GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School
at 10am Thursday 25 May 2023

Present (Ex officio):
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)
Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor David Finlay, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Professor Laurent Muzellec, Trinity Business School
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
Professor Ivana Dusparic, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science
Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education
Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering
Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Jennifer Edmond, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor David Prendergast, School of Law
Professor Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics
Professor Catherine Darker, School of Medicine
Professor Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Mary Hughes, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Professor Carlos Medina Martin, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Hongzhou Zhang, School of Physics
Professor Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology
Professor Gillian Wylie, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Tara Mitchell, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Erna O'Connor, School of Social Work & Social Policy
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education, TT&L
Ms Ewa Sadowska Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

In attendance for all items:
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor’s Office
Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme
Ms Sian Bradley, Administrative Officer, IT support
Ms Frances Leogue, Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies
Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo, temporary nominated graduate student as GSC member

Not in attendance – Vacant:
Graduate Students’ Union President
Graduate Students’ Union Vice-President

Apologies:
Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Mr Viktor Jelen, temporary nominated graduate student as GSC member

In attendance for individual items:
Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal) for items GS/22-23/134 to GS/22-23/138
Prof. Padraig Carmody, School of Natural Sciences, for item GS/22-23/136
Prof. Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development (TR&I Administration), for item GS/22-23/137
Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer, Academic Affairs (TT&L), for item GS/22-23/139

As this was the final meeting of 2022/23, the Dean thanked all members of GSC for their hard work, energy, commitment, and time throughout the year, and bid a special warm farewell to eight Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) from the Schools of Business, English, Histories and Humanities, Natural Sciences, Nursing and Midwifery, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Physics and Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies who were finishing off as DTLPs. The Dean also extended appreciation to her own administrative support team from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies (Catherine Allen and Ewa Adach who have both left during the year) and Frances Leogue and Sian Bradley (who have recently joined the office) and Dr Cormac Doran, as well as the PG Renewal Team (Leona Coady, Rionnagh Sheridan, Ewa Adach and Mark Sheridan) who have all participated in the meetings. She gave a special mention to Ewa Sadowska for organising all the GSC meetings and assisting with PGT course proposals.

XX Section A

XX GS/22-23/129 Minutes of GSC of 27 April 2023
The minutes were approved as circulated with one change in relation to GS/22-23/115 deleting reference to the Trinity Business School DTLP’s opposition to the pilot of the two-phased approach to PGT programme development from the April GSC minutes, based on subsequent communication from the DTLP.

XX GS/22-23/130 Matters arising
The Dean advised members that all actions from the April meeting had been completed. The Dean also noted that all decisions, recommended at the previous meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by the last Council. Matters arising were covered in the Dean’s memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting. In particular, the Dean drew members’ attention to the following:

Agenda A
**Decision GS/22-23/110:** Council approved the External Examiner Policy in relation to research programmes, incorporating the amendments proposed specifically in relation to research examiners who may not be invited to examine a thesis with the same supervisor for five years, but may be invited for other work within the same School after three years have lapsed. The changes proposed by the GSC to the Policy for PGT programmes were incorporated, with some final minor amendments suggested at Undergraduate Studies Committee.

**GS/22-23/114 PGR: Proposal for framework for cyclical review of PGT programmes.** The Dean thanked members who made further email contributions on the issue. She noted that Council gave a green light for the development of the framework within the context of existing processes in Trinity.

**GS/22-23/115 PGR: Proposal for two-phased approach to PGT programme development.** The Dean referred to Prof. Muzellec’s wish at the previous meeting to have it minuted that the Business School did not support the proposal to develop a two-stage framework. She noted that subsequently Prof. Muzellec clarified that his reservations were primarily that the change would add a further layer of administrative effort, and ultimately cause delays in progressing course proposals. As many DTLPs had indicated similar concerns, Academic Affairs (AA) have committed to ensuring that this is considered in planning the logistics of the pilot process. The Dean underlined that she was committed to take the AA undertaking as a key performance measure in reviewing the success of the pilot before making any decision on whether or not it should be progressed further. On this basis, Prof. Muzellec has indicated that he is agreeable for the April minutes to be amended to delete reference to his opposition. For transparency, the Dean had left the reference in the April minutes until the meeting itself.

**Action GS/22-23/130(i):** To amend the April GSC minutes (GS/22-23/129) to delete reference to Prof. Muzellec’s opposition to the pilot on the proposal for two-phased approach to PGT programme development (GS/22-23/115).

**GS/22-23/116 PGR: Assessment of PGR Students: changes to Annual Progress Report, Confirmation Report and Guidelines for Thesis Committees.** The Dean noted that at the April meeting, the item generated a lot of discussion, and many members had to leave before it reached a conclusion. Subsequently, further local meetings took place with a number of DTLPs when key points were discussed, which were partly staff-related but also about the role of the supervisor and their participation in progress review meetings and Confirmation interviews. The proposed revision set out in the memorandum for item GS/22-23/137 below outlines that thesis committee membership should continue to be two people, but only one is required to be an academic member of staff from within the Discipline or School. The supervisor is not a member of the thesis committee, but their attendance at progress review meetings and the Confirmation interview should follow Discipline norms and can be determined locally. If the memorandum is approved, then WP2 will work on developing guidelines that reflect the changes.

**Agenda C**

**GS/22-23/126 Information for Schools/non-Schools on Programme/stand-alone module proposal development.** The Dean reminded members that the memorandum was an important item, especially for prospective Course Directors and MCs developers in Schools, and DTLP members should disseminate its contents in their Schools.
Action GS/22-23/130(ii): DTLP members to disseminate content of the memorandum to academic colleagues in their Schools (re GS/22-23/126).

