



## GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 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 Frank Barry, School of Business  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Ruth Barton, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education  
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English  
Professor Anne Dolan, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Jürgen Uhlich, School of Languages, Literatures &  
Cultural Studies  
Professor Elizabeth Heffernan, School of Law  
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech &  
Communication Sciences  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical  
Sciences  
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology  
Professor Benjamin Wold, Confederal School of Religions, Peace  
Studies and Theology  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
- Ms Katie Crowther, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Dr Gianna Hegarty, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President  
*(Ex officio)*  
Ms Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian (in attendance *Ex officio*)

- Apologies:** Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry  
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering  
Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine  
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics  
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative  
*(Ex officio)*



Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative  
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

**In attendance:** Ms Ewa Sadowska, Trinity Teaching and Learning,  
Temporary Secretary to the meeting (Ex officio)  
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office (Ex officio)

Dr Maeve Bracken & Dr Olive Healy (School of Psychology) for item  
GS/15-16/18

Dr Laurent Muzellec (Business and Administrative Studies) for item  
GS/15-16/19

Ms Roisin Smith (TTL – Quality Officer) for item GS/15-16/21

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### **GS/15-16/16 Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015**

The minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated with an insertion into GS/15-16/11 minute stating that it had been agreed that Schools would be notified when their graduands were scheduled for commencements.

### **GS/15-16/17 Matters Arising**

*Re: GS/15-16/12 A new joint course proposal with UCD MSc in Comparative Social Change:*

The Dean of Graduate Studies advised that the proposal had been approved by the University Council on 18 November 2015.

*Re: GS/15-16/13 A new course proposal MPhil in Philosophy:*

The Dean of Graduate Studies advised that the proposal had been approved by the University Council on 18 November 2015.

*Re: GS/15-16/14 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2013/14*

Following what had been agreed at the last meeting the Dean advised that she had contacted a number of universities to survey their thesis submission practises i.e. whether they allowed their PhD students to submit their research thesis with or without the approval and the sign off of the supervisor. The Dean confirmed that she would circulate the information for the January meeting.

### **GS/15-16/18 A new course proposal for MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Prof. Maeve Bracken & Prof. Olive Healy (directors of the proposed course from the School of Psychology) to talk to the circulated course proposal taken as read.

Prof. Bracken, the course director of year 2, explained that the School of Psychology proposed to close down for entry as of September 2016 the current three one year



courses - Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Behaviour Analysis (PDPS-ABAN-1F), MSc in Applied Behaviour Analysis (DPTPS-ABAN-IF) and MSc in Psychology (Applied Behaviour Analysis) (DPTPS-PABA-IF) - and introduce instead a new two year full-time MSc course in Applied Behaviour Analysis (MSc in ABA) worth 120 ECTS with an exit Postgraduate Diploma (60 ECTS). With the recent growth in staff expertise teaching these programmes, and the increasing national and international demand for training in ABA the proposal to combine the Postgraduate Diploma and MSc programmes into a two year MSc programme was a logical development. This would also be in line with similar two year MSc programmes in NUI Galway and NUI Maynooth. Prof. Bracken emphasised that the new MSc would be marketed to graduates more effectively than the current one year Postgraduate Diploma ABA programme as an attractive opportunity for pursuing research in behaviour analysis or preparing for further study in the School, e.g. in Clinical/Educational Psychology or PhD studies. The new programme would also contribute to increasing numbers of registered Masters students and their retention in the School. Currently, those who complete the Postgraduate Diploma programme exit after one year, and may then elect to apply for further study on the MSc programme. However, many of such graduates leave Trinity for other institutions at that point. The availability of a two year MSc would mean that students continue their commitment to Trinity for two years instead of automatically exiting after the current initial Postgraduate Diploma year. This would secure a complete student cohort of normally 15 students per year for a two year period totalling 30 students. Such a steady cohort would impact on research opportunities for students and staff enhancing the research profile of the School of Psychology. Currently, a one year MSc has a limited time to develop and deliver high quality behavioural research. With a two year programme and the corresponding retention of students, research design and development by students and staff can begin during the first year, carry over during the summer and continue into Year 2.

In the discussion which followed a number of issues were raised and clarifications obtained from the proposed course directors. It was noted that the supervised practice module was Pass/Fail and that students would need to reach level 3 in order to pass the assessment component based on a scale of 1 to 5. It was also explained that the reason why the new the MSc course would have 120 credits was due to its curriculum following guidelines of an international professional accrediting body - the Behaviour Analyst Certification Board (BACB©) - which outlined the required course content (both academic and professional training components), and the corresponding number of classroom hours which students must engage with, in order to achieve all competencies; consequently the ECTS weightings have been assigned to reflect these professional requirements. The new course would seek accreditation with the (BACB©) in due course.



