



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the online meeting held via Zoom at
10am on Thursday 23 September 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 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

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

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

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

Professor Frank Barry, Trinity Business School

In attendance for individual items:

Ms Linda Darbey (Assistant Academic Secretary) for item GS/21-22/005Ms

Róisín Smith (Quality Officer) for item GS/21-22/010

As this was an additional meeting to the standard list of GSC meetings, the minutes of the previous meeting were not discussed, nor was there a Matters Arising item. There was no Section B or C.

The Dean welcomed six new Directors, Profs Frank Barry, Sarah McCormack, Russell McLaughlin, Isabella Jackson, Blanaid Clarke, Lina Zgaga, Carlos Medina Martin, Gillian Wylie, Tara Mitchell, and also welcomed the new Dean of Research, Prof. Wolfgang Schmidt to the committee.

GS/21-22/001 GSC Survey Results

The Dean confirmed the survey results showed that overall, members were satisfied with the running of GSC. She noted a positive response to the Dean's memo and so will continue the Dean's memo in the upcoming academic year. Many members gave a neutral response to their preference for online or in-person meetings. The Dean suggested an in-person meeting for the December GSC but welcomed anyone with strong views to contact her re same.

There were some requests within the survey, for an induction to the role of DTLP and therefore the Dean had held a meeting with all incoming DTLPs, which was well received. Members had commented on the value of the Director of the Academic Registry attending meetings and the Dean advised that this will be incorporated into the planning for 2021/22.

The Dean also noted a request arising from the survey for School-specific issues to be discussed and suggested that people would learn from the collective wisdom of each other. It was agreed that one meeting per term be set up for small groups of approximately six Directors. Attendance would not be compulsory, however.

Action GS/21-22/001: The Dean will create small groups of approximately six DTLPs with termly meetings to discuss School-related issues. The Dean requested that Directors contact GSO with any requests to be grouped with certain Schools, e.g., cognate disciplines or Schools where similar issues are likely.

In response to a further comment, the Dean reminded those present that the content of discussions at GSC meetings are confidential, although decisions, recommendations or general information shared at the meeting may be disseminated.

In the survey, the Dean asked members whether they would like to continue to review all course proposals brought to GSC, which it was acknowledged was very time-consuming, or whether members should be tasked with reviewing only a certain number of proposals.



Decision GS/21-22/001: GSC agreed that every member will be tasked with specifically reviewing a maximum of one course proposal per meeting, although all course proposals will be circulated to all members for their review, and comments are welcome from all members on each proposal considered.

XX **GS/21-22/002 Revised Supervision Guidelines and PGR Handbook**

The Dean informed members that updated and revised versions of two handbooks will shortly be available in hard copy and on the Graduate Studies website: *Supervision of Research Students: Best Practice Guide* and the *Postgraduate Research Student Handbook*. She encouraged members to disseminate the handbooks among postgraduate students. She noted that the Supervision Guide was currently on the Graduate Studies website and could be downloaded. The PGR Handbook was undergoing a quality assurance stage and it was expected that it would be uploaded to the website in the following fortnight.

The handbooks were welcomed by members and it was noted that the research supervision guide filled a gap. Some suggestions for future editions were also given by members.

- A full section on mental health challenges for PGR students could be included in the next revision, given that undertaking a PhD can be quite stressful on students.
- Guidelines on the rights and responsibilities of students and supervisors could be included in future offerings, along with signposting of the complaints process. A question was raised as to whether the roles and responsibilities set out in the guide to supervision practice might give rise to expectations on the part of students, that could form the basis of a formal complaint. It was noted that the responsibilities were set out as guidelines rather than regulations and that reference was made to the diversity of practice across disciplines.
- A reference to Tangent entrepreneurship could perhaps be included in the next iteration.