XX GS/22-23/131 Review of Pilot Non-Resident PhD programme – Memorandum and Report from Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary - Graduate Education (TT&L)

The Assistant Academic Secretary - Graduate Education reminded members that in March 2020, Council approved a proposal from the then Dean of Graduate Studies for the piloting of distance-based PGR students (referred to also as “Non-Resident PhDs”) which was subsequently rolled out at a time when the country was brought into a lockdown as a result of Covid pandemic. The circulated report reviewing the initial two years of the Non-Resident PhD pilot identifies positive and negative experiences from the perspectives of students and supervisors. It addresses specific requirements of the pathway including the supervision process and the condition that students must complete 20 ECTS of taught modules as opposed to only 10 credits undertaken by resident students. The 20 ECTS requirement became difficult to fulfil when courses moved back in-person. Dr Doran concluded by presenting six recommendations for consideration by the committee which were that the pilot be scaled up to all Schools wishing to avail of it, administrative processes be reviewed for efficiency in preparation for the roll out, one annual on-site central induction event be set up for students to network with other Non-Resident PhDs and their supervisors and be introduced to services on campus, the 20 ECTS taught element be reduced to align with the requirement for other students, an appropriate marketing strategy be developed to support an expansion of the Non-Resident pathway, and a designated person be allocated responsibility for developing and managing the Non-Resident PhD pathway.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

(i) The School of English has the highest number of Non-Resident PhDs in the pilot which has been a success bringing in good students and additional fee income. The only obstacle for growing further numbers is the requirement for students to complete the 20 ECTS taught component. When PGT courses were delivered online it was unproblematic for students to achieve 20 ECTS, but since the College opened up and courses returned to the in-person delivery, online modules are rare and hybrid teaching is not widely available in College. Another issue is that timing of lectures and seminar is beyond the remit of the School and cannot be adjusted locally to suit the needs of a student from a diametrically different time zone. The School of English DTLP also noted that an initial vetting process is in place to screen applicants to establish their suitability for the Non-Resident programme: applicants are interviewed and will need to fully understand the requirement of the programme. In their experience, applicants tend to be mature in their mid-30s and - 40s.

(ii) The Postgraduate Student Support Officer raised an issue that additional student supports should also be made available online. The pandemic demonstrated that such services can work effectively online. However, with the return to in-person teaching, many student services have struggled to operate effectively both in-person and online. Non-Resident PhDs are a new modality of PGR students, and they deserve designated support services. In terms of the 20 ECTS, the Postgraduate Student Support Officer suggested that when Non-Resident PhD students come on campus, credits could be attained for some reflective assessment linked to their visit. All agreed that it is of benefit for Non-Resident PhD students to come on campus in-person at least once during their PhD to familiarise themselves with the university, its facilities and its staff.

(iii) The Dean advised that the original plan has been for a central development of additional taught modules enabling Non-Resident PhD students to attain the 20 ECTS. This has not happened yet for a variety of reasons. A suite of interdisciplinary modules should also be developed as is the practice in comparator universities. Recorded lectures should be made available. Under the multidimensional skills set which PhD students are supposed to acquire
existing resources will be scaled up online; some of them are modules and when available online will be accessible by Non-Resident PhDs. The Dean is therefore reluctant to change the current requirement. She is prepared to offer flexibility to those students approaching the end on their PhD pathway who have not managed to complete the 20 ECTS before the additional resources have been put in place.

(iv) In response to a query the Dean clarified that Non-Resident PhD students can carry out teaching, but they will be liable for an emergency tax in Ireland as they do not have a PPS number.

(v) A member stated that the proposal for scaling up Non-Resident PhD student numbers should not be developed as a way of counterbalancing the cost of living in Dublin. The Dean also noted that students cannot switch between the two modalities of the PhD register: Resident and Non-Resident.

(vi) In response to another query, the Dean explained that scheduling weekly meetings with the supervisor will be decided on a local level between the supervisor and the Non-Resident PhD student. The Non-Resident PhD model is easier to be accommodated in some disciplines than in others especially those relying on lab work. This may determine which Schools can avail of the model when it is scaled up.

(vii) A School of Mathematics DTLP noted that his experience with remote supervision during the pandemic was not successful and it should not be seen by students as their entitlement. Each School should make their own decision whether they wish to participate in the scheme. The Dean confirmed that the Resident student requires permission to be absent from College for a prolonged time; the Dean’s permission is needed for conducting research outside Trinity for more than 3 months.

The Dean concluded that members’ feedback indicates that the Non-Resident PhD model could be a very useful way of broadening student recruitment. To work well and to be scaled up, additional consideration will be needed to establish how to support students effectively. Members were satisfied that they can endorse the report’s recommendations for Council consideration.

**Decision GS/22-23/131:** The committee endorsed the report and its recommendations for Council approval.

**XX GS/22-23/132 Regulation change concerning the repeat of Masters dissertations from 2023/24 – Memorandum with Calendar change from Dr Cormac Doran Assistant Academic Secretary - Graduate Education (TT&L)**

The Assistant Academic Secretary - Graduate Education reminded members that at the December and January meetings, changes were discussed to the current Calendar regulation that would allow students to repeat the failed dissertation or research element. While most committee members were in favour of placing boundaries on the eligibility of a student to repeat a failed dissertation, the Dean had asked DTLPs (GS/22-23/070) to collect further views from their colleagues to work out how best to ensure equity across the student body while being mindful of resources in Schools and to better inform the drafting of a regulation change. The consensus that emerged from subsequent consultations was that only students who reach a certain threshold should have the opportunity to repeat the dissertation component. Any student whose dissertation is potentially a fail already has the right to a *viva voce* before the Court of Examiners meeting.

The circulated replacement regulation has incorporated additional feedback from eleven School DTLPs, who responded to the Dean’s request, as follows: “Students on a Masters course who do not achieve a pass mark in the research element or dissertation but achieve a mark within the range of 40-49% (or 30-39%, where the pass mark is 40%) may make one application to the relevant school to repeat this section of their programme. Marks for a new submission will be capped at 50% (or 40 where the pass mark is 40%). Resubmitted research elements must be submitted before the next
examination session at a date determined and published by the School. Alternatively, and where this is provided for in the Course regulations, such students may be awarded an associated Postgraduate Diploma. Members were asked to note that a low fee is suggested for the repeat and the submission date for a revised dissertation is at the School’s discretion.

