



## GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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### XX = Council relevance

- Present:** Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor James Quinn, School of Business  
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Ruth Barton, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor John Walsh, School of Education  
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English  
Professor Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Giuliana Adamo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Caoimhín MacMaoláin, School of Law  
Professor Lorna Carson, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics  
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Elizabeth Fahey-McCarthy, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics  
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology  
Professor David Shepherd, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Mr Shane Collins, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative  
(in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative  
(*Ex officio*)  
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Elisa Crespo Miguelez, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President  
(*Ex officio*)  
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub-Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience  
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

**Apologies:**

- Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:



Professor Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Richard Reilly, School of Engineering  
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

***In attendance:***

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Trinity Teaching and Learning),	Secretary ( <i>Ex officio</i> )
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies)	( <i>Ex officio</i> )
Prof. Eilish Burke (School of Nursing and Midwifery)	for item GS/16-17/91

**GS/16-17/89 Minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017**

The minutes were approved by the committee as circulated with the addition of the Postgraduate Student Support Officer to the list of the members present at the meeting.

**GS/16-17/90 Matters Arising**

*Re: GS/16-17/78 Non EU student quota:* The Dean thanked the DTLPs for the turn-around of Non EU applications within the agreed timeframe of ten days. He advised that the Academic Registry should be informed when the course reaches the Non EU quota as the ten days timeframe does not apply from that point.

*Re: GS/16-17/85 A new validated Masters in Education Studies course proposal in Leadership in Christian Education:* The Dean advised that the course had received an extremely positive external review and Council would be considering it in April.

*Re: GS/16-17/86 A new validated Masters in Education Studies course proposal in Visual Arts:* The Dean advised that the proposal had received an extremely positive external review and that Council had approved the course proposal in March.

*Re GS/16-17/88 AOB*

- (i) The Dean thanked the DTLPs for encouraging students to apply to attend the Doctoral Summer School at the University of Zurich in July 2017 organised by LERU. Trinity is guaranteed one or possibly two places. The Dean also thanked the DTLPs in the Schools of Psychology and Biochemistry and Immunology to undertake to review the applications.

**XX GS/16-17/91 A new MSc course proposal in Aging, Wellbeing and Intellectual Disability**

This item was in reference to GS/16-17/87. The Dean welcomed Prof. Eilish Burke, from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, to speak to the circulated course proposal revised in response to the feedback from the previous meeting. After a brief summary of the course proposal, Prof. Burke drew the members' attention to a list of changes she had introduced. Amongst the main changes a re-positioning of the assessment in Module 1 as reflective practice resulting in a reduction of its weighting



to 40%. It was also explained that the online module delivery of the postgraduate certificate course would be hosted on the Trinity Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Blackboard Learn. The timeline for development of the online materials for the course is coinciding with a Trinity internal review of the current approach to the online structure. The Faculty had agreed to support the review in having the online course elements built with a non-associated party as a pilot exercise to test the time, cost, effort and capabilities and to inform the online review's recommendations. The course promotion, support, tutoring and all quality checks would remain with Trinity supported by the Trinity Online Services Ltd team. Prof. Burke had also changed the admissions requirements from honours to 2.1 in line with Trinity regulations. An entry route had been introduced for non-clinical applicants from general public without a compulsory professional work experience. And finally, inter-school synergies had been identified in that the core Module 2 "Principles and perspectives of service delivery for older adults with intellectual disability" offered on the MSc in Ageing Health and Wellbeing in Intellectual Disability will also be offered as an elective on the Masters course in Disability in the School of Social Work and Social Policy. It had also been agreed by both Schools that both courses would signpost to each other from their respective websites.

There was no discussion and the committee approved the new course without any changes to go for an external review.

