbeing. The Dean reported on Utrecht University's 'Research Supervision Manifest', which articulates the expectations both student and supervisor should anticipate, as well as the responsibilities of both.

Action GS/21-22/017: The Dean advised that the LERU position paper on doctoral supervision was in review and that she would bring it to GSC on completion.

XX GS/21-22/018 PGR Progression

The Dean welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry, and Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning, the Academic Registry, to the meeting. The Director of AR gave a presentation on the current status of PGR progression. As of the previous day, there were 132 unknown records (which may have included potential roll over students, those submitting thesis early, those withdrawing etc.) She commented that, unlike other cohorts, SITS does not facilitate a process for PGR progression and therefore all PGR student records must be updated manually.

She gave a presentation on progress reports, confirmation reports and accurate visibility of data in Schools. She also suggested setting up a working group comprising the AR, Schools, research administrators, research centres and the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies in order to define the report requirements.

Members were advised that AR did not require students' progress reports but rather the outcome of the report (progression status) determining whether the student should be progressed. It was strongly suggested by members that an alternative simple system for PGR progression by automatic rollover would be preferred by Schools. It became clear in the ensuing discussion that the term 'progress report' was used to refer both to the progress report form completed for each PhD student on an annual basis, and to progression status. It was agreed that clarification on exactly what was



meant by progress report would facilitate clear communication.

After much discussion, it was agreed that the AR would issue Schools with a spreadsheet on students' progression status. The default progression status for each student will be set to indicate that students should progress and that their record should be rolled forward. Schools will be responsible for changing this setting to indicate those students who are not to be progressed. The timeline for determining student progression currently varies in Schools from May to September but it was suggested that, for ease of administration, all progression status reports should be completed by 30 June. This requirement is independent of the need to ensure that an annual progress report is completed for each PhD student and where relevant is signed off by the thesis committee, except in those years where a Confirmation report has been successfully completed.

It was confirmed that there were currently 247 students yet to register, having been invited to do so and that the Academic Registry was actively following up on each unregistered individual. A query was raised about the difficulty of knowing whether fees have been paid by students based in a research centre outside the School. It was suggested that the AR could put a mechanism in place to note whether there were any fee-related issues that would block a student's registration.

The GSU President called for the abolishment of the option of March entry to the register, as funding is primarily based on a September start date. It was acknowledged that there are far fewer March-entry students. The Dean noted that this issue was outside the scope of the meeting, but it could be discussed as part of the working group dealing with PGR students within the Postgraduate Renewal Project.

The Dean thanked the Director of Academic Registry and the Head of Business Support and Planning, the Academic Registry, for their time and noted that the working group would discuss further the issues raised. The Director of Academic Registry confirmed that she would share the presentation slides with GSC.

Action GS/21-22/018(i): The Director of Academic Registry will share her slides on PGR progression to be circulated to GSC members.

Action GS/21-22/-18(ii): AR will issue Schools with a spreadsheet on students' progression status. The spreadsheet would be automatically designed to roll students forward and in an 'opt out' manner Schools would tick next to the names of the students who are not to be progressed.

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GS/21-22/019 Plagiarism

The Dean reminded members of existing plagiarism regulations and the processes that should be followed, as per Calendar Part III. She noted that a number of plagiarism cases had come to her attention over the preceding year. The item was on the agenda as a reminder of existing policies and process and a caution to ensure that students understand the gravity of the offence.

She highlighted that students at postgraduate level can reasonably be assumed to be familiar with rules in respect of plagiarism, therefore any plagiarism occurring in the context of any postgraduate work should not normally be deemed to constitute Level 1 plagiarism (i.e., requiring only an informal meeting with student). The Dean of Graduate Studies must be notified and requested to approve the



recommended penalty in the case of Level 2 or 3 plagiarism. Level 4 plagiarism was to be brought directly to the Junior Dean; also if facts are in dispute, if it was believed that the penalties were inappropriate or one party disagreed about whether it was a summary procedures case.

The Dean emphasised that although the DTLP determines a recommended penalty, it is the Dean of Graduate Studies who had the final decision and therefore DTLPs must wait for the Dean's approval/decision before the penalty was notified to the student.

The Dean referred members to page 16 of Academic Integrity Guidelines by National Academic Integrity Network (Section C) and Australian research on the many reasons why students engaged in plagiarism, noting that it could be a helpful resource for members.

The Dean also emphasised that it is important to ensure students are regularly reminded of plagiarism penalties, that handbooks also provide clear information about plagiarism and that, although it may be considered cumbersome, it was important that processes are followed in all cases of perceived plagiarism.