In a discussion which followed the following comments were made:

(i) The Assistant Academic Secretary - Graduate Education noted that the revised regulation does not provide for a blanket permission to repeat any failed dissertation but instead allows the student to apply for such a permission to their School and the decision will be at the School’s discretion.

(ii) The Dean added that some students who failed badly will not receive such permission but for those students who even after the *viva voce* are nearly at the pass level such permission can be granted. A decision whether the repeating student will be repeating their dissertation, or a project will be decided at the School level. Sometimes the dissertation might have to be re-written without the need to collect any further data. Sometimes the student can fail so badly that it might not be advisable to let the student into the lab again or the mark awarded may fall below the threshold where a revision is considered possible. Calendar regulations state that students can apply to repeat, but note that should permission be denied, a student may appeal that decision. The default position is that the student who meets the criteria is normally allowed to repeat on payment of the relevant fee.

(iii) The Postgraduate Student Support Officer noted that students may seek permission to repeat with an off books status without having to pay the repeat fee but also without having access to the supervisor and the library. The Dean clarified that fee for the repeat is relatively low to reflect that it is for reassessment.

(iv) Should a repeat contain an element that it is difficult to repeat such as a practice-based component, the regulation will permit for a substitute of an alternative kind of assessment.

(v) When the proposed regulation refers to the “next examination session” Schools will be required to notify students as to when the next examination session will take place (i.e., the next annual or supplemental session).

(vi) The School of Education DTLP noted that one of their programmes does not offer numerical marks, but dissertations are marked as distinction, pass, fail. The Dean clarified that it is at the School’s discretion which failing students will receive permission to repeat, as Schools should have good understanding of the student’s position relative to the passing standard. For transparency, it is essential that criteria underpinning decisions as to which students are eligible to apply to repeat this component should be published in the student handbook.

With that discussion members were satisfied that they wanted to endorse the proposed regulation. In response to a query the Dean clarified that DTLPs will be notified of Council’s approval so that the regulation can be incorporated into student handbooks over the summer.

**Decision GS/22-23/132:** The committee endorsed the new regulation for Council approval.

**Action GS/22-23/132:** DTLPs to be notified of Council’s approval of the new regulation to incorporate it into student handbooks in Schools.

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Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director, gave a brief overview of recent PG Renewal developments listed on the circulated monthly slide. Some items on the slides were taken subsequently as Agenda Items under PG Renewal while others were continuing in progress, as discussed at previous meetings. Around twenty meetings are scheduled with the Schools to discuss
teaching and learning supports for PGR students. In terms of the student life cycle (annual progression), members were advised that the redesigned process was communicated to Schools together with new reporting templates for 2022/23 to be returned by 30 June 2023. With regards to Trinity Research Doctorate Awards there was a process review taking place to ensure timely payment of stipend to eligible new entrants and continuing students. The Dean thanked Ms Coady for her monthly update.

XX GS/22-23/134 PGR: Vision statement for PG Education in Trinity – Memorandum and presentation by Dean of Graduate Studies and Programme Director; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend

In reference to the circulated statement, the Dean reminded members that Council at its meeting in May 2022 required further input into the first fledgling version of the Vision statement based on an online survey. Subsequent consultations with the College community – both staff and students - during the current academic year have resulted in an updated Vision statement better reflecting expectations of the community and identifying the preferred direction of PG education at Trinity.

The proposed current Vision statement formulated after much data analysis, consultation and cross-College engagement reflects the values and language that emerged in the survey, GSC discussions and consultation workshops: “A stimulating, inclusive, and sustainable research and learning environment, where curious minds and creative thinkers thrive.” While the vision statement will be on the Trinity website and publications, it is primarily intended as a source of ambition and inspiration internally. It is therefore proposed that for communications, a short, crisp tagline “[A thriving and inclusive community]... where curious minds and creative thinkers thrive...” will be used to be completed by a still to be developed specific set of codas that can be selected for use as appropriate, such as “build better futures together; make a difference in/to the world; push frontiers of knowledge; solve real world problems; build alternative futures”. The proposed Vision statement was approved by the PG Renewal Programme’s Steering Committee on 16 May, 2023.

In a short discussion which followed members made the following comments:

(i) As codas (2): “make a difference in/to the world” and (5): “build alternative futures” do not preclude negative outcomes these pronouncements should be reconsidered to express that the outcomes are positive.

(ii) As coda (3): “push frontiers of knowledge” captures the main role of the university it should constitute the main message of the Vision statement with all other information being subsidiary to it.

(iii) The leading message of the Vision statement rightly emphasises the role of the university environment as a thriving and inclusive community which is the basic enabler for research to take place

The Committee were satisfied that they could recommend the proposed Vision statement to Council for consideration and approval.

Decision GS/22-23/134: The committee recommended the proposed Vision statement for Council approval.

XX GS/22-23/135 PGR: Interim Report on progress for Council - Memorandum by Dean of Graduate Studies and PG Renewal Director; presentation by PG Renewal Director; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend
The Dean invited Ms Leona Coady, the PG Renewal Programme Director, to speak to the circulated report documenting the wide-ranging work undertaken under the PG Renewal programme. The PG Renewal Programme Director summarized the findings of all the five sections of the report which covers the first half of Horizon 1 and aims to make a convincing case for continuing with the project. It evidences considerable achievements in spite of the fact that most of the resource support has been in place only a short number of months. The Appendices provide key details and illustrate numerous people who have worked with the PG Renewal Team to deliver on the project goals. Whilst a final report will be brought to Council in December, when the last of the ‘in progress’ items will be complete, the interim report needs an endorsement by the committee so that it can be submitted for Council consideration.

