

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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**Present:** Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education  
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering  
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English  
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech and  
Communication Sciences  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical  
Sciences  
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics  
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology  
Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology  
and Ecumenics  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
Professor Stephanie Holt, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Megan Lee, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Mr Adam Hanna, Graduate Students' Union Vice President (*Ex officio*)  
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
The Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan, CAPSL  
Representative (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Lee Mills, Information System Services Representative (*Ex officio*)

**Apologies:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Frank Barry, School of Business  
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry  
Professor Kevin Devine, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Anne Fitzpatrick, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies  
Professor Alex Schuster, School of Law

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research (Ex officio)

**In attendance:** Mr Dimitrios Paraskevas, Trinity Teaching and Learning, Secretary to the meeting (Ex officio)  
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office (Ex officio)

Professor Michelle Leech and Professor Timothy Savage, for item GS/14-15/15  
Ms Roisin Smith, for item GS/14-15/16

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#### **GS/14-15/12 Minutes of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014**

Subject to one correction to the list of attendees, the minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated.

#### **GS/14-15/13 Matters Arising**

Following the last Committee meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014, the Dean provided an update on certain items that had been discussed. Specifically:

- GS/14-15/7, the Dean circulated Council minute CL/14-15/058 (Council meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014) referring to GSC's discussion regarding item GS/14-15/3, College Policy on the Return of Coursework (GSC meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014), and specifically to GSC's proposal that the respective timeline for return of feedback in postgraduate courses should be 4-6 weeks (20-30 working days). Council noted 'that the proposed timeline suggested by the GSC was within the existing parameters of the College Policy on the Return of Coursework and that the provision of feedback to students should not exceed 30 days'.
- GS/14-15/10, the Dean informed members that the M.Sc. Managing Risk and System Change course proposal was with the external reviewer.

#### **GS/14-15/14 Clarification regarding anonymous marking of postgraduate exams**

Further to the Committee's request for clarification regarding anonymous marking of postgraduate exams (minute GS/14-15/11 of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014) the Dean presented Ms Mary McMahon's (Examinations and Timetables Officer) memo on the issue, asking the Committee to consider and approve the implementation of anonymous marking from the 2015/16 academic year for all formal postgraduate examinations. In the discussion that followed, members identified occasions where, theoretically, anonymity of marking in SITS could be compromised (i.e. some markers also having access to SITS exam keyholder files, and staff being able to identify students by entering marks in the coursework components by name and then

tracking these marks against the anonymous components). Another issue raised was the fact that markers who were not TCD staff (e.g. for clinical components) did not have access to SITS to enter marks directly. The workaround of exporting spreadsheets from SITS and re-importing them once markers had completed them was explained, some members deeming this process labour intense, and further adding to the workload that anonymous marking would bring. In the discussion it was also clarified why students needed to enter both their exam ID and name (on fold-down hidden flap) on their scripts, which was to identify them in case their exam ID was entered incorrectly. As an alternative to this practice it was suggested that invigilators could check exam IDs on student scripts at the exam venue. The Dean agreed to bring these issues to the Examinations and Timetables Officer for consideration. The discussion concluded with members agreeing that College should proceed with anonymous marking of postgraduate exams on the grounds that it would eliminate any potential bias (considering postgraduate students are usually better known to academic staff), further clarifying that assessments marked by name were equally valid in terms of measuring students' performance. Members also agreed to invite the Examinations and Timetables Officer to a future meeting in order to brief the Committee on the required SITS configurations, when these become fully known, and also to clarify certain details of the move to anonymous marking.

**GS/14-15/15                      Advanced Radiation Therapy Practice (P.Grad.Cert,  
P.Grad.Dip, M.Sc.)**

The Dean invited Professor Michelle Leech and Professor Timothy Savage to present this item. Professor Leech outlined the key aspects of the course proposal highlighting the fact that this was an important endeavour for both the Discipline and College in general as it offered a new entry path to prospective students. Furthermore, she cited the reasons for developing this online course i.e. the role of a radiotherapist becoming more complex, the Discipline not being able to accept international students in the past due to the part-time mode of delivering the face-to-face version of the course, and taking into account evidence that radiotherapists in Ireland were signing on to similar courses in the UK to further their education. Professor Leech then proceeded with explaining that selection of course strand would be dependent on each student's background and Professor Savage noted that details of financial assistance to the Library will be included in the proposal once the related costs were fully understood. At that point, the Keeper of Readers' Services informed the Committee of the increased costs associated with online delivery of courses as the additional traffic and access from different geographical locations to periodicals' websites results in increased subscription fees and royalties to be paid. Responding to a query, Professor Leech clarified that the Discipline would continue to run the existing face-to-face course in parallel and until it was clearer what the demand was for either form of delivery, the online format expected to be more in demand. A suggestion to deliver some of the modules to the face-to-face cohort online as well in order to avoid duplication of teaching was deemed particularly useful. In the discussion following the presentation, it was clarified that the course will be included in College's Online Education pilot phase, and that delivery of the second strand would depend on the review of the first strand. Moreover, the Committee noted that although student numbers were not expected to be high, the course should have no issues in attracting applicants in order to run. Following this discussion, the Committee approved the course proposal as circulated.

