



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 20th April 2017
Boardroom, Provost's House

XX = Council relevance

- Present:** Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor James Quinn, School of Business
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry
Professor Ruth Barton, School of Creative Arts
Professor John Walsh, School of Education
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English
Professor Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Lorna Carson, School of Linguistic, Speech &
Communication Sciences
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine
Professor Elizabeth Fahey-McCarthy, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical
Sciences
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
- Mr Shane Collins, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology 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 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 Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Richard Reilly, School of Engineering
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Giuliana Adamo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural
Studies
Professor Caoimhín MacMaoláin, School of Law
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics



Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences
Professor David Shepherd, Confederal School of Religions, Peace
Studies and Theology
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Elisa Crespo Miguelez, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President
(*Ex officio*)

Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (*Ex officio*)

In attendance:

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Trinity Teaching and Learning),	Secretary (<i>Ex officio</i>)
Prof. Brian O'Connell (School of Dental Science)	for item GS/16-17/99
Prof. Catherine Comiskey (School of Nursing & Midwifery)	for item GS/16-17/100
Prof. Daniel Geary (School of Histories and Humanities)	for item GS/16-17/101
Mr Dale Whelehan (TCDSU Education Officer)	for item GS/16-17/103
Prof. Keith Johnston (School of Education)	for item GS/16-17/104
Prof. Sarah O'Brien (School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences)	for item GS/16-17/105
Ms Maura Horan (College Web Officer, Public Affairs and Communications)	for item GS/16-17/106

GS/16-17/97 Minutes of 23rd March 2017

The minutes were approved by the committee as circulated.

GS/16-17/98 Matters Arising

Re: GS/16-17/76 AOB

(vi) The Graduate Students' Union President noted that he had been to a meeting with the Department of Education and Skills which confirmed that all postgraduate students including on taught and research programme could apply for a state grant for next year, covering fees and maintenance, subject to eligibility criteria. He undertook to pass on to the DTLPs the official correspondence when he receives it for the grant to be advertised in Schools.

Re: GS/16-17/85 A new validated Masters in Education Studies course proposal in Leadership in Christian Education: The Dean advised that that Council had approved the course proposal in April.

Re: GS/16-17/88 AOB

(i) The Dean thanked Professor Jean Quigley and Professor Richard Porter for reviewing applications to attend the Doctoral Summer School at the University of Zurich in July 2017 organised by LERU, and advised that three out of five applications from Trinity were successful.

Re: GS/16-17/91 A new MSc course proposal in Aging Health and Wellbeing in Intellectual Disability: The Dean advised that the course proposal had been sent out for an external review.



Re: GS/16-17/92 Research Supervision Policy: The Dean advised that he would welcome correspondence on specific best practice in Schools to be shared out. The Policy would be submitted to Council in May.

Re: GS/16-17/93 Advertising and marketing of postgraduate taught programmes: The Dean advised that workshops on effective marketing would commence in September 2017.

Re: GS/16-17/94 Postgraduate students and mental health concerns: The Dean advised that the item would be on the agenda of the GSC in May, and that he would welcome comments emailed to him in advance of the meeting.

Re: GS/16-17/95 Postgraduate Studentship Model: The Dean advised that he was due to meet the Provost the following week to share the concerns expressed by the GSC members at the previous meeting and in subsequent correspondence. The Dean undertook to email the members the outcome of the meeting. In response to a query he also confirmed that no new financial obligations would be imposed on Schools which they would not have been bound by on the current scholarships.

Re: GS/16-17/96 AOB:

(i) The Dean advised the i-Pads would be used from the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year.