The PG Renewal Programme Director clarified that funding for Horizon 2 is still to be decided on by the Planning Group in June, and therefore the aim of the interim report is to seek an approval in principle from Council on the basis of an outline of what activities are proposed to take place over the next two years. The proposed scope for Horizon 2 is to focus on PGR-related initiatives under a broad umbrella of “Community and Connection” while PGT-related activities are embedded in Triple I, the curriculum and the student life cycle. The chosen focus on PGR students has been influenced by the fact that they are in Trinity for four years which provides sufficient time to investigate relevant issues, propose and test solutions and evaluate and modify outcomes. PGT students are normally only for a year in Trinity so the team would like to adopt changes that have been fully field-tested. In response to a query, Ms Coady explained that although the financial theme is not going through to Horizon 2, some financial aspects of the deliverables achieved in Horizon 1 will be included in the scope of Horizon 2 although not explicitly called out as a theme in the report.

The Dean comlimented the whole PG Renewal Team for successfully driving the renewal project and for the achievements to date evidenced in the interim report. The committee endorsed the interim report for Council.

Decision GS/22-23/135: The committee recommended the interim report for Council consideration.

GS/22-23/136 PGR: WP4 – Proposal for I3 Integration - Report from Orla Bannon (WP4 Lead; Director of Careers, Trinity Careers Service, TT&L); Prof. Padraig Carmody (WP4: Interdisciplinary Subgroup) to present; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend

Prof. Padraig Carmody was invited to speak to the circulated report prepared by Orla Banon (WP4 Lead) who was not in a position to attend the meeting. Prof. Carmody noted that there are diverse ways in which many taught and research programmes already provide opportunities of Triple I (Interdisciplinary, Intersectoral and International) experience for students. He noted that WP4 carried out in 2022/23 a review of national and international strategy and policy documents on graduate skillsets and conducted two surveys in March/April 2023: (1) amongst DTLPs, research supervisors and course directors on current activity levels and ambitions for intersectoral and international activities for PG students, and (2) amongst research supervisors, course directors, and PG research students working on interdisciplinary projects to understand their experiences and needs. The finding showed that most students do not have an opportunity for intersectoral experience but participate in international activities by way of attending conferences. In terms of interdisciplinary projects, the finding was that supervisors and students are involved in them as they
are an inherent part of their academic work.

Prof. Carmody briefly outlined the proposed WP4 activities for Horizon 2 such as: developing a new I3 Framework for Trinity that defines I3 to create a shared understanding of I3 values, sets out phased stages, multiple touchpoints and links to supporting resources; undertaking consultations with students, employers and relevant stakeholders; outlining the requirements for I3 intelligence and analytics; enabling students to capture, reflect on, and articulate skills acquired through I3 experiences and finally, developing a suite of interdisciplinary activities by exploring potential for PG interdisciplinary research methods, running a pilot project focused on interdisciplinary research practice and fostering greater community and connection.

The Dean thanked Prof. Carmody for his presentation. In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

1) In response to a query, the Dean clarified that Triple I initiative is targeting both PGR and PGT students.

2) Some concern was expressed that students may be availing of travel and secondment opportunities too excessively breaking the continuity of research supervision thereby losing the focus from their own research project.

3) The Dean noted that Trinity’s aim is to ensure that every student has a realistic, transparent and accessible opportunity (not understood as “an obligation”) to engage with Triple I activities and reflect on the experience so acquired. However, PGT courses may decide that some aspects of the Triple I may be an obligation on their curriculum. The same may apply to research supervision. However, students should be able to reflect on their extra mural contacts and articulate them as Triple I events on their CV evidencing thereby the skills set they have achieved while in Trinity. Although, the primary aim of a PhD student is to complete their degree to the best of their ability, they will move on afterwards to jobs outside Trinity, and their CV will be their passport towards a further career after graduation. For many students the gap is not in that they have lacked experience to develop I3 skills but that they cannot adequately identify those skills in their CV.

4) In response to a query the Dean could not yet comment whether there might be additional funding for travel added to the awards. However, she reminded members that PGR students can already apply for travel grants.

The Dean thanked Prof. Carmody for his presentation and noted that the recommendations were approved by the PG Renewal Programme’s Steering Committee on 16 May, 2023, and they came to the committee for endorsement to progress to the next meeting of Council, and that a framework be developed as a deliverable under Horizon 2. The committee were satisfied to endorse the report.

**Decision GS/22-23/136:** The committee endorsed the report and its proposed recommendations for Council consideration.

**XX GS/22-23/137 PGR: Thesis Committee Terms of Reference update - Memorandum from Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (WP2 Lead; Dean of Graduate Studies to present; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend**
The Dean spoke to the circulated revision of Terms of Reference for thesis committees prepared by Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (WP2 Lead). She noted that the proposal was put together on the basis of feedback from the discussion at the April meeting and further conversation with some DTLPs across Schools. Two main issues surfaced. Firstly, small Schools and Disciplines were concerned about limited staff resources and constraints on expertise to draw upon to service thesis committees. Secondly, there was considerable variability in the function fulfilled by thesis committees within Schools. The Dean suggested that where the thesis committee as currently set up is working well within a School there is no need to change anything. The circulated memorandum aims to address the two issues. The main change is to revise the membership of thesis committees, retaining the requirement for two members, but with only one required to be an independent academic member of Trinity staff from within the Discipline/School. The second independent member of a thesis committee may be an academic member of staff from within the university or a recognized external expert in the student’s field of study. While the supervisors are not official members of the thesis committee, they have the option to attend at progress review meetings and confirmation interview meetings in line with normal practices within the specific Discipline and the practice must be made transparent to the students. The revision aims to provide flexibility to Schools and Disciplines in appointing members of thesis committees and accommodates School- and Discipline-specific existing norms. The Dean opened the floor for comments.

In a discussion which ensued the following feedback was shared:

(i) In opening the thesis committee membership to academics from other Schools it was important that the associated workload be recognised for promotional advancement of the staff. The Dean noted her support for the proposal, noting the complication arising from the fact that PhD does not carry any FTSE weighting in terms of financial transfers between Schools.