In response to a separate query it was clarified that all Year 1 students would register on the MSc in ABA in the first instance and would complete a core set of mandatory modules during Year 1 and Year 2. However, in order to reflect the different entry qualifications of students (those with or without a Psychology degree respectively) students would take one specific module in the second year based on their primary degree. Psychology graduates would be required to take a module entitled “Theoretical Approaches in Behaviour Analysis”, and non-Psychology graduates would be required to take a module entitled “Applications of Recent Theoretical Advances in Behaviour Analysis”. The requirements for each module assessment would differ, and although all students would exit with an MSc in ABA, the differentiation of these two specific modules would be reflected in the students’ transcripts.

Prof. Bracken also explained that resubmission opportunities to be offered on the new course would be the same as the ones on the current three courses, namely students who fail to achieve a minimum of 50% in a written assessment element may resubmit with a deadline for resubmission of one month from the publication of the initial results. Those who have not taken the opportunity to resubmit any failed written assessment elements would have an opportunity to resubmit them before the meeting of the court of examiners, which would present a final opportunity to moderate the result and decide the student’s progression to Year 2.

Prof. Healy clarified that students entering the course would not have to have secured training placements in advance as these would be provided by the course organisers where required. This would broaden up the recruitment catchment and the appeal of the new course to those applicants who were new to the discipline without links to the profession.

The committee approved the course without any changes.

### **GS/15-16/19 A new course proposal for *MSc in Digital Marketing Strategy***

*(This item was taken after Item GS/15-16/20.)* The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Prof. Laurent Muzellec (from Business and Administrative Studies), a director of the proposed course, to talk to the circulated course proposal taken as read. Prof. Muzellec explained that the course was one of a portfolio of courses proposed by the School of Business in furtherance of the School of Business Strategic Plan agreed by College Board. More specifically, the new MSc course in Digital Marketing would extend the offering of the MSc in Marketing, recently approved by Council to answer an ever increasing demand for high calibre graduates in the digital marketing field. It would go a step further beyond data analytics, business ethics and digital marketing communications to allow students to further specialise in the digital marketing field. The rationale for offering a specialised



version of the MSc in Marketing was to allow Trinity to answer the particular market demand, take full advantage of its unique location and reputation while achieving economies of scope and scale. Prof. Muzellec underlined that the new strategy would reinforce the credibility and viability of both Masters (MSc in Marketing and MSc in Digital Marketing Strategy) as they would operate on a complementary basis academically and financially in the School. The market had been fully analysed by Prof. Muzellec in preparation for the course proposal. Prof. Muzellec emphasised that the recruitment market for the new course would not be local but international preferably from the non EU fee paying regions. He drew on his previous experience as the founder and former programme director of the M.Sc. in Digital Marketing at UCD Smurfit Business School.

In the discussion which followed the issue of the anticipated rise of student numbers on the course from the commencement year to year 3 was raised. Prof. Muzellec explained that the numbers were on the conservative side, and he hoped to further increase them once the School of Business achieved its proper international visibility comparable to other business schools of recognised renown.

The committee approved the course subject to clarification about distinction regulations on page 9 points 9 and 14.

### **GS/15-16/20 A new proposal for Dissertation with Practice Module (Film Studies)**

*(This item was taken prior to Item GS/15-16/19.)* Prof. Ruth Barton, the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School of Drama, Film and Music, spoke to the circulated proposal for the inclusion of practice component into the Dissertation module. Prof. Barton explained that the proposal was enabled by the restructuring of the MPhil in *Film Studies* into MPhil in *Film Studies: Theory, History, Practice* to include film practice. Two new positions were filled on foot of that restructuring namely a new Lecturer in screenwriting with experience in creative documentary practice and a new Lecturer in digital theory and practice. Prof. Barton explained that currently, the Department of Film Studies offers practice-based modules in screenwriting, editing and creative documentary but students could only write a traditional dissertation. The introduction of a practice component to the dissertation, to be worth 30% of the dissertation (of 30 ECTS), will reflect the composition of the restructured course and align it with comparable taught Masters programmes in the UK and USA. It would also reflect the commitment to developing creative practice at Trinity as articulated in the current College Strategic Plan. Under the Dissertation with Practice proposal, students would be able to complete a practical project such as a screenplay, a film or films, or a video essay. Prof. Barton underlined that criteria for permitting candidates to undertake such a work would be



strictly imposed. The written research component would reflect critically on and speak to the practice component.

In the discussion which followed Prof. Barton clarified that the practical component would be optional. It was expected, on the basis of an informal survey of current students, that the opportunity would be taken up by three to four students maximum in any given year. Such students would have to have technical competence from the start as there would not be the time to teach it to the students during the course of the academic year. The aim was not to turn the Department into a film school but to give select students with appropriate technical competence at the point of entry transferable skills that would enhance their employment prospects while still retaining the rigorous academic expectations of an MPhil at Trinity. Students would only get one chance at the very start of the course to have their request for the practical component considered by the Department's screening committee whose decision would be final. The intention would be that such a decision would be comprehensively laid out and clearly communicated. Prof. Barton also explained that a test to check the student's technical abilities was not planned but there would be a requirement for each applicant to submit a pitch for their film to include a short summary of the film's narrative, a reference to a genre and targeted audience in order to facilitate the screening committee and increase transparency of applications.