## **XX GS/16-17/92 Research Supervision Policy**

The Dean invited members to share their views on the circulated draft research supervision policy, aimed at a broad and high level, reflecting the various discussions at GSC on the issue. A number of points were made, and concerns articulated. It was noted that flexibility is required with respect to what constitutes research on taught Masters courses. It was agreed that point 4.1 should therefore be shortened to only say that the policy applies to the supervision of student theses at doctoral level and at research Masters levels without referring to taught postgraduate programmes. Another issue raised was availability and ownership of new raw data, programming of data analysis, and material samples gathered (for example in geology) by research students during the time on the research register. It was commonly acknowledged that research science students tend to treat these as their individual property and would normally store data in locations un-accessible to their supervisors. It was suggested that supervisors be seen as custodian managers of data, and it was agreed that a specific policy be developed for that area of student research. It was also noted that the issue was pertinent to the sciences rather than to the humanities where students are expected to publish in their own name on their own initiative. Ownership of data is normally stipulated by a funding agency (in medicine and in dental science) or by a sponsoring company (in business studies). The Dean has undertaken to liaise with the Research Office to explore the issues in preparation for drafting the policy. In relation to point 6.3 it was agreed to insert "or delegate" to allow for a possibility of local practices in the Schools, such as a Director of Doctoral Studies in the School of Business Studies, to complement the stipulation that the School must be satisfied that the proposed supervisor will provide appropriate supervision to the student. The Dean thanked the Academic Secretary for her assistance in developing the policy.



The Dean also advised that he had brought the proposed research supervision policy to the recent meeting of LERU (The League of European Research Universities) where there had been a good deal of discussion about supervision. Of issues inspired by LERU most significant would be the creation in all Schools of a “PhD student oversight committee” or “Thesis Committee” (TC) which could comprise the DTLP, the Supervisor and one other member of staff with input from the relevant student. The TC would meet once every term to assess the progress of individual students and, at the commencement of the student’s time on the register, would help construct an agreement between supervisor(s) and student as to the operation of the supervision relationship. The Dean noted that the TC appears to be a standard in many European universities and may reflect best practice. The TC appears in particular to make the student feel more embedded within a school structure rather than simply in a “master/apprentice relationship” which is, apparently, now regarded as simply outmoded. A discussion followed on the issue whether the TC is a good practice and should be regarded a standard practice in Trinity. It was noted that some Schools had already in place set ups similar to the TC, and therefore the introduction of the TC may simply formalise the existing practice. However, it was also noted that universities in the States do not appear to have a similar practice, and for some disciplines such as political science they provide the benchmark in research supervision. The recommended approach was to achieve the maximum impact in efficient supervision with the minimum administrative workload, more so that LERU did not provide a definition of what “good supervision” was. Members were also concerned that the proposed meetings of the TC once a term would be too frequent and preferred an annual meeting. A comment was made that the introduction of the TC was a manifestation of an implicit assumption that increasing monitoring of research supervision, compared to quality control to catch out problems, should irrevocably lead to increased quality of supervision per se, whereas the real issue should be to concentrate on the quality assurance as a preventive measure to ensure that the research supervision is set up correctly from the start and runs smoothly for both the supervisor and the student. Members agreed to email their views directly to the Dean so that they could contribute to a further discussion at the LERU level.

**XX GS/16-17/93 Advertising and marketing of taught postgraduate programmes**

As agreed at the last meeting (GS/16-17/88 AOB(iv)), the Dean initiated a general discussion about marketing of Trinity’s postgraduate taught courses. Trinity aspires to achieve a position of a global university of international consequence with a student population shifting towards parity between undergraduates and postgraduates in terms of enrolment numbers. Discussion was led by Prof. Quinn, the DTLP from the School of Business. The idea was that, whereas there was a more focused overall level of marketing of courses centrally, a lot of effective marketing needs to be done at a local level within Schools. Prof. Quinn explained that Schools need to organise their marketing in line with the dictates of the College overall corporate strategy. Specific aspects of School operations also need to be aligned as sub-strategies based on comprehensive understanding of competitive context of the discipline-based market. The overall marketing approach should be based on the 4Ps at the School level: Product (the course), Price (the fees), Place (the global outreach of the course) and Promotion (sales advertising including giving discounts articulated as scholarships). In a discussion which followed it was noted



that most DTLPs want to grow their postgraduate courses especially in Non EU markets but have concerns about the financial returns to the Schools. Schools have to determine what their strengths so that their postgraduate taught offers could be marketed effectively at a competitive advantage. A strong point was made that Trinity should explore more its central location in Dublin, and its consequent visibility should be used more effectively in commercial terms. Trinity as an inclusive and diverse postgraduate community should also be an attractive marketing offering to shift Trinity's current image away from that primarily seen as an undergraduate university. A concern was raised about limited accommodation and its high costs in Dublin negatively impacting on recruitment numbers into Trinity. Various measures to enhance recruitment were suggested, such as seeking testimonials from students, publishing videos of student experience on social media, and generally using social media more in Trinity's marketing strategy, organising virtual Open Days, revamping the Postgraduate Open Day for next year, and organising workshops for Schools, with the involvement of postgraduate students, showing how to effectively enhance marketing at the School level. The Dean thanked Prof. Quinn for his stimulating presentation which inspired the discussion.