There were two specific queries about the supervision handbook: p.32 mentioned that when co-authoring with a supervisor, the first author should not be supervisor. However, it was suggested that perhaps it is not best practice that students co-author research with their supervisor. However, the Dean noted that in many disciplines co-authorship is the norm and so in those disciplines, it is important to clarify from the outset with students how authorship will be assigned and/or recognised. Re supervision handbook p28 – it was suggested that the handbook could include a note stating that there should be no conflict of interest between supervisor and external examiner.

It was noted that some Schools had specific requirements in relation to modules that therefore a caveat should be added that students may take additional modules so long as they also fulfil the requirements of their own School. It was queried whether future modules were to be delivered online or in-person and whether the current online modules would be moving to an in-person delivery, as these decisions would affect non-resident PhD students.

The Dean welcomed the input of members and noted that ideally the draft handbooks would have been distributed at the end of the last academic year but unfortunately it had not been possible to do so. However, she noted that next revision of the handbooks would be done earlier in the coming



academic year so that DTLPs could give their inputs in May 2022 in advance of publication.

Action GS/21-22/002: The Research Supervision Guidelines and the PGR handbook will be drafted earlier in the year so that DTLP inputs can be given in May 2022 and included in the updated versions.

XX GS/21-22/003 LERU Update

The Dean noted that the online LERU Summer School hosted by Trinity was very well received. There were over 90 attendees and student feedback was very positive. Students indicated that the opportunity to meet and interact with students from other universities was very worthwhile. The Dean noted that the participating students were continuing work on developing a policy paper for consideration by the LERU Rectors' Assembly in November. She also urged DTLPs to encourage their PhD students to apply to attend the next LERU Summer School in Utrecht, noting that 2022 would have a limit of two Trinity students. It had been possible for more to attend in 2021 as the summer school took place online, but it would revert to an in-person event in 2022.

XX GS/21-22/004 PG Renewal

The Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Studies), Dr Cormac Doran, gave a presentation to introduce the Postgraduate Renewal Project to members. He noted that the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer was the Project Chair, the Dean of Graduate was the Project Sponsor, and the Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Studies) was the Project Manager. The steering committee had representation from across Trinity and there were six work packages – PGT Renewal, PGR Renewal, Systems and Processes, I³ Relationships, Student Experience and Staff Experience.

It was noted that the first meeting of the Steering Committee would take place the week following the current GSC meeting and consultation would take place over the upcoming months. It was further noted that timelines had been delayed slightly due to COVID and a change in Senior Officers. The Dean of Research stated that he is looking forward to engaging with GSC on the matter of PG Renewal.

The Dean of Graduate Studies confirmed that PG Renewal would be a standing item on the GSC agenda. She clarified that some issues can be addressed in the short-term, while other issues would take longer to address. She explained that with a wide scope project, decisions would be needed on what items should be prioritised and she welcomed members' input on same.

Action GS/21-22/004: Members were invited to contribute thoughts and suggestions in relation to PG Renewal to the Dean of Graduate Studies.

XX GS/21-22/005 PG Course Proposal Resources

The Dean welcomed the Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs), Linda Darbey, to the



meeting. The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) introduced members to the Academic Affairs webpages which have been updated over the summer.

Sharing her screen, she showed members the main page of Academic Affairs site, which lists the remit of the department. She noted that academic policies are listed within the site and pointed members to the bottom of the webpage where people can sign up to the Academic Affairs mailing list. She then shared two new areas of the webpages – micro-credential resources and postgraduate course proposal resources.

The Graduate Education page gave information in relation to submission timelines and information and resources on postgraduate course proposals. She noted that from this academic year course proposals would be submitted and amended via SharePoint, a single access point that allowed for feedback to be given in real time. Other graduate resources included information on the Trinity award structure, structured PhD credit-bearing modules, course proposal document, checklist, FAQs, and a link to course proposals that were previously approved by Council.

The micro-credential webpages included similar resources for the approval process with development timelines, pedagogic considerations, an exemplar and also included a short video analysing the key sections within the proposal document.

The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) thanked Laoise Quinn and Ewa Sadowska for their work over the summer to create these new pages. She welcomed feedback from members and any requests that they had for further development of the website.