In response to another query Prof. Barton explained that hands on dissertation supervision in the department finishes in June and students work independently throughout the summer. Information was exchanged by some members of the committee on what was the norm in their respective Schools. Some concern was expressed about an interaction between the two supervisors of the traditional dissertation and the practical component should they be of conflicting views.

The committee approved the proposal subject to clarification about the supervision remits, and on the understanding that the dissertation supervisor is the principal one. Prof. Barton indicated that where a Dissertation with Practice required two supervisors namely a dissertation supervisor and a technical supervisor, the dissertation supervisor would be the principal supervisor and would work closely with the technical supervisor to ensure consistent and coherent supervision.

### **GS/15-16/21 Postgraduate Research Students Pilot Survey**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Ms Roisin Smith, the Quality Officer from Trinity Teaching and Learning, to speak to the survey. The Quality Officer explained that the evaluation of the postgraduate research student experience had been identified as a gap in the *2013/14 Annual Faculty Quality Reports*. The Quality Officer clarified that a working group had been set up to develop the survey





instrument and it had been piloted with four research students during the initial development phase and a further 12 research students upon completion. The survey if endorsed by the Committee would be implemented over a two week period in January/February 2016, to take advantage of the promotion offered through Postgraduate Week.

In the discussion which followed a number of issues were raised including the placement and the number of questions in the survey. The Quality Officer agreed to reposition the sections on supervision, research and teaching to the top of the survey, include an explicit reference to the library at the suggestion of the Library member, to re-word the options under the frequency of supervision meetings question and include an overall barometer question like “how satisfied are you with the overall experience”. In response to a query, the Dean clarified that the survey was only focusing on academic and research areas without covering the student experience in terms of facilities. The Quality Officer explained that the students who tested the survey did not have an issue with the length of the survey and found most of the survey easy to complete with the exception of some terminology which non English speakers found unclear. She also noted that the survey would assist Trinity to meet institutional requirements under the National Framework for Doctoral Education. The issue of an incentive to encourage student response to the survey was discussed. A view from the GSU member was expressed that graduate students were very motivated to participate in the survey and that considering the characteristics of postgraduate research students as mature students no incentive was required. A concern was also expressed that in order for the survey outcomes to have a meaningful impact, Schools must also receive the results of the survey noting concerns that in Schools with small numbers of research students it may be possible to identify students through their responses. The Dean asked the committee members to forward comments directly to the Quality Officer with suggestions to improve the survey prior to implementation.

**GS/15-16/22 Graduate Studies Committee Self-evaluation survey 2014/15: analysis of responses:**

The Dean of Graduate Studies introduced the analysis of responses from the 2014/15 self-evaluation survey of the Graduate Studies Committee conducted at the end of the previous academic year. She commented that the response rate was approximately 50% and the level of satisfaction looked respectable. A member of the committee noted that that particular survey was a good example of an efficient information-gathering instrument which was of appropriate length with focused and relevant questions. The Dean noted that last year in addition to the regular committee meetings she had organised an informal workshop to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the DTLPG and to enable established members to share their experience with the newly appointed ones, and that another such workshop was coming up on the 15<sup>th</sup> December. She also noted that the agenda normally sets itself, with recurrent items such as new course proposals, but she would be open to consider any other items the members might wish to suggest. She noted with



concern that attendance of some members was not regular but the committee did not endorse the idea of publishing an annual attendance record of the members. Instead, some members suggested that Heads of School whose DTLPG consistently do not attend the meetings should be contacted. A suggestion that an *ad hoc* replacement might be allowed to attend in lieu of an absent member was not endorsed on the grounds that that would break up continuity unless an acting DTLPG had been appointed to represent the School. There was consensus that the graduate studies committee was a useful platform for School DTLPGs to inform themselves of postgraduate issues taking place across College and bring them back to their respective Schools, and therefore it was recognised that persistent absence of any DTLPG was putting their School at a disadvantage.

**GS/15-16/23            AOB**

There was none.

**Section B for noting and approval**

**B1.    *Suspension of postgraduate courses form:***

The Dean explained that the varied practices of suspending courses in College had been reviewed in collaboration with the School and Faculty administrators. The circulated form was the outcome of that review which recommended that the decision to suspend a course would be the remit of the Faculty Deans given that they are responsible for budgetary matters. The Committee noted and approved the form which applies to suspension of courses and/or their constituent strands.

**Section C for noting**

The committee noted the below:

C1.    Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 6 May 2015

C2.    Minutes of the Associated Colleges Degrees Committee (ACDC) of 13 May 2015

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 3 December 2015