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GS/16-17/99 A new MSc course proposal in Clinical Dentistry (Top up)

The Dean welcomed Prof. Brian O'Connell (School of Dental Science) in lieu of Professor Michael O'Sullivan to speak to the circulated course proposal taken as read. Prof. O'Connell noted that the School of Dental Science at the Dublin Dental University Hospital was the national centre for dental education, research and patient care, and that it provided courses as part of the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements for dentists. The proposed Masters in Clinical Dentistry was envisaged as a one year part-time top up course primarily to the established Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dentistry which had been completed by over 180 dentists since 1996 many of whom wished to have further involvement with Trinity as they develop their careers. This top-up M.Sc. is ideally placed to support dentists in general dental practice in further training. The Top-up M.Sc. course will be CPD-linked specifically for dentists. For that reason its 30 ECTS will be specific to the CPD-requirements of the School and will be built up by three modules (academic/clinical/research) rather than one dissertation module which is part of the current M.Sc. courses in Trinity, and will therefore lead to a new named M.Sc. award in Clinical Dentistry to be approved by the Senate. The new top up course will target primarily the holders of the P.Grad. Dip. in Clinical Dentistry but will consider also holders of other similar dental postgraduate diplomas either in Trinity (e.g. Conscious Sedation in Dentistry) or from elsewhere in Ireland and the UK who might be interested in obtaining the new award. The new course will be offered initially with a view to being run for 1-2 years but subsequently might be offered only for School-designated years depending on external demand and School resources. It is likely that during the next two years that there will be a new Dental Act as part of legislation changes in relation to the practice of dentistry. Thanks to the proposed



Top-up M.Sc. course Trinity and the Dublin Dental University Hospital will therefore be in a good position to align with the requirements of the new Act and to respond to the new dental landscape that such an Act will introduce, including compulsory CPD for all dentists.

In a discussion which followed a number of significant issues were raised. Given that the Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dentistry had not run for the last five years, it was agreed that an extended time limit of ten years would apply to the holders of the diploma to apply for the Masters Top up since their graduation. Prof. O'Connell explained that the postgraduate diploma course had been very comprehensive and that holders of the award would normally have engaged in CPD since completing the course to keep abreast with clinical and research advances of the profession .

It was also confirmed that the award of the Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Dentistry would need to be rescinded upon completion of the Masters Top up as both courses are Trinity's and the latter is understood as a continuation of the former. However Trinity could not require holders of equivalent awards from external bodies to rescind their awards to those bodies. The Dean referred to Trinity's Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy 7.5 stipulation which says that "When formal RPL is used for admission, the highest NFQ level award achieved will normally be used upon graduation" to get over the issue of double-counting the diploma. The Dean also explained by referring to the RPL 7.9 that Trinity in this case would recognise formal prior learning of 60 ECTS equivalent credit, or one year of study, for advanced admission to the Masters Top up which would be taken as a second year of study towards the Masters award. In response to a query the Dean clarified that the transcript for the Masters Top up would only reflect the student's learning record of that year.

Another issue raised was that of a bespoke Masters course structure comprising three 10ECTS-credit modules reflecting academic, clinical, and research components of the dental practice instead of one dissertation module worth 30 ECTS. Prof. O'Connell explained that such a structure was indispensable to attract dental applicants to the course as otherwise the course would not be professionally viable. The Dean noted that even though the dissertation module on this course was 10 ECTS its deliverable was mandated as a dissertation worth 10,000 words and the subject must also be submitted in short paper format of 3,000 words suitable for publication, the requirement which far exceeded stipulations on Trinity's regular Masters courses. A regulation was noted that if the dissertation module failed the student would have to resubmit within 3 months. It was commented that that was outside the Calendar regulations, and it was agreed that in order to possibly eliminate dissertations from failing a "mid-term review" should be incorporated. Thus at 4 weeks prior to submission of the final dissertation, the student would submit a first draft to be reviewed by the supervisor (and perhaps one other academic). A decision could then be made if the dissertation is on track, and if not the student could be offered a 4-week extension. The Dean noted that a new named Masters in Clinical Dentistry award was being proposed to be approved by the Senate to reflect the specific structure of this top up course. The committee agreed that subject to the



“mid-term review” being introduced into the course regulations the proposal should go for an external review.