The Chair of USC and GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials congratulated the team on the work involved and noted that the resources on the Academic Affairs website had a direct impact on the high quality micro-credential proposals submitted in the previous weeks.

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GS/21-22/006 PGR Student workload and Dean's memo

The Dean spoke to a memo that had been circulated to GSC. Over the previous number of years, attention had focused on the demands made of PhD students in terms of teaching, demonstration, and assessment responsibilities, with the aim of ensuring that students' research time is effectively protected, while also ensuring that students had opportunities to develop teaching skills. She noted that expectations around teaching contributions varied across disciplines and faculties, as well as across funding schemes. She clarified that a condition of most internal TCD funding schemes was that students would be expected to teach no more than six hours per week during the teaching term. However, she explained that a parallel regulation was that students that are on funding awards would not be permitted to earn in excess of €18,000, without prior approval of the Dean in exceptional circumstances. She noted that this constraint was linked partly to historical revenue requirements but was also understood to operate as a source of protection of the research time that should be available to students.

The Dean noted that there was a proposal in the previous academic year to remove this regulation from the Calendar, but subsequent discussions indicated that previous Council members had placed



value on ensuring that students were not asked to divert time away from core research activities.

She proposed the establishment of a working group tasked with capturing information on the status quo across Trinity, with a view to providing recommendations on whether changes were required in Calendar regulations in terms of the expectations of students and the potential income threshold. She furthered that the working group would aim to deliver its recommendations to GSC in January 2022, so that any Calendar changes could be planned, recommended and approved in time for the 2022/23 student intake. The Dean proposed nominees for the working group would include 2 DTLPs or nominees from each faculty and would also include GSU representation.

The Dean of Research welcomed the Dean of Graduate Studies' proposal for a working group to be set up and he confirmed that the Research Office would make available any relevant data it had collected.

Members voiced their support for a working group to be established. It was suggested that an anonymous survey could be sent to PhD students to gain their views on the subject.

It was noted that it is unfortunate that demonstrations, which are integral to students' education and their formation as researchers and scholars, are not currently recognised by Trinity on students' transcripts. The Dean confirmed that this will be on the agenda of an upcoming meeting with Academic Practice.

Action GS/21-22/006: Members who are interested in joining a working group on PGR student workload (with a view to providing recommendations on whether changes are required in Calendar regulations in terms of the expectation of students and the potential income threshold) should contact the Dean.

XX **GS/21-22/007 CA7000 Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship era**

The Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education) Dr Cormac Doran gave a presentation on the compulsory PhD module CA7000 *Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era*.

He noted that both the new module and the module it is to replace are owned by the Library. The old module included some elements of the Epigeum Research Integrity course specifically on research integrity. The new module (5 ECTS) includes five redesigned areas – research integrity and ethics; copyright IP and data protection; research data management and the construction and application of data plans; research communication, dissemination and publishing; research evaluation and impact in an open scholarship era.

The previous CA7000 was suspended in February 2021 due to a combination of licensing difficulties with Epigeum and challenges related to the relevance of material. Students who had been enrolled on that module were being cleared and certified by the module coordinator (Library). Students who registered in March 2021 but did not enrol on the old module will be enrolled on the new CA7000 in the coming weeks.



The new module went live on 13 September 2021 and block enrolment was currently taking place and would appear on all incoming students' Blackboard. He noted that the module was mandatory and the timeline had changed, with the module to be completed within six months.

The full Epigeum programme has now been made available to all research students, but was optional (no credit value and further information was available on Blackboard). He proposed that assessment of the new module would comprise two parts – MCQ (80%) and a personal development plan to be reviewed by the supervisor (20%). The proposal was that supervisors would engage with assessment and Schools would forward marks to the module coordinator (Library) once per term. The designated School contact would then enter the Pass/Fail grade directly.