**XX GS/16-17/94 Postgraduate students and mental health concerns**

The Dean explained that he had put this item on the agenda on the basis of a request from a senior professor (not a DTLP) in a School who stated that he was aware of a radical increase in mental health problems suffered by PhD and research Masters students. He noted that the issue had been discussed at the recent LERU doctoral studies meeting. He sought to obtain DTLPs' views as to whether this was a cross-College issue, and to assess what, if anything, could be done to address it. The Postgraduate Student Support Officer stated that only a limited research data was available but it was showing a definite increase. He claimed that there might be a correlation between the higher research performing the institution is the higher the number of students affected with mental health issues. In Trinity that figure is at nine per cent whereas nationally it is only at seven per cent. The members were wondering as to what possible causes of this issue might be. It was suggested that perhaps it was due to the existing research model which might be out of touch with the contemporary student or the student's feeling of "going nowhere" in terms of there being no quality jobs after the graduation. It was agreed to defer further consideration of the issue due to lack of time to the next meeting while the members were asked in the meantime to email directly to the Dean their views which will be fed back into the discussion in April.

**XX GS/16-17/95 Postgraduate Studentship Model**

The Dean reminded the committee that Trinity currently offers sixty six '1252' studentships to research students which provide fees and a stipend of roughly 6k annually. However from Trinity's perspective these studentships are not strategic in operation and are so meagre that students are not attracted by them. As indicated in previous meetings (GS/16-17/60) the Dean was asked to work with a small working group, including Trinity Development and Alumni, to identify radical new ways to create new research studentships. The working group took into consideration three additional factors. Trinity was going into a major fundraising campaign with a view to ensuring that fundraising efforts would apply across the whole College. Some





disciplines needed to engage in a step-change in approach to getting better at external funding applications given that external funding is becoming ever more vital across the board for all Schools. That step-change to demonstrate capacity to attract research funding was also becoming more vital for an individual academic in terms of promotions. On that basis, and following discussions with the Dean of Research and the Dean of Development, a new set of measures was proposed for consideration by the committee. Of the current sixty six studentships, twenty four (one per School) would remain as they are and will be allocated as the School sees fit. However the remaining forty two would be re-branded to “Trinity Studentships” worth fees plus 16k stipend annually for four years, and awarded on a competitive basis to project applications by assistant and associate professors. The studentship would then fund a PhD student attracted to work on the successful project advertised externally.

There were a number of concerns raised with respect to the proposal:

- a) The introduction of “Trinity Studentships” will create a two-tier system of research students: one funded by the financially inferior 1252 award and the other by the financially superior new scheme, which might contribute to the diminution of the student self-worth. A strong principle was articulated that research students should be on the same type of studentship.
- b) Following the above a view was expressed that the 1252 awards remaining with the Schools should be made financially equivalent to “Trinity Studentships”.
- c) It was suggested that the pool of “Trinity Studentships” should be split three-ways between the three Faculties, and there should not be a preference towards any particular discipline.
- d) It was noted that in the arts and humanities research projects were very individual, and successfully publishing academic staff attract a lot of interest from potential high calibre applicants even without there being studentships to fund their research.
- e) Inter-disciplinary research underpinning joint applications might be disadvantaged under the new scheme with the monies flowing into the principal supervisor’s School.
- f) Administration of the new scheme looks heavy as it requires setting up a new committee chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies to review all applications from the whole College submitted towards one specific deadline during the summer. It was proposed instead to let Schools select projects internally via its own selection committees and then have them competitively ranked by the respective Faculties.
- g) Concern was expressed whether the new scheme was adequately supporting the Trinity corporate strategy but the Dean explained that by being College-focused the new scheme was likely to appeal to and galvanise alumni to provide more generous funding to assist research students.
- h) The following specific queries were raised: what would happen to the monies if the staff of the selected projects or students recruited to work on them leave Trinity; whether unsuccessful applicants receive feedback from the selection committee; whether staff on probation and/or on short contracts can apply; whether there will be payment for field research; whether in a multi-disciplinary School there should be one old 1252 award per discipline rather than per School;



how to make School funding solid so that Schools could fund independently other PhD students; what will happen to senior academics' projects which in some Schools are supported by Trinity's awards; whether the deadline for applications can be pulled back so that academics might start advertising the successful projects sooner than in mid-November; what will happen if no applicant applies to the advertised project; whether students recruited to the publically advertised research projects would still have a fair chance to obtain grants from the European Research Council or Irish Research Council for the same projects thus bringing much needed external funding into Trinity.