XX GS/16-17/100 A new Postgraduate Certificate course proposal in Quantitative Methods and Data Analysis for Healthcare

The Dean welcomed Prof. Catherine Comiskey (School of Nursing & Midwifery) to speak to the circulated course proposal taken as read. Prof. Comiskey provided a brief outline of the course, and explained around seven hundred new Advanced Nurse Practitioners would be recruited by 2020 which would be the target group for the course whose aim was to equip students with the relevant quantitative skills to critically analyse healthcare data used in their research. The proposed course will also respond to the practical needs of a wider healthcare and related industries in Ireland and beyond, and in particular healthcare professionals and those working in healthcare-related industries and others with a specific interest in health research methods, the core principles of data analysis, epidemiology and methods commonly used in research. Prof. Comiskey explained that the proposed course does not aim at turning its participants into statisticians and is not intended to be in competition to the already existing Postgraduate Diploma in Statistics run by the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

In a short discussion which followed a comment was made that modules on the proposed course might be of interest to research students in the School of Medicine, and Prof. Comiskey was delighted with the prospect. In response to a query she clarified that she hoped it might be possible for course participants to obtain HSE funding in the future. The Dean clarified that he was in discussions with the College Library about extending borrowing rights to students on postgraduate diplomas. The Dean also made a general comment on the need for a more formal process of consultation on any possible cross-overs between courses in different Schools as part of the work on a new course proposal to enhance inter-School collaboration and more effective resource sharing and to avoid possible overlaps and impact on recruitment targets. The committee recommended the course for an external review and presentation to Council in June.

XX GS/16-17/101 A new MPhil course proposal in International History

The Dean welcomed Prof. Daniel Geary (School of Histories and Humanities) to speak to the circulated course proposal taken as read. Prof. Geary provided a brief outline of the course and its structure, and explained that the course was intended to complement the suite of Masters in the School, and that it would be unique in Ireland and would help place Trinity at the cutting edge of postgraduate teaching internationally. It would chronologically and thematically complement the existing successful taught postgraduate courses in the Department of History in Modern Irish History and Public History. A course in International History would advance the research culture of the School and attract EU and non-EU students to M.Phil. study at Trinity and also, in years ahead, recruit additional students to the Ph.D. programme.

In a short discussion which followed Prof. Geary confirmed that some modules would be shared, and that not all optional modules amounting to twelve would be offered in



any given academic year given that the maximum number of students to take them would only be twenty. The DTLP in the School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences obtained reassurances that the module *Modern China in International Perspective: Imperialism, Revolution and War* could be shared with their M.Phil. in Chinese Studies. Prof. Geary also advised that a new staff member would be recruited to support teaching on the proposed course. The committee viewed the course as an interesting Masters proposition. A query arose why Non EU applicants were capped at 50%. A numerical error was noted on page 9 requiring correction of 10 ECTS for Dissertation to 30 ECTS. It was noted that some modules were Pass/Fail and a clarification was sought about the consequences of a fail to be incorporated into the Calendar entry. The committee recommended the course for an external review subject to amendments to the proposal rectifying errors and providing the clarifications.

XX GS/16-17/102 A new Postgraduate Certificate course proposal in in Fintech Innovation & Entrepreneurship

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

GS/16-17/103 Student Partnership Agreement

The Dean welcomed Dale Whelehan (TCDSU Education Officer) to speak to the circulated document taken as read. The Education Officer explained that approval by the Graduate Studies Committee was sought for each of the three sections comprising the circulated submission, namely Section A which describes Student Engagement and Representation with College and the Capitated Bodies, Section B which proposes the Partnership Theme and associated projects for the Academic Year 2017-18 as described in the policy document, and Section C which outlines the scope of the policy and highlights the typical areas where staff and student may act as partners in quality enhancement. The Education Officer provided a brief overview of the whole document.