(ii) Stipulating that attendance of the supervisor at an interview meeting could be optional or mandatory, depending on discipline norms, was an acceptable solution to members.

(iii) The external member of the thesis committee may not be an external examiner and they may not chair the committee as they do not have a contractual relationship with the University and may not chair a meeting making decision about a student’s academic progress. Another internal person would need to be brought in to chair the meeting.

(iv) Normally for the two members, one would be the chair and the other an internal examiner. The chair can also participate in the discussion, but it would be preferable to have a chair whose only role is to chair. This would require three members for the committee which many Schools would not have staff resources to secure. In some Schools one of the two people is the internal examiner and the other is DTLP as the chair sometimes focusing on the professional development of the thesis.

(v) The Dean supported continuation of local practices which have been working well as long as the process is transparent, and the student is notified in advance. Once Council gives approval to the proposed changes the guidelines will be developed around the roles in the context of further consultation with the Schools.

(vi) The progress report must be signed off by the supervisor and the thesis committee and if the external member has been formally nominated as a member they will be required to sign off on the report.

(vii) Consideration should be given to a gender-balanced thesis committee as a criterion for selection as far as it is practical and other things being equal.

(viii) The principle that one of the two members can chair the meeting is effective immediately although the current Calendar for 2022/23 states that the meetings are chaired by the DTLP or their nominee.
Members were satisfied to endorse the proposed two changes (referring to the membership of thesis committees and to the status of the supervisor) with a view to enabling the work package to develop a set of accompanying guidelines for Schools together with required Calendar changes which will describe in more detail the specific roles and responsibilities of the thesis committee members distinct from the supervisory team members.

**Decision GS/22-23/136:** The committee endorsed the proposed recommendations for Council approval in order to develop guidelines to flesh out the revised terms of reference.

**XX GS/22-23/137 PGR: Proposed approach to developing guidelines on Teaching and Learning supports provided by PGR students - Memorandum and paper from Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (WP#2 Lead) Prof. Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development, to present; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend**

The Dean invited Prof. Raquel Harper, Head of Research Development who introduced the item by noting that WP2 had originally planned to bring to the committee a developed proposal on the teaching and learning supports that PGR students could reasonably be asked to engage in, and how those activities should be recognized. Prof. Harper reminded members that WP2 was tasked to develop guidelines clarifying teaching and learning supports for PGR students and to set up clear information on allocating teaching and learning duties.

As a result of carrying out surveys across Schools, comparator universities and the PGR community in Trinity, WP2 established that the current practice results in differing workloads, unequal opportunities to secure work and varied rewards. The WP2 has then undertaken to set up clearly defined contracted learning support roles enhanced by training and mentoring, definition of maximum hours and a policy of fair recruitment. To that end, a framework document containing a template for the policy and guidelines has been put together, but specific issues and gaps in information have also been identified. Resolving these issues requires further exploration with Schools making it not feasible to finalise the deliverables, i.e., the “Policy on Recruitment and Selection Process of PGR Students who Provide Teaching and Learning Supports” and the “Guidelines on the Nature of Expectations and the Process of Allocation of Teaching and Learning Responsibilities”, before the summer. These items will be carried forward to Horizon 2. Prof. Harper summed up WP2 tasks for Horizon 2 as follows: to achieve clarity on contractual implications for PGR students from HR/Legal and revenue implications, to ensure fairness and transparency of the current selection processes in Schools, to collect rules and regulations that exist in external research funding bodies and internally in Trinity mechanisms and explore the dynamics between resource needs of Schools and Disciplines and the educational needs of the PGR students.

The Dean thanked Prof. Harper for her presentation. In a discussion which followed a number of comments were made:

1) WP2 have presented a specific “employment-based” approach to the management of PGR teaching and learning supports in Schools but it has not been made clear whether it is the most appropriate model. There could instead be perhaps multiple differing approaches across College under a more broader umbrella for Schools to select an approach which is the most appropriate for their Discipline. Why were some external universities, e.g., St Andrews, and not others chosen as examples of best practice? How should the definition of “appropriate teaching” be defined? On which grounds is it stated that it is not appropriate for PGR students to teach at the Masters level even though they may derive a lot of benefits from the experience? Before a policy can be put together its underlying principles should be considered and agreed by the College community.
2) Practicalities of the proposed recruitment of PGR students for teaching and learning supports should be considered. Some Schools rely on many teaching assistants (sometimes as many as 80 students in a year) to deliver a lot of UG teaching. It would be extremely time consuming near impossible to run annually a full recruitment process. Students would not know from one year to the next how many hours they would be teaching and will find themselves in a precarious financial situation budgeting- and planning-wise if they had to apply for teaching every year. Currently, some Schools can guarantee a stipend and teaching commitments to the students to be carried over the four years on the PhD register.

3) A concern has also been articulated by the student representative on the committee as to how to determine what number of hours is “appropriate” for the PGR student to teach. Student stipends do not cover the cost of living in Dublin, and therefore students need to teach as many hours as possible during the year. Securing these hours is extremely competitive. The proposed number of six hours a week taught only within half of the week is not realistic as there are students who teach forty hours a whole week sometimes teaching four hours a day.

4) PGR students need to be protected from being “overused” for teaching. Frequently, the supervisor is the enabler by asking the student to provide excessive teaching. The allocation of teaching hours should be de-coupled from the student’s supervisor.

5) PhD students should be allowed to teach on Masters courses towards the end on the register.

6) It can be problematic to impose one set of guidelines and one policy with strict rules on all the Schools in College with different practices and sources of funding for PGR students.

7) If the funding of a PhD student is inadequate in Trinity and the policy prevents the student from teaching sufficient number of hours to cover their expenses the student will look for teaching opportunities in other universities in Dublin.