## **GS/14-15/16 Irish Survey of Student Engagement Postgraduate Report**

The Dean welcomed Ms Roisin Smith (Quality Officer) to the meeting for this item. Ms Smith gave a brief introduction and background to the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and explained that this was a new instrument for academic institutions to review student engagement. The survey structure comprised of eleven indices, divided into two parts: i) six related to Engagement and ii) five indices related to Outcomes. The report analysed the responses of postgraduate students on taught programmes, both full-time and part-time. After going through some of the overall findings of the survey and establishing that there was very little difference between TCD scores and those of other Irish universities a discussion ensued where members noted the following:

- The scores for the overall satisfaction index were higher in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) while the remaining AHSS indices' scores were lower than those in Engineering, Mathematics and Science (EMS) and Health Sciences (HS). The Quality Officer noted that the indices scores were independent of each other and were related to the number of questions within an index that the student provided a response to. It was suggested that this observation (i.e. the overall satisfaction index in AHSS being higher when all other indices were lower than EMS and HS) should be brought to the attention of the relevant working group.
- TCD and other institutions' Careers related scores were the lowest amongst all indices. The questions asked did not refer to the quality of services delivered by the institution but to how proactive students were in developing their own career options. It was agreed that these results demonstrated a need to be more proactive and keep reminding students of what they need to do to improve their career prospects. It was noted that the Careers Advisory Service had already begun offering more tailored services to students, a practice that should be sought by Schools in order to further improve student experience. Careers organising tailored seminars for each School and extending invitations to alumni and industry representatives to speak and share their experiences were identified as steps towards helping students reaching their potential. The quality of the Careers Service provided to postgraduates was commended.
- Open comments were deemed particularly useful, and Directors of Teaching and Learning agreed to review them in detail and identify areas for improvement.
- The survey consisted of 100 questions and some students might have not answered them all, although the majority of those who started the survey completed it. The Quality Officer informed the Committee that a conscious effort was being made to reduce the number of questions in future years without compromising the validity of the survey. Also, she informed members that there was discussion to allow institutions to each add 2-3 questions of their own in future years.
- As this year's tag was 'national survey' it was suggested to clarify to students that TCD and individual Schools will also be using findings to improve student experience locally.
- It was recognised that many students suffered from email and survey fatigue which discouraged a wider participation in the survey. To improve on this in future years it was suggested that individual Schools should follow up on the original invitation sent from College. In the follow-up, and tying with the

previous suggestion, Schools should inform students of actions taken at local level as a result of previous ISSE findings and that feedback will be used by them as well to further improve on student experience. This practice should also encourage one-year postgraduate students' participation, who might feel more attached to their Schools than College and who otherwise might consider the survey as not relevant to them.

- Other incentives suggested to increase participation and reduce non-completion of the survey were specifying the length of time required to complete it, and offer a prize draw for those that answer all questions.
- As relevant data accumulate, in future it should be possible to determine trends and extract more accurate conclusions. Also, it was envisaged that ISSE would reduce the need for locally organised student surveys thus reducing student survey fatigue.

The discussion ended with members agreeing to study the report in detail and encourage their Schools to act on its findings in a timely manner. Furthermore, it was agreed to advise the national working group that future reports present survey findings as clear as possible, for the benefit of all parties involved.

#### **GS/14-15/17            Plagiarism**

The Dean explained that new challenges in relation to plagiarism (e.g. students being able to purchase ready-made assignments) made it necessary to revisit it as an issue and invited members to assist in gathering all related thoughts amongst the College community. Furthermore, she briefed members on a list of questions related to plagiarism, prepared within Trinity Teaching and Learning, and advised that a working group was due to be set up shortly. Members suggested that there should be a unified TCD policy on the issue and a clear mechanism to deal with cases. Directors of Teaching and Learning agreed to liaise with their undergraduate counterparts (who were presented the same questionnaire) in collating feedback from their Schools. Furthermore, members agreed to the Dean's suggestion to have a full discussion on the issue at the next Committee meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### **GS/14-15/18            Research Supervisor Development Programme**

The Dean informed members that a new programme for research supervisors was being rolled out, jointly hosted and developed by TCD and UCD. The Dean explained that as UCD was already running such a programme and demand for it was high. Given the experience of UCD in delivering such a programme successfully, and the benefit of sharing ideas and best practice, it was agreed that we deliver the programme on a collaborative basis this year. Members welcomed the initiative, their only comments being related to the fact that proposed delivery required staff committing five full afternoons, which for many might be difficult to accommodate in their busy schedules. The Dean explained that the proposed delivery was chosen because it had worked well in UCD, but depending on feedback and demand this could change in future years.

#### **GS/14-15/19            AOB**

The Dean reminded members of the College Postgraduate Open Day taking place on the same day as the GSC meeting.

**Section B for noting and approval**

1. The Committee noted and approved the proposed new modules for M.Phil. in Art History.
2. Professor Murchan explained that the proposed new modules for the Master in Education (M.Ed.) fit well with the existing modules and with what students in the Special Education Needs strand are interested in, namely Early Intervention. The Committee noted and approved the proposed new modules for the Master in Education (M.Ed.).
3. The Committee noted and approved the proposed change in module choice for the M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip. in Gerontological Nursing and the P.Grad.Cert. in Specialist Practice.
4. The Committee noted and approved the proposed change in module choice for the M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip. in Palliative Care.
5. Professor West explained that the proposed conversion of the 2-year full-time M.Phil. in Music and Media Technologies to a 1-year full-time M.Phil. and discontinuation of the 1-year full-time Postgraduate Diploma in Music and Media Technologies was in response to the loss of the course fees subsidy and also to the reduced number of applicants over the last years apparently due to similar courses being run on a 1-year, full time basis in other universities. Furthermore, he informed members that fees would increase gradually to their full amount and not immediately following the loss of funding. The Dean noted that the School of Drama, Film and Music, which also contributes to the course, was in agreement of the proposed conversion. The Committee noted and approved the proposed conversion of the 2-year full-time M.Phil. in Music and Media Technologies to a 1-year full-time M.Phil. and discontinuation of the 1-year full-time Postgraduate Diploma in Music and Media Technologies, as of 2015/16.

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2015