Members noted with appreciation the proposed partnership agreement and emphasised that it was long overdue for updating. A concern was raised with respect to page 7 Section A on student representation. It was noted that the regulatory framework had already been in place to require College to ensure student representation on its committees, and that such an obligation, rather than voluntary partnership, should be acknowledged in the documentation. It was also noted that it fell to the SU to ensure that student reps were duly elected to the committees. It was emphasised that it was in the interest of Schools and College to have effective student representation on their committees. The Graduate Students' Union President acknowledged that he had been collaborating with the Student Union for over a year on the partnership agreement. He emphasised the issue of representation of Masters students who were normally only in College for a year, and stated that the continuity aspect of their views and concerns should be addressed. With respect to the statement on page 7 that Trinity Student Union will endeavour to ensure "Treatment of students as partners, full members, and equal stakeholders in all appropriate decision making processes in the university", a note of caution was sounded that it was important to safeguard that on occasion a particular agenda item might be reserved business excluding student representation, and that such situations would be



assessed on a case by case basis. The committee recommended the document for the University Council subject to insertion of clarification on the “reserved business” and a statement that the existing regulatory structures would not be affected by the student partnership agreement.

GS/16-17/104 Trinity Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Policy

The Dean welcomed Prof. Keith Johnston (School of Education) to speak to the circulated policy, taken as read, in lieu of Prof. Timothy Savage, Associate Dean On-Line Education. Prof. Johnston explained that the need for a VLE Policy had emerged through a number of College-wide initiatives such as “The Terms of Reference of the Trinity Educational Project (Strand 5: Technology Enhanced Learning)”, the HEA Performance Compact which includes a measure that 60% of all modules will have VLE activity, and the VLE Project (IT Services). Prof. Johnston provided a brief overview of the whole policy. He explained that the policy did not apply to the technical service level to support the institutional VLE which was the responsibility of the Information Technology Services. He also noted that the VLE Policy had been developed by a working party lead by the Associate Dean of Online Education and had undergone consultation with the Academic Registry, the College Disability Service, Academic Administrators, the Quality Committee and the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

In a discussion which followed members expressed their appreciation for the proposed policy, and raised a few issues. A concern was expressed re Section 7.2 that the policy should not be prescriptive with respect to the timing and the contents of the uploads of lecture materials which should be left to the discretion of academic staff. Some members noted that access to the Blackboard was restricted to some categories of academic staff (casual) and off books students but it was acknowledged that these issues were becoming well recognised in College and lie beyond the scope of the policy. A slow upload speed onto the Blackboard was also mentioned. This led to a discussion on the need of capacity building in this area which was currently minimal, and should be expanded and made more specific, and that technology-enabling supports and mechanisms should be put in place to give Trinity a competitive advantage. It was noted with concern that Trinity was not reaching a Compact-stipulated target of having 60% of all modules with VLE activity. The Academic Secretary clarified that in the aftermath of the recent review of the Online Education Unit measures were being identified to address these concerns and to enable realisation of 5.2 and 5.3 principles of the Policy which stipulate that the “VLE was key to Trinity’s ongoing commitment to enhance the undergraduate and postgraduate educational experience through the promotion of appropriate technology enhanced learning and the meaningful use of technology”, and that “Digital capacity and innovation in the use of technology enhanced learning will be promoted and supported” respectively. It was emphasised that academics were willing to engage with this area but would need to be properly supported. Subject to those clarifications the committee recommended the policy for consideration by the University Council.