8) The Dean summed up the arguments by noting that there are competing tensions between the staff resource needs in Schools and the financial needs of students. The Revenue comes also into the picture with its requirement that students have to engage in full time study and not in activities that are in service to their employer if they are to receive a tax-free stipend. The students’ workload therefore needs to be monitored in some way. Revenue recognizes however that while the academic year cycle compresses activities into 22 weeks, they look across the whole year span of 52 weeks in evaluating what is reasonable for the student to teach. The proposed six hours a week across the whole year may mean many more hours within a single week of a teaching term. Currently, the Irish Research Council (IRC) allows for 150 hours of teaching contributions for students on IRC stipends, and therefore Trinity takes the figure as a guide that the Revenue must permit it. That figure however is not distributed equally across all weeks of the year but compressed within the weeks of the teaching terms of the academic year.

9) The nature of the activities and the recruitment process remains to be discussed fully under Horizon 2.

10) School-based recruitment process might be difficult to run smoothly in multi-disciplinary Schools and those which teach across Faculties and therefore some flexibility would be required to organize the activity along the Discipline level.

11) Formalisation of the recruitment process might result in unintended consequences in that some teaching in some Schools may become available on an ad hoc basis and might be more difficult to fill with a heavier administrative cost to manage. There could be fewer teaching assistants doing more hours as a result. Another consequence would be the perceived increase in the administrative effort to service the recruitment process which may deter
academics from offering teaching opportunities to students on their modules by cutting the tutorial components out.

12) The Dean has clarified that “recruitment” is used broadly in the allocation of teaching hours to students and is not intended to imply a formal employment process. The issue will be discussed under Horizon 2 in the next year.

13) The question has arisen as to who will take up the additional administrative support for the recruitment process.

14) A concern has also been raised about unequal abilities to teach by PGR students and therefore DTLPs should have discretion not to appoint such students to teaching duties. There is an entitlement to apply to teach but the entitlement to teach should be contingent on the ability to provide quality teaching.

The Dean concluded that, in recognition that students will be registering in September for 2023/24 and that Schools are currently finalizing plans for the following academic year, a communication will be circulated to Schools to request that transparent information on how teaching support activities are allocated and who is the point of contact is made available to students – ideally in their handbooks but also online and during the induction event. It is assumed that Schools already have the information available, although it might not be clear to students where to find it. The Dean stated that WP2 is asking for the committee’s endorsement to carry the work forward, with a view to engaging in thorough discussions with Schools, HR, the Secretary’s Office and possibly Revenue to ensure that all aspects of the project have been fully considered before the Policy and the Guidelines are proposed for the committee’s consideration next academic year as part of Horizon 2.

Decision GS/22-23/137: The committee endorsed the recommendation for Council consideration.

Action GS/22-23/137: A communication will issue to Schools requesting transparency in the information provided to students on the availability and allocation of teaching opportunities within their Discipline.

XX GS/22-23/138 PGR: Draft Business Case for Horizon 2 summary - update by Dean of Graduate Studies; Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend
The proposed scope for Horizon 2 was outlined above under Agenda Item GS/22-23/135 PGR: Interim Report on progress for Council.

XX GS/22-23/139 Academic Integrity Working Group 2022/23 and Changes to Calendar Regulations on Plagiarism (Academic Misconduct) in 2023/24 - Dean of Graduate Studies to update; Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) to attend
The Dean welcomed one of the authors of the circulated submission on Academic Integrity, Ms Lizzie Whitcher, a new Education Policy Developer from Academic Affairs. The Dean spoke to the circulated document and its three Appendices: New Academic Misconduct Process (flowchart), Rubric and Consequences, and Calendar Regulations. She noted that the committee was asked for endorsement in principle of the proposed processes so that it could progress for Council consideration.

The Dean noted that since November 2022 with the introduction of CHAT GPT a new environment has evolved, representing new challenges to academic integrity. Schools will need to investigate a wide range of infringements and need to be supported in their decision making process to ensure
that consequences for students are consistent across the University. The circulated proposal will need to be approved by the next Council in order for the Calendar changes for the next year to be implemented. The Dean drew members’ attention to a visual chart illustrating steps of the proposed process. The proposal has already been considered by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) earlier in the week.

The Dean noted that over the year she has been briefing the committee on the activities of the Academic Integrity Working Group (AI WG) and its three sub-groups considering changes to the existing processes related to Academic Integrity and plagiarism. The AI WG has taken into consideration the draft framework drawn up by the National Academic Integrity Network (NAIN). In addition, the focus has been on Academic Integrity and potential infringements instead of merely on plagiarism. The emphasis has also been on educational consequences arising from infringements, rather than punishment. The AI WG proposal has been approved in principle by the USC with some modifications.

The Dean took members through the proposed new process. The aim was to set up a process sufficiently streamlined for Schools and students to engage with it but consistent across the University. A NAIN-inspired rubric is proposed for use in Trinity. The Dean illustrated the possible reasoning with the use of the rubric, discussing scores that indicate poor academic practice and their consequences, as well as instances where scores indicate potential breaches of academic integrity. One new proposal applies when a score indicates potential academic misconduct, offering students the option of facing up to the alleged transgression and accepting the penalty, or going through a lengthier process with a full hearing. The DTLP will have an oversight of individual situations and will be guided by the marking rubric. An Academic Integrity meeting will take place in the School, but a new requirement is suggested for the student to make a mandatory written submission. A School may also require that the student presents in person although the student may opt out of that requirement. An advocate for the student may or may not be able to be present at the hearing as there is a limited number of PG tutors and a very small PG support team to support all PGT students in such difficulties. Therefore, meetings may not be contingent on their attendance even if the student is seeking such supports. The Academic Integrity meeting will consider the evidence submitted by the module coordinator, the marking rubric, the student written submission, and in parallel any mitigating circumstances before it can be determined what pedagogical consequences to recommend. These will be forwarded to the relevant Dean (Postgraduate or Undergraduate) or straight to the Junior Dean.

