

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 15 November, 2007
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Prof. Carol O'Sullivan, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Joe McDonagh, School of Business
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry
Dr Anne O'Connell, School of Dental Science
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Philip Matthews, School of Education
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Prof. Biswajit Basu, School of Engineering
Dr Fintan Sheerin, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleánáin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Prof. John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Thomas Connor (Acting), School of Medicine
Dr Iain Atack, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences
Prof. Eunan O'Halpin, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English
Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, School of Social Work & Social Policy

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska, Graduate Studies Office, Secretary to the meeting (*Ex officio*)

The Dean welcomed to the first meeting of the Committee its new members: Dr David Lloyd, the new Dean of Research and Dr Joe McDonagh, Dr Anne O'Connell, Prof. Biswajit Basu, Dr Fintan Sheerin, Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, Dr Gail McElroy and Dr Thomas Connor (Acting) the incoming Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School of Business, School of Dental Science, School of Engineering School of Nursing & Midwifery, School of Social Work & Social Policy, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy, School of Medicine respectively.

203.0 Minutes of 15 June 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 15 June 2007 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

203.1 Matters arising

No matters arising were raised.

203.2 A tutorial system for research students

The Dean welcomed Dr Myra O'Regan, the Senior Tutor, and invited her to speak about a proposal to introduce a tutorial system for postgraduate students. Dr O'Regan explained that the initial proposal was to introduce a tutorial system for postgraduate students on taught courses and that subsequently this was extended to the research register. The proposal was recently discussed as part of an external review of the College tutorial system and four members of the Committee

including the GSU President and the Dean participated. The discussion focused on how feasible it would be in terms of staff resources (i.e. extra academic staff to be identified and/or the current staff taking on more students into their chambers) to extend the system, and whether an alternative format of tutorial panels run out from the Senior Tutor's Office, could be set up to provide easily accessible service for postgraduates when they needed it. The Senior Tutor advised that the reviewers are due to submit a report in three weeks' time, and the Dean undertook to feed its recommendations back to the Committee for further discussion. The Committee expressed their support for the extension of the tutorial system for all postgraduate students providing that it gave a due respect for the relationship between the research student and their supervisor, and that it took account of the resource implications. The Dean thanked the Senior Tutor for coming to talk to the Committee.

203.3 M.Sc. in Finance (1 yr f-t/2 yr p-t)

The Dean passed the apologies from Prof. Brian Lucey, the proposed course director, and invited Dr Joe McDonagh, the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) from the School of Business to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr. McDonagh explained that the new course is being proposed in response to market demand, the School's own and the College's strategic development needs. The course is a new departure for the School marking its first entry to the immediate postgraduate area. It is designed to assist in providing finance for staff expansion and concomitant research growth in an area where the School has already secured a strong international profile. The course fills a gap in the provision of existing skills as identified by industry participants. It has been designed in conjunction with industry while being academically independent and at a high cognitive level. The course will aim to provide graduates with a thorough grounding in key concepts, tools and applications in modern finance, also will equip them with appreciation of modern finance research approaches. The course is also designed to be cognate with government and state aims and as an underpinning to a planned partnership between the School and the CFA Institute. Dr McDonagh also spoke about the academic structure of the course, its entry requirements, staffing, space constraints (especially in the context of the module delivery in 3-day blocks on campus) and course management.

The Dean thanked Dr McDonagh for his presentation. In a discussion which followed a few issues were raised:

- a) with respect to "the space constraints" the Dean referred to an earlier conversation with the bursar, who recognises the difficulty that space limitations impose an objective restriction on the flexibility with which new postgraduate courses can be introduced now and in the future.
- b) Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services wished it to be noted that the Library's restricted services and opening hours during the periods when students on this course will most likely be on campus have been drawn to the attention of the Course Director. Term-time evening and week-end opening hours are not available at the proposed start of the course in September and during term-time full services are not always available after 17:00 week-days and on Saturdays. Similarly, during the final dissertation / project period in the summer, the opening hours are restricted. However, since it is expected that much of the course work will be based on e-resources, both currently available through the Library and via additional services acquired for use within the School, the Library is happy to support this new course proposal.

After further more general discussion the Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

203.4 M.Sc. in Comparative European Politics (1 yr f-t/2 yr p-t)

The Dean welcomed the proposed course director, Dr Robert Thomson, from the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, and invited him to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Thomson explained that the new course is an integral part of the School's strategic plan to strengthen recruitment to Ph.D. programmes and to provide an important training element to new graduate students. In addition to developing knowledge of the political systems of modern Europe, students will receive a strong training in research methods which underpins most of the modules. The course aims to provide students with the necessary skills for a range of research-related careers, as well as careers in other areas such as in applied policy research, the civil service, European Union institutions, non-governmental organisations or the media. Dr Thomson also spoke about the academic structure of the course, its entry requirements, staffing arrangements, finance, and proposed marketing.