GS/16-17/105 English Language Training for Ph.D. students



The Dean welcomed Prof. Sarah O'Brien (Director of Centre for English Language Learning & Teaching in the School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences) to advise the committee members on the supports the centre offers to the non-native English speaking students. Prof. O'Brien clarified that the Centre focuses on improving academic outcomes for Trinity's non-native English speakers through the provision of English language modules to students from non-English speaking backgrounds during the academic year by means of the English for Academic Purposes Program as well as through research in the area of English as an academic language. She emphasized that input from academic staff was crucial to the constructive functioning of the Centre. She extended an invitation to interested members to take part in a focus group aimed at generating additional suggestions that might further support the "New speakers of English" student population. Prof. O'Brien noted four research points for focus groups such as students' dissatisfaction with being marked on English rather than on the contents of their assignment, the emphasis on pre-sessional programmes in advance of the start of the academic year, effective supports for non-native English speaking Teaching Assistants including possible creation of various streams, effective preparation of students for the academic literacy to be expected in Trinity. The Dean noted that some issues could be embedded in the structured Ph.D. There was no discussion due to the lack of time, and the Dean concluded that he would be willing to meet with Prof. O'Brien and suggested that members email him their feedback in advance of that meeting. Prof. O'Brien thanked the Dean for the opportunity to gather feedback from the GSC's perspective on the current needs of students in the area of English language.

GS/16-17/106 Website Performance for Schools and Postgraduate Studies

The Dean welcomed Maura Horan (College Web Officer and Head of Digital in Public Affairs and Communications) to update the committee members on the website design upgrade work taking place in Schools. Ms Horan provided an overview as to why the website was critically important in the context of recruitment along with information on website analytics explaining how the harvested data could be used to help improve the users' experience, look for admission trends and ensure better visibility of Schools by enhancing their website presence. Ms Horan explained that Schools and Disciplines had been transitioning to a new more effective website template which was of great assistance for that purpose. The Dean advised that members should email Ms Horan their comments directly.

GS/16-17/107 AOB

There was none.

Section B for noting and approval

XX Re B1. Memo re change to MSc delivery online on Child Protection and Welfare (P.Grad.Dip./M.Sc.) from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes - Prof. Stephanie Holt (School of Social Work and Social Policy)

A reclassification of the MSc part of the whole programme was sought to allow for a change to a fully online delivery supported by the online education team without the course content and its modules being affected. The committee approved the proposed reclassification and the resulting Calendar changes for 2017/18.



XX Re B2 Memo re changes to the Master in Education from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes - Prof. John Walsh (School of Education)

Approval was sought to the following amendments of the M.Ed. programme informed by the institutional review of the School in February 2015, external examiners' reports and by an internal re-appraisal of Masters' level programmes in 2015-16:

- 1) the introduction of a new compulsory five credit module in *Academic Literacy and Research Methods* within the taught component of the M.Ed. programme;
 - 2) an option for students to complete three modules from their chosen strand and one module from a different strand;
 - 3) making the *Thinking Education* module compulsory in the Foundation Studies strand;
 - 4) removing references to strands in Educational Guidance Counselling and Co-operative Learning which have been suspended for 2017-18 and future years.
- It was noted that the proposed changes did not affect the M.Ed. programme structure and its learning outcomes to be achieved through the other eleven strands offered in 2017-18. The committee approved the proposed amendments and the resulting Calendar changes for 2017/18.

XX Re B3 Memo re changes to the Professional Master of Education from 2017/18 and resulting Calendar changes - Prof. John Walsh (School of Education)

A removal of the existing requirement was sought to cap the overall PME award as a pass/third class degree for students who had failed a module or failed to complete the programme requirements by the beginning of the annual examinations. The committee approved the proposal and the resulting Calendar changes for 2017/18.

XX Re B4 Calendar 2017/18 changes from various Schools

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

- a)
- b) Law
- c) Law – amendments to Frances E Morgan Research Studentship
- d) Linguistic Speech and Communication Sciences
- e) Natural Sciences
- f) Natural Sciences (Joint Masters in Development Practice)
- g) Psychology
- h) Social Work and Social Policy
- i) Social Sciences and Philosophy
- j) Business

Section C for noting

The committee noted the *Careers Advisory Service, Career Management System - steering group notes* from February 2017.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.05am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 20 April 2017