The Sub Librarian advised that the Library provided 'Understanding Plagiarism & the art of referencing' workshops that were course specific (with Subject Librarian) as well as the Library HITS programme <https://www.tcd.ie/library/support/skills-training.php>.

It was noted that many academic staff were concerned that it was beyond time and resource capabilities to pro-actively look out for incidences of plagiarism. The Dean agreed, noting that the institution must find a way to make information more accessible for academics with a concern, while also making it more difficult for students to plagiarise. It was noted that the Turnitin feature via Blackboard plays an important role in plagiarism detection. It was also suggested that, where possible, academics should assess to minimise opportunities to plagiarise, although the challenge in achieving this varies across disciplines.

It was suggested that the Calendar entry was not clear in the definition of each level of plagiarism and the terminology of an 'informal meeting' with a formal written agreement was also unclear. It was stated that the academic integrity document recommended mandatory training following an incident of plagiarism, but training in advance of an offense was deemed more effective.

The Dean thanked members for their contributions, noting that they would be brought to the working group for discussion. She acknowledged that the working group had an important role in bring recommendations for how best to address potential plagiarism, including guidelines of minimising risk of students succumbing to plagiarism, supporting colleagues dealing with such student, defining penalties, and keeping a record of plagiarism as well as making recommendations to update Calendar entry.

Action GS/21-22/019: The Dean will collate the input of GSC members on plagiarism to be shared with the working group on plagiarism.

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GS/21-22/020 COVID-19 and update from COLSAG

The Dean thanked members for submitting issues and noted that the next COLSAG meeting would be the following week and further noted that focus remained on issues related to face-to-face



teaching. She suggested that post-COVID a reflection could take place on examples of good practice that could be continued as well as practices that should be discontinued. The Academic Secretary noted that a survey on the topic had been conducted during the summer. Responses from over 500 academic staff were currently being analysed and findings would be brought to GSC. The issue of a lack of teaching rooms was also reiterated.

Action GS/21-22/020: The Dean will raise the concern about a lack of teaching room availability and the loss of teaching rooms at the Trinity Living with COVID committee.

XX GS/21-22/021 Any other business

The GSU President noted that she had liaised with Academic Registry to create lists of postgraduate students in preparation for election of Class Representatives. She outlined the process of the election, which would be facilitated by an outside company. An email will be sent to each student whereby they can self-nominate for election. A further email will then be sent to students with a unique code to enable them to vote for a class representative. Finally, an email will issue to all students with the election result. It is expected that the process will be completed two weeks following the current meeting.

Action GS/21-22/021(i): The GSU President will contact the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies when the first email link has been issued to students so that Schools, DTLPs and PG administrators can be contacted to let them know of same.

Action GS/21-22/021(ii): The GSU President will contact appropriate DTLPs if no nominations have been received so that students within those programmes can be contacted to encourage nomination.

XX Section B for noting and approval

XX GS/21-22/022 PgCert in Entrepreneurship (PCIA-IENT-IP) funded by HCI 3

A memorandum from Tangent, dated 27 September 2021 requested GSC approval of a deferred start date to March 2022 for the PgCert in Entrepreneurship (PCIA-IENT-IP).

Action GS/21-22/022: GSC approved the request from Tangent to defer the start date of the PgCert in Entrepreneurship (PCIA-IENT-IP) to March 2022.

XX GS/21-22/023 PgCert/PgDip (top up) in Immune Therapies (HCI 3)

A memorandum from Arleen Folan, HCI Project Manager, dated 29 September 2021, requested GSC approval of cessation of PgCert/PgDip (top up) in Immune Therapies (HCI 3).

Action GS/21-22/023: GSC approved the request from the HCI Project Manager for cessation of PgCert/PgDip (top up) in Immune Therapies (HCI 3).

XX GS/21-22/024 Postgraduate Research Policy

A memorandum from the Dean of Graduate Studies requested GSC approval of revision of the Postgraduate Research Policy (dated October 2021). The policy with revisions was also circulated to



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

members.

Action GS/21-22/024: GSC approved the revision of the Postgraduate Research Policy, dated October 2021.

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Section C for noting

GSC noted the following items/documents:

- (i) Academic Integrity Guidelines by National Academic Integrity Network (1st edition)**
Published by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), September 2021
- (ii) Academic Integrity National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms by National Academic Integrity Network (1st edition)**
Published by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), September 2021

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

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 7 October 2021