

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 3rd May 2012
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Professor Veronica Campbell, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Dr Martin Fellenz, School of Business
Professor Isabel Rozas, School of Chemistry
Professor Simon Wilson, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Dr Conor McGuckin, School of Education
Dr Sam Slote, School of English
Dr Joseph Clarke, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Jurgen Uhlich, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Jeffrey Kallen, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Dr Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics
Dr John Gormley, School of Medicine
Professor Anna Davies, School of Natural Sciences
Ms Anne-Marie Brady, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Andrew Harkin, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr Gillian Wylie, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Dr Stephanie Holt, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Mary O'Connor, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
Ms Alex Anderson, CAPSL Representative (*Ex officio*)
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)

Apologies: Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Claire Healy, School of Dental Science
Dr Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film & Music
Professor Timothy Foster, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Dr Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics

Ms Lee Mills, Information System Services Representative
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research

In attendance: Ms Jennifer Hill, Graduate Studies Office, Secretary to the meeting (*Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office

GS/11-12/046 Minutes of 5th April 2012

The minutes of the meeting of 5th April 2012 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

GS/11-12/047 Matters Arising

The Dean confirmed that following the discussion at the previous meeting, Professor John Scattergood had revised the Harmonisation of Assessment Regulations document **GS/11-12/039** and would be attending this meeting to follow up with the Committee.

The centralised survey for evaluation of postgraduate courses **GS/11-12/043** was brought back to the Quality Committee and although minor amendments were suggested, this has now been approved.

As requested at the previous meeting **GS/11-12/045**, the new SITS system was on the agenda for this meeting and members of the GeneSIS project team would be attending to update the Committee and take questions.

The issue of a second sabbatical officer for the Graduate Students' Union for 2012/13 **GS/11-12/045** continues to be discussed in College.

GS/11-12/048 Harmonisation of Assessment Regulations

The Dean introduced Professor John Scattergood and asked him to speak to the circulated document.

Professor Scattergood explained that, following feedback from the previous GSC meeting, the Advisory Group on the Harmonisation of Assessment and Progression Regulations had amended the proposed document.

With some further clarification provided during the meeting, it was confirmed that the changes made are as follows:

- Point 1. 1. (i) re: 90 ECTS now states 'are normally awarded' and a footnote suggests that where it is proposed to exceed this credit value a special derogation must be obtained from the Graduate Studies Committee.
- The phrase 'and only two' has been added to the description of the two assessment models (the credit weighted version and the decoupled version) to prevent variants from the 40% / 60% split.
- A sentence has been added to the opening paragraph of section 1. 2. 1, to make the optionality of the award of 'distinction' explicit although a recommendation has been added stating that the possibility of awarding distinctions should be part of any future proposals for courses
- A recommendation has been added to section 1. 3. 1, that for all courses developed in the future 50% should be the norm.
- Section 1.3.2 has been amended to state that students may apply to repeat the year, as per confirming current regulations for failure of coursework.
- The document has also been amended, as per current regulations, regarding failure in the research elements or dissertation to state that students may apply to repeat the year, or take the relevant exit award.

Following a query, a discussion took place on the issue of numerical marking for assessment and arguments for and against this were put forward. It was confirmed that the system could accommodate both numerical and categoric marking however this would require more maintenance and would cost more to implement. As the majority of Schools would opt for a numerical system, the Dean suggested that those Schools seeking an alternative should meet with the GeneSIS project team separately to discuss this further. It was also confirmed that Masters would continue to be awarded on the basis of Pass or Pass with Distinction.

Following discussion, it was agreed that in section 1.33 the text "may apply to submit a dissertation in a subsequent year" would be removed.

Subject to these amendments, the Committee confirmed their broad support for the document and approved it for submission to the University Council. In approving the

document, it was noted that the issue of categoric marking for a small number of Schools would require further discussion.

It was confirmed that clarification on submission of Calendar Part 2 changes (incorporating these new regulations) would be issued via email.

GS/11-12/049 GeneSIS / SITS

The Dean introduced Michael Hughes, Colm Stephens and Lynn Balfe from the GeneSIS project team.

Michael Hughes gave a brief presentation and update on the GeneSIS project confirming that CAO and postgraduate admissions are now live and web curriculum management and the single person record have also been rolled out. Direct undergraduate admissions has not yet gone live and there are issues to be resolved and enhancements to be made for the postgraduate admissions.

It was confirmed that user access, uploading of supplementary documents and email notifications are all in testing and should be available next week. Analysis of the user interface is taking place.

It was explained that the major issue of accessing applications in progress is under discussion with the Academic Secretary and the College solicitors as there could be legal implications with accessing this information. Many Schools wanted to be able to monitor how many applications are in progress and be able to contact these applicants, but there was an acknowledgement that applicants would need to authorise the release of this information prior to them submitting their complete application.

