

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 12th May, 2005
Arts Building

Present: Chair: Dean of Graduate Studies (Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast), Dr Alan Kramer, Dr Alan Moore, Prof. Terence Brown, Dr Vasilis Politis, Dr Christine Morris, Dr Trevor Hodkinson, Dr Evelyn Mahon, Mr Gerard Tobin, Prof. Vincent Cahill, Mr Ryan Sheridan, Mr Charles Larkin,

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska

Apologies: Dean of Research (Prof. Ian Robertson), Mr Trevor Peare, Mr John Murphy, Dr Brian Lucey, Dr Frederick Falkiner, Dr John Donegan, Mr Ronan Hodson, Ms Helen Thornbury

187.0 Minutes of 14th April 2005

The minutes of the meeting of 14th April 2005 were approved with an amendment to be inserted to the last paragraph under 186.3 to say that the Committee welcomed the proposal to establish a digital archive for research theses, and decided that in particular the issues of copyright would need to be further discussed in departments and schools.

187.1 Matters arising

Re. 186.3: The Dean advised that Modern History would be willing to participate as the second department in the pilot project to set up a digital archive for research theses. Ms Niamh Brennan, Research Support System Administrator, would be in touch directly with the two selected departments (the other being Computer Science) to put in place required arrangements.

187.2 The Graduate Schools

The Dean spoke to the circulated proposal on Graduate Schools. He explained that resulting out of the restructuring an opportunity had arisen to form graduate schools, which is being explored by the Dean at the suggestion of the Executive Officers and the Provost. The proposal for graduate schools had already been considered by the Deans' Committee, which had supported it on condition that it is thoroughly thought through and properly established. There are currently two graduate schools in College (i.e. the Graduate School of Engineering Studies established in 1969 and the School of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Health Sciences established in 2003), whose experience could inform the current process to some extent.

The Dean emphasised that the purpose for setting up a graduate school is primarily academic in that it will provide an academic unit for operating cognate postgraduate courses (including Ph.D. programmes) and teaching modules (including time-tabling, module duration and examination). In addition, although a graduate school within a single school could be envisaged in some cases, it is more probable that graduate schools will combine the activities of two or more schools/vice groupings. Graduate schools should also be able to facilitate increased external visibility of the postgraduate studies in a discipline in order to aid recruitment of postgraduate students, common promotion of cognate postgraduate programmes, etc.; to facilitate external collaborations by linking to external bodies (e.g. hospitals, professional organisations, other universities); to coordinate graduate student activities (seminar programmes, publications, workshops, away-days, and symposia); to provide a framework for obtaining external/philanthropic funding; and to advise postgraduate students on discipline-specific career progression. The Dean explained that the resources to run the graduate school could be provided by the collaborating schools/external bodies, either through an annual subvention or through an agreed percentage of the ARAM resources coming to the schools, or a combination of both. He also advised that it is proposed that the Director of the Graduate School be appointed by Board and Council, on the (joint) nomination of the Head(s) of School.

Some Committee members felt that an initiative to set up a graduate school should be a bottom-up one, which should/might locally occur in the formation of new schools at a later stage and would then follow the proposed administrative and academic structure for a graduate school. It was emphasised that the proposed document appears to indicate that postgraduate teaching should be viewed as an integral part of the core activity of a school, which currently is not always the case as some departments see an undergraduate teaching as their focal activity. A concern was therefore expressed that an establishment of a graduate school might lead to postgraduate activities being taken out from the school when they are currently well integrated there, as is the case in the Computer Science department. The Dean advised also that currently the Research Office offers career advice to postgraduate students on applications for Research Grants, however, if this function were to be carried out by graduate schools it could be made discipline-specific and it would need to be properly resourced with staff. With respect to devolution of further functionality to graduate schools, the Dean confirmed that postgraduate admissions could be administered there. The rubric for such devolution is already in place prepared by the Graduate Studies Office, which would also continue to train local staff. Within the next 2-3 years a system of on-line applications should be put in place in College, which should further assist the admissions process at the schools' level. A strong concern was expressed by the Committee that any proposed changes should depend on adequate staffing resources available to schools and graduate schools, and that some of the costs should be borne centrally.

The Dean advised that, in the immediate future at least, allocation of College awards would continue to be faculty-based in order to ensure that awards would continue to be available across all disciplines in College. Proposals for new courses would continue to come before the Graduate Studies Committee after being approved at the school level and would then be passed to Council for a final approval.

187.3 PGDipMSc Mental Health – a two year part-time course (a new course proposal)

The Dean invited Ms Elizabeth Fahey-McCarthy (Deputy Director of the School of Nursing and Midwifery) to speak to the circulated course proposal. Ms Fahey-McCarthy explained that the School had agreed to be the host school for a multi-professional course and that there would be coring with some of the existing modules of the established MSc course. The proposed course would be conjoint in nature, and delivered together with the Health Service Providers. The running costs of the proposed course are therefore reasonably low. The course was approved on condition that it would be favourably reviewed by an external assessor whose recommendations would be incorporated in the final submission to Council.

187.4 Procedures for students presenting for a second Masters degree

The Dean explained that an increasing number of students who had graduated with a Masters in Science degree in a taught course, later register for a research degree in the hope of pursuing a Ph.D. However, for a variety of reasons a number of these students end up submitting a research masters. They are not in a position to be awarded a second Masters degree though as the University awards a degree with a particular generic title only once even if it is in another discipline. (In Arts, two distinct degrees are in place i.e. research M.Litt. and taught M.Phil. which adequately cater for such situations.) The Dean therefore proposed that a new degree be set up for the Science/Engineering/Health Sciences areas which could be called a Research M.Sc., possibly given the designatory letters of M.Sc. (Res). Should such a new degree be created it would address a number of current cases where graduands are refusing to accept that they might not be conferred with a degree of Research M.Sc. The Committee endorsed Dean's proposal and recommended that the Dean should write to the Registrar in order to put the new degree for approval before the University Senate at the earliest available opportunity.

187.5 AOB

- 1) The Dean advised that there was a meeting of the Graduate Studies Appeal Committee to hear a student's appeal against an examiners' recommendation that an M.Litt. be awarded for a thesis submitted for examination for the Ph.D. The Committee ruled in the student's favour and voided the period of referral and allowed the student to resubmit a revised thesis in a year's time with a new set of two supervisors but retaining the same examiners.
- 2) The Dean advised that resulting out of restructuring the membership of the Graduate Studies Committee may be dissolved as its final meeting on 9 June 2005, and that the Committee would be reconstituted with new membership consisting of Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as of the next academic year.
- 3) The Committee noted with appreciation and satisfaction that the Faculty Ussher awards had increased this academic year to €12,700 and postgraduate research studentship to €8000 with fee waivers for both EU and non-EU students. It was recommended that effort should be maintained to increase the value of these awards even further in the next academic year to bring them in line with awards available elsewhere.
- 4) The Committee noted concern of the President of the GSU that students on the pre-2005 awards are required to do the same amount of teaching as prospective holders of the revised award even though their financial privileges are substantially different. The Committee confirmed that holders of the pre-2005 award signed up to a set of specific terms upon accepting that award and that these terms were still binding. The Dean advised the GSU President to contact Heads of Department directly to discuss any reduction in the teaching hours in individual cases.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.30 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 9th June 2005 in the Conference Room 2026 in the Arts Building.



Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast.

Date: 16 June 2005