The Dean clarified that the new model of "Trinity Studentships" should not disturb the autonomy of Schools in relation to the successful projects as once awarded, the studentship ultimately becomes the possession of the School and the successful professor becomes the steward and operator of the award. Should that professor leave the School then the School manages the award. Should the student obtain external funding, the professor may then fund another student to work on the project or related work for the duration of the studentship. The Dean also clarified that "Trinity Studentships" would only cover fees and stipend while the relevant School would be required to fund (where necessary) the cost of consumables and travel for research-related fieldwork but not to useful conferences. Successful students will be required to undertake a minimum amount of unpaid teaching/demonstrating within the School at the level normally applied by that School to its funded students. The Dean concluded that "Trinity Studentships" should attract qualitatively better applicants to the research register and asked for additional comments to be emailed directly to him so that they could inform the 'advice document' being prepared for applicants.

### **GS/16-17/96 AOB**

- (i) The Dean advised that he had received communication from the Assistant Secretary in the Secretary's Office about the upcoming use of the Boardpad app and i-Pads for future meetings of the committee, and stated that he would be supportive of that. The Secretary's Office will fund the associated licencing costs while the i-pads can be funded by relevant Schools meeting the costs for their committee member. He also noted that those committee members who have access to an i-pad already could utilise it for GSC meetings.
- (ii) The Dean advised that he had received a communication from Dr Ciara O'Farrell, Senior Academic Developer in CAPSL, to say that CAPSL had obtained funding from the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching & Learning in Higher Education to develop and enhance the current 5ECTS module for graduate Teaching Assistants (TAs) to be offered online. This online module will deliver research-informed professional development for Teaching Assistants, to include demonstrators; tutors; those leading fieldwork, in areas such as student-centred learning, design and delivery of small group teaching, supporting assessment, and reflection/evaluation of teaching. It will consist of multimedia content, formative/summative assessment, peer interaction activities and links to websites and resources. The module will supplement



or extend existing programmes as a blended option, or be a stand-alone online offering. The Dean explained that the purpose of bringing the issue to the attention of the committee members is to ascertain feedback from academics as to what they would like to see in such a professional development module aiming to support TAs. Dr O'Farrell would be grateful to incorporate that feedback as part of their scoping. It was agreed that members would communicate their views to Dr O'Farrell by emailing them to the Dean.

### **Section B for noting and approval**

#### **XX Re B1. A course title change from Pg Dip/MSc in Applied Social Studies to Pg Dip/MSc in Social Policy and Practice from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes**

A course title change from Postgraduate Diploma and Masters in Applied Social Studies to Postgraduate Diploma and Masters in Social Policy and Practice from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes were noted. The new course title is expected to enhance the course recruitment, and will form the first part of a rebranding of the course to ensure that the nature and content of the course is more recognisable to potential EU and Non EU applicants. There are no changes to course structure, content or learning outcomes associated with the name change. Graduates of the postgraduate diploma with the old title in use for the 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 cohorts who wish to resume further studies at the Masters level will be recognised for acceptance to the Masters programme.

The committee approved the proposed course title and the resulting Calendar changes for 2017/18.

#### **XX Re B2 Introduction of 2 modules *Linguistic Landscapes* and *Speech and Language Technology in Education* from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes**

A memorandum from the DTLP in School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences was noted, and the committee approved the inclusion of two new elective modules *Linguistic Landscapes* and *Speech and Language Technology in Education* to the Masters portfolio in the School, and the resulting Calendar changes for 2017/18.

#### **XX Re B3. Calendar 2017/18 changes from various Schools**

The committee noted and approved the Calendar changes for 2017/18 from the following Schools:

- a) Biochemistry and Immunology
- b) Computer Science and Statistics
- c) Creative Arts
- d) Engineering
- e) School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
- f) Innovation Academy: Postgraduate Certificate in Creative Thinking, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The proposed Calendar changes from the School of Natural Sciences were returned for further clarification without approval.





**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

ITEM 1

**Section C for noting**

The committee noted the “Guidelines on Evidence in Support of an *ad misericordiam* Appeal” and “Guidelines on Exceptional Circumstances supporting an *ad misericordiam* Appeal”

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.20am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 23 March 2017