Several Schools expressed significant dissatisfaction with the implementation of the SITS system and a potential loss of applications and acceptances. The potential impact of fewer students on staffing levels was noted. The main concerns raised included:

- frustration that the system was rolled out when several features were still in testing
- an increase in workload for both administrative and academic staff due to the lack of email notifications being sent to applicants
- applicants experiencing problems uploading their documentation and being unable to accept places when offered. This was noted as a particular concern for students in receipt of scholarships.
- problems with contacting staff when issues arise – it was confirmed that the SAS User Support Unit should be the first point of contact
- when issues have been raised, no communication has been provided confirming that they have been resolved – a logging system (similar to IS Services) should be considered
- supporting documentation is made available in multiple documents and formats which could result in a large number of individual documents to open and save when committees are reviewing applications. It was confirmed that at present there is no option for combining the individual documents into one PDF (as was previously available through PAC) but that this would be discussed with Tribal and further guidelines would be provided to applications about uploading their documents
- referees experiencing problems with downloading and uploading the reference form and it was queried whether this could be made into a web form (as is in place at many UK universities). As this would involve significant re-design it was confirmed that the requirement for a signature on the reference has been removed to enable referees to complete the form electronically and not need to print and scan before uploading

It was confirmed that the number of applications were expected to decline with the new system as applicants would apply for a specific course(s), rather than applying to their

top 5 TCD courses, as is the case with PAC. However, the technical issues hampering the ability of applicants to accept their offer of a place was a matter that required urgent attention in order to maintain student numbers.

The GeneSIS Team agreed to consider the issues raised and bring forward solutions.

GS/11-12/050 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report

The Dean referred to the circulated document and drew the Committee's attention to the following:

- the total postgraduate student numbers for 2010-2011 was 4,903 which is a reduction of 432 (8%) students from the previous year. 44 fewer students were on the research register and 388 fewer students were on the taught postgraduate register, compared to 2009-10.
- an increase in the number of students with Asian, North American and South American nationality, but a significant reduction in the number of Irish students.
- Further analysis has been done regarding EU/non-EU status and this will be added to the report prior to circulation to the University Council but the Committee should note that in 2010-11 there were 26 additional research non-EU students and 36 taught masters students. There were, however, 53 fewer non-EU postgraduate diploma students. This information indicates that the two week turnaround policy of non-EU applications needs to be engaged with further to increase the number of non-EU students.
- 395 research degrees were examined in 2010-2011 which is an increase of 59 from the previous year.
- Approximately €79,000 has been allocated in travel grant funding and the contribution of Trinity Foundation and the Benefaction Fund was acknowledged.
- in the preliminary figures for 2011-2012 there were 542 research students registered on year 1 which is an increase of 52 students from the previous year (2010-11).
- In 2011-12, 88% of the registered research students were within the timescale of 2 years for Masters and 4 years for Ph.D.
- For the first time, data has been collected on funding sources and this is detailed in pages 28/29 and appendix 9a and 9b.

GS/11-12/051 TCD-UCD Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship

The Dean explained that the TCD version of a Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship had already been approved by the University Council in June 2011 and the document circulated now outlines the governance arrangements for a joint TCD-UCD Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship.

The Dean asked the Committee to note that the 5 modules that will contribute to the joint certificate are the same as those previously approved by Council for the Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship. These modules have already been delivered to TCD and UCD students by staff from both TCD and UCD.

The Committee were also asked to note that the Postgraduate Certificate will be awarded by Trinity College and not the University of Dublin, as stated in the document.

It was confirmed that the two core modules are mandatory before the specialist modules can be taken, module development is ongoing and that there is no cost to the student or School for a PhD student taking this certificate due to the Innovation Academy having PRTL funding until 2015.

The joint TCD-UCD Certificate in Innovation & Entrepreneurship was approved by the Committee.

GS/11-12/052 AOB

The Dean informed the Committee that the MSc in Bioengineering and MSc in Neuroscience received Postgraduate Course of the Year awards in the Engineering and Science categories, respectively, at this year's GradIreland Graduate Recruitment Awards and congratulated the Schools of Engineering and Medicine on this success.

The Dean confirmed that a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the Graduate Studies Committee would be circulated to the Committee.

Section B for noting and approval

1. The Dean confirmed that a meeting will be held between the relevant Schools and the Faculty Dean to discuss how language support may be optimally developed and delivered in College. Once this has been agreed the modules on Arabic language will be brought back to the Committee for review.
2. The Masters in Theology modules in Developing New Communities of Faith and Church History were approved.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.09am.

Prof. Veronica Campbell

Date: 4th May 2012