The Dean thanked Dr Thomson for his presentation. In a discussion which followed a few issues were raised and the following clarifications were obtained:

- a) with respect to the title of the degree award being Masters unlike the MPhil which is a similar course offered as year one of the Integrated PhD in Political Science, Dr Thomson explained that the proposed new course is based on a heavy application of quantitative research methods which build up students' numerical skills unlike the MPhil which is mainly literature-based.
- b) that it is not the current intention to make available the methodology-based modules to students from other Schools on the grounds that even though the modules may appear to develop students' generic research skills, in fact, the research methods component taught there is strongly linked to the subject-area of comparative European politics and would not therefore be suitable for outside students.

- c) that the ratio of actual contact hours to the overall study hours as expressed by the ECTS credits is justified by the need for self-directed extensive reading which is in line with the format of similar courses in Ireland and the UK.
- d) Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services wished it to be noted that similar reservations apply to this course as those specified in point 203.3 (b) above but that the the Library is happy to support this new course proposal.

The Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

203.5 Feedback on an IUA Graduate Student Skills Statement

The Dean introduced the item by explaining that the circulated draft of the Skills Statement is a central part of the Irish Universities Association Strategic Innovation Fund 4th Level Ireland project which describes the desired learning outcomes and skills that PhD graduates should aspire to achieve upon completion of their studies. This IUA position is supported by the government's *Strategy for Science Technology and Innovation* and the Irish Universities Quality Board's *Good Practice in the organisation of PhD programmes in Irish universities* where the importance of developing PhD graduates with strong generic, transferable and discipline-specific skills is declared. The IUA Statement identifies 8 skill groups such as "Research & Knowledge", "Research Environment", "Personal Effectiveness/ Development", "Team-working", "Communication", "Career Management", "Entrepreneurship & Innovation", and "Ethics & Social Understanding", which are deemed to assist the graduates to enter a broad range of employment sectors.

In a discussion it was argued that the IUA Graduate Student Skills Statement ties in with Level 10 descriptor for an award of Doctoral Degree within the National Framework of Qualifications, approved by the University Council in 2006 and laid down in Calendar part 2 (2007) on page 26 which also refers to the comprehensive acquisition of intellectual-academic and generic skills by PhD graduates during the course of their study.

The purpose of the draft skills statement was therefore queried in that context. An issue was also raised to what extent the draft statement conveys adequately the idea that the main purpose of the PhD process is the student's achievement of academic goals by means of intellectual enquiry. The committee have agreed that it is important for PhD students to acquire a sound range of generic skills empowering them to enter various professional careers other than academic research but the PhD's main focus is the contribution to new knowledge by means of research and that skills training should only underpin that goal and not become a goal in itself. It was also felt that various careers, in academic, public and private sectors, would appear to require sector-specific generic skills, and that it may not be of benefit to the PhD students to restrict their choices to the one-fit-all fixed list of skills. The committee expressed concern about a legal impact on the University should the skills statement be approved by the IUA and emphasised that considerable resources would need to be put in place if a whole range of listed skills were to be consistently provided to all PhD students as a result. The committee have viewed the skills statement therefore more as an aspirational indicator than a regulatory document binding for the University. An additional issue was to note that provision of generic skills training should fall on the University and not on individual PhD programme organisers, and that students' performance would not be centrally assessed but self-assessed by the students themselves. The GSU President was strongly in support of provision of communication skills.

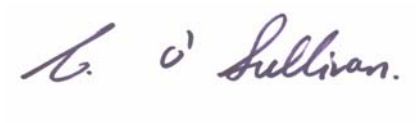
The Dean undertook to pass on the Committee's comment to the IUA meeting of the 4th Level Network on 26 November.

203.6 Any Other Business

- a) The Dean advised that there was a meeting of the Graduate Studies Appeal Committee to hear a student's appeal against the refusal of the Course Committee to recommend the student for the award of a postgraduate diploma. The Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students ruled against the student on the grounds that the appellant accepted that they had been made aware of the course practice of forfeiting the diploma when proceeding to the Masters. Whereas the course committee would have been entitled to award the appellant the diploma on *ad misericordiam* grounds, the committee decided that no sufficient *ad misericordiam* grounds were present in the case to warrant this. In the circumstances the Graduate Studies Appeal Committee did not propose to recommend the award of a diploma to the appellant. The Committee noted and approved the Academic Appeals Committee for Graduate Students' recommendation for submission to the University Council.
- b) Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President, advised about a resignation of the Vice President of the GSU Ms Molly Doros and her replacement by Gabriel Magee elected on 13 November 2007.
- c) An issue of external funding for graduate education was raised and the committee expressed their regret and dissatisfaction that the anticipated funding from the research councils will not be forthcoming. It was emphasized that a lot of staff effort was put last year into GREP submissions and many an interesting programme proposal may not be implemented now because of lack of funding.

- d) An issue was raised with respect to the Student Information System and its limited way in which it conveys information on thesis under examination, Dean's Grace, minor corrections and other important details about student academic progression which does not get displayed on the SIS. It was argued that even if recording such information is not possible in the immediate future on the current system, an effort should be made to try to find a way to record it in "comments".
- e) A query was also raised about a possible time-scale for the rolling-out of the current on-line admissions pilot project to encompass all taught courses and possibly research on the grounds that dealing with paper-based applications is highly inefficient.
- f) The Committee noted and approved all the items in Section B on the agenda.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.15 am.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "C. O'Sullivan".

Prof. Carol O'Sullivan

Date: 13 December 2007