The Dean pointed out that there are different domains and criteria in the rubric, including consideration of any previous violation. She underlined that the further the student is in their academic career the more they should already know about Academic Integrity and the higher the penalty will be for any transgressions. The higher the score the more severe the consequences. The numerical score will still be considered in the context of mitigating circumstances presented by the student.

The Dean invited members to share their thoughts and the following comments were articulated:

1) The proposed streamlined process with re-emphasis on the educational rather than punitive consequence is promising. However, in places the language used appears to be punitive and may have a chilling effect on the student and should be re-considered.

2) In the real courts of law, the jury are not supposed to know about previous convictions, and it is therefore required that the lecturer identifying a possible academic misconduct of the student should not at that point be aware of the student’s previous history. The Dean clarified that such background information will only be available towards the end of the process.
3) The Dean noted that it is intended that a record of students’ infringements be kept, ideally in SITS although this might not be in place for the next year. Visibility of a history of infringements is particularly useful for students who are in inter-School programmes.

4) A member noted that the list of points of study does not include the PhD. The Dean clarified that this is an un-intended omission to be rectified.

5) DTLPs may not be in possession of all relevant information related to individual cases such as whether the module coordinator has provided an academic integrity training.

6) There is no room for noting mitigating circumstances on the rubric form. The Dean clarified that these can be included in the student’s written submission or at the very start of the process when they student is alerted that they are suspected of having committed an infringement. The score should be retained even though mitigating circumstances may impact the course of action recommended for the student. The decision how to proceed is not exclusively determined by the score itself but by the deliberation of the team considering all aspects of the infringement and its consequences.

7) In response to a member’s suggestion, the Dean noted the need for an Academic Integrity Office to centrally maintain records and oversee the process across all Schools.

8) It was suggested that a high score through Turn-it-in could frequently operationalise the process by alerting the lecturer of the possible infringement. That initial step could therefore be integrated into the process and reflected in the flow chart.

9) However, another DTLP raised the question as to how to approach assessments generated by CHAT GPT which produces new texts undetectable by Turn-it-in as opposed to plagiarised texts.

10) In response to a member’s query the Dean clarified that level 1 is not automatically skipped for PG students if the infringement points to that level.

11) The Dean noted that reliance on plagiarism has been taken out of the Calendar as the only term for academic integrity infringement. The Calendar will also point to the misuse of Artificial Intelligence tools and resources as a form of academic misconduct. There is a recognition that the AI is here to stay, and students should learn how to work with it rather than abuse it. This will involve work on establishing how to embrace Artificial Intelligence and how to design effective assessments.

12) When the student is suspected of submitting an assessment generated by Artificial Intelligence, the only measure available under the current regulations is to talk to the student to see whether they have achieved the understanding of the relevant leaning outcomes represented by the work they submitted and whether they acknowledge that they have used the AI tool to generate it. However, such a conversation may not be conceived as a mini viva which would require designated Calendar regulations.

13) Should the student demonstrate an inability to learn from feedback on their previous instances of poor academic practice, the consequence is greater even if the next offence nominally stays at level 1.

14) It is not intended to alter the score for part-time students over two years to level out their more limited exposure to the course in the 1st year as compared to the full-time students but to treat it as a mitigating circumstance. In addition, part-time students do their dissertations in year 2 which will add a heavy weighting for academic infringement to the higher score for year 2 which together might bring the student into a higher penalty rubric. Ms Whitcher clarified that because of the omission of PhD students, the table will be reviewed for PG students and that issue will be considered at that point for a final regulation. The Dean noted that she would not be supportive of dividing the big picture into small fragments for regulatory purposes.

15) Finally, a member noticed that the term AI (Artificial Intelligence) is being used extensively in a negative context. However, in all disciplines, students already use AI-based tools on a daily basis such as a google-based search engines and translation software based on substantial AI
components. The specific difficulty comes into play with the generative tools. It is therefore important to use more precise language than just AI and to clearly identify which AI-based tools and software are prohibited. For example, if students can use “Grammarly” can they also use the grammar function of CHAT GPT which is free of charge.

16) As a point of clarification, the Dean noted that the new process will commence in September at a School level with the use of a new form, but the proposed consequence of an infringement will have to be approved by the Dean.

The Dean thanked members for their comments and concluded by hoping that the proposed streamlined process will provide consistency and clarity for both staff and students and shift the narrative towards a pedagogical dimension away from the current punitive one. Members endorsed the proposed process for Council consideration.

Decision GS/22-23/139: The committee recommended the proposed process for Council consideration.

XX GS/22-23/140 GSC Survey 2022/23 - Dean of Graduate Studies to present
The Dean reminded members to complete an anonymous online Annual Survey 2022/23 evaluating the effectiveness of the GSC in conducting its business. She advised that members were requested to complete the survey by mid-June and responses would help with the future planning of GSC meetings.

Action GS/22-23/140: Members to complete the GSC Annual Survey online by 16 June 2023.

XX GS/22-23/141 Any Other Business
(i) Planning for 2023/24
The Dean noted that meetings during 2022/23 had particularly full agendas making it difficult to allow for proper discussion on important items. As she was concerned that there would be a similar high volume of business for the coming year, she proposed to modify the structure of GSC meetings to preferably one longer meeting, but for 3 hours: 9.30-12.30 on Thursdays, with a coffee break at 10.30. The Dean advised that a survey will be sent out in order for members to provide their feedback. She asked members finishing off their DTLP term this year to take part in the survey on behalf of their replacements whose names are not yet known. She also reminded members that ad hoc substitution at the Graduate Studies Committee is not allowed and replacements have to be approved by Council.

Action GS/22-23/141 (i): Dean to send out a survey for members to indicate preferences as to how they would like to restructure the frequency and duration of GSC meetings in 2023/24.

Action GS/22-23/141 (ii): The Dean will circulate to Schools over the summer a list of items to be added to research handbooks.