A robust discussion followed the presentation and many members noted that supervisors would view this as an increase of their workload. It was emphasised that the intention of the module was to aid the supervision process, rather than be a large piece of assessment. It was suggested by a member that perhaps the assessment could be embedded in the annual progress report.

The Dean of Research acknowledged that this module would increase a supervisor's workload. However, he noted that research integrity had important implications on how research is undertaken and therefore the question was how this module is to be implemented.

A number of concerns were raised regarding the degree of additional supervisor input with this module. The Dean confirmed that the multiple-choice question section (80%) would not require input from the supervisor. She acknowledged the concerns raised and confirmed that making the other section (20%) optional could be considered. She noted that the project remained a work-in-progress and concluded that, following review, it would be discussed further at the next GSC meeting in October 2021.

Action GS/21-22/007: The Dean and the Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Studies) will review CA7000 following input from GSC and it will be discussed further at the October GSC.

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GS/21-22/008 COVID and update from COLSAG

The Dean noted that a Policy on Covid-19 Vaccination for Students in Clinical Placements or Placements in Allied Settings was approved by GSC under vacation procedures/Administrative Arrangements for the Summer Session.

The Dean noted that in-person teaching was due to return following Reading Week and asked for members' feedback on any issues or solutions. She advised that a helpline has been set up for queries on COVID to be addressed.

The Dean has been asked to provide answers to FAQs on the topic e.g. use of pre-recorded lectures rather than live online lectures.



Action GS/21-22/008(i): Members are to send suggestions to the Dean to be incorporated into the Dean's responses to FAQs on teaching and learning during COVID.

The Dean reported the Academic Registry were gauging the demand for a return to in-person examinations and were planning for examination contingency dates (Friday 10 December, Thursday 9 December and Saturday 11 December). She noted, however, that there was no expectation of a need for the contingency dates for postgraduate students.

The issue of students not wearing a mask during a lecture was discussed at COLSAG and the Dean informed members that official protocol was under negotiation. However, it was recommended that if a student refused to wear a mask and had no valid reason not to wear a mask, then the lecture was to stop.

Members spoke of their own issues in terms of technical support, seating arrangements, lecture theatre space and room capacities. The Dean asked that members contact her with any specific problems as COLSAG and Trinity Living with COVID meet weekly and the Dean could raise members' issues at these meetings.

Action GS/21-22/008(ii): Members are to contact the Dean with specific issues arising from COVID, which can be brought to COLSAG and Trinity Living with COVID.

XX GS/21-22/009 Discussion of GSC workplan 2021/22

The Dean proposed the discussion of the following topics at GSC in 2021/22

- Working group to be set up to resolve the €18,000 income threshold on Trinity earnings by postgraduate students
- Recognition of prior learning – Trinity was part of a HCI project on this, which impacted how applications to PhD and postgraduate programmes were recognised
- EU v non-EU fees for PGR students
- Revisit 2020/21 Open Day and plan accordingly for this year's Open Day
- Structured PhD modules – how to successfully implement these modules
- PG Renewal

XX GS/21-22/010 ISER

The Dean welcomed the Quality Officer to the meeting. The Academic Secretary spoke to the report circulated prior to the meeting. She noted that any comments on the report should be sent to the Academic Secretary by 5 October. She advised that the institutional review will take place in March 2022 and the Dean of Graduate Studies will nominate members to meet with the panel.

Action GS/21-22/010: Members are to send any comments on the Institutional Self-Evaluation Review document to the Academic Secretary by 5 October 2021.



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

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GS/21-22/011 Any other business

A concern was raised regarding the election of student representatives. It was noted that the elections had been delayed significantly in the previous academic year and a hope was voiced that GSU would be able to have representatives in place in the current academic year.

It was noted that some research students had not yet been progressed and so were unable to register for the current academic year. The Director of Student Services stated that although this was an extremely busy time of year for the Academic Registry, there should be no delays in the process. She suggested that direct communication with the Academic Registry would be best and she also noted that she could also be contacted.

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

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 23 September 2021