XX Section B for Noting and Approval

XX GS/22-23/142 MPhil in “Film Studies” title change to “Screen Studies” and discontinuation of two
strands from 2024/25 – Memorandum from Prof. Paula Quigley (School of Creative Arts DTLP)

A memorandum from Prof. Paula Quigley was circulated requesting a change of the MPhil course title from “Film Studies” to “Screen Studies” and discontinuation of two strands: “Theory, History, Practice” and “Screenwriting” from 2024/25. The exit award will change from “Postgraduate Diploma in Film Studies” to “Postgraduate Diploma in Screen Studies”.

Decision GS/22-23/142: The committee recommended for Council approval a change of MPhil course title from “Film Studies” to “Screen Studies”, the title change of the exit award from “Postgraduate Diploma in Film Studies” to “Postgraduate Diploma in Screen Studies” and discontinuation of two strands: “Theory, History, Practice” and “Screenwriting” from 2024/25.

XX GS/22-23/143 Correction of status of MES in Leadership in Christian Education in 2023/24 from Discontinued to Suspended – Memorandum from Prof. Neville Cox (Registrar)

On the basis of a clarification at the MIE ACDC meeting held on the 11 May 2023 with respect to Decision GS/22-23/107, a request from the Registrar, Prof. Neville Cox was submitted seeking that GSC approve a change of status of the Master in Education Studies in Leadership in Christian Education (PTED-EDLV-1V) from “Discontinued” for entry from 2023/24 to “Suspended” for the academic year 2023/24. The MIE have clarified that they did not wish to cease the current in-person programme yet, but rather to suspend it, so that they can review the success of the new online format before making a final decision to discontinue the in-person course.

Decision GS/22-23/143: The committee recommended for Council approval a change of status of the Master in Education Studies in Leadership in Christian Education (PTED-EDLV-1V) from “Discontinued” for entry from 2023/24 to “Suspended” for the academic year 2023/24.

XX GS/22-23/144 Review of Timetabling Policy - Mary McMahon, Manager (Central Timetabling Unit)

A memorandum from the Manager of the Central Timetabling Unit followed by the Timetabling Policy Review Record Sheet accompanying the reviewed Timetabling Policy (v3.1) and followed by Timetabling Procedures (v3.1) was seeking GSC to note the documents. The memorandum sets out a request to continue ‘as is’ and to postpone any substantial review until there has been sufficient time to road test the existing policy.

Decision GS/22-23/144: The committee recommended the submitted Timetabling Policy document for Council approval.

XX GS/22-23/145 Changes to Calendar Section for validated PGT course in 2023/24 from MIE and RIAM - Memorandum from Prof. Neville Cox (Registrar)

Following the approval by the MIE ACDC on the 11th May 2023 and by the RIAM ACDC on the 3rd May 2023, the Registrar was requesting that the GSC recommend for Council approval the submitted Calendar III entries for the validated courses to be delivered in 2023/24 by the respective linked providers.

Decision GS/22-23/145: The committee recommended for Council approval the submitted Calendar III entries for the validated courses to be delivered in 2023/24 by the respective
The Dean advised that the circulated draft of the 2023/24 Calendar does not include changes to Section XI with information on the new Trinity Research Doctorate Awards and the Provost’s PhD Award which did not appear in the 2022/23 edition. These changes are being finalised and will be included in the published version. The entry on legacy awards has been amended but will be retained until the students who hold them have completed their studies even though there are no new awards.

Decision GS/22-23/146: The committee recommended for Council approval

A memorandum and proposal from the School of Nursing and Midwifery DTLP was seeking a special derogation from the current limit of 10 ECTS for which exemption is normally approved under the current regulations regarding the threshold of RPL and permission that 30 ECTS be allocated to applicants who have completed the Professional Certificate in Prescribing (NFQ 8) and apply for admission to the MSc in Advanced Practice. The Dean stated that this is an exceptional request on the grounds outlined in the submission which she supports after careful consideration. She underlined that it is intended that the exceptional RPL provision will be availed of pre-registration, so that the experience of the applicants having previously completed the Professional Certificate is taken into account at the point of admission. The Dean concluded by referring to the very exceptional circumstances of the request and noted that this is a unique case with financial, pedagogical, and reputational dimensions and cannot therefore be used as a precedent.

Decision GS/22-23/147: The committee recommended for Council approval a special exemption from the current regulations regarding the credit exemption threshold of RPL and permitted MSc in Advanced Practice students who have successfully completed the Professional Certificate in Prescribing (NFQ 8) and demonstrated the necessary professional experience to be eligible to apply for a credit exemption threshold of 30 ECTS following admission to the MSc in Advanced Practice.

The draft minutes of the GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials on the 17th May 2023 were circulated to members noting that out of six 5 ECTS micro-credential proposals reviewed, two were approved: “Assessment and Management of frailty in ageing adults” to commence in Semester 1 (2024/25) in the School of Medicine and “Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Humanitarian Emergencies” to commence in Semester 2 (2023/24) in the School of Psychology.

Decision GS/22-23/148: The committee recommended for Council approval the draft minutes of GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials on the 17 May 2023.

Section C for Noting
XX GS/22-23/149 Submission of PGT course proposals for GSC – key dates for 2023/24 – Memorandum from Linda Darbey Assistant Academic Secretary - Academic Affairs (TT&L)
A memorandum from Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary - Academic Affairs, detailing key submission dates of PGT course proposals for GSC in 2023/24 was circulated to members.

XX GS/22-23/150 Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 9th February 2023
The RIAM ACDC minutes of the 9th February 2023 were circulated to members.

XX GS/22-23/151 Draft Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 3rd May 2023
The RIAM ACDC draft minutes of the 3rd May 2023 were circulated to members.

XX GS/22-23/152 Draft Minutes of the Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE) ACDC of 11th of May 2023
The MIE ACDC draft minutes of the 11th May 2023 were circulated to members.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.35pm.

Prof. Martine Smith Date: 25 May 2023