



## GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 6 December 2018  
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 Rachel Mary McLoughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Sinéad Roden, Trinity Business School  
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry  
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education  
Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering  
Professor Philip Coleman, School of English  
Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law  
Professor John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine  
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology  
Professor David Shepherd, School of Religion  
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy
- Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Dr Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Mr Oisín Coulter, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Library (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning) Secretary (in attendance *Ex officio*)



*Apologies:*

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Ex officio)

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics

Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences

Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics

Dr Gogol Falia, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (Ex officio)

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative  
(in attendance Ex officio)

***In attendance:***

Prof. Catherine Darker (School of Medicine) for item GS/18-19/240

Prof. Seamas Donnelly (School of Medicine) for item GS/18-19/241

Prof. James Hanrahan and Prof. Hannes Opelz (School of Languages, Literatures  
and Cultural Studies) for item GS/18-19/242

**GS/18-19/238 Minutes of 1 November 2018**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**GS/18-19/239 Matters Arising**

*Re: GS/17-18/200 Provost's Project Awards:* The Dean advised that the awards would be discussed in a particular context later during the meeting (GS/18-19/243). He noted that the application process for 2019/20 was complete and applications were of outstanding quality. He thanked the panel members for reviewing the applications. He stated that he had been in touch with all applicants by email and had also met and given additional feedback personally to any unsuccessful applicants who had asked for this. He noted that a large number of successful applicants this year had been unsuccessful the year before and encouraged all eligible staff members to apply the following year.

*Re: GS/18-19/229 A new MSc course proposal in Law and Finance:* The Dean advised that Council had approved the proposal at its meeting in November.

*Re: GS/18-19/230 A new Postgraduate Certificate course proposal in Innovation and Enterprise Development:* The Dean advised that a positive external review had been received and the proposal would be submitted to Council in January.

*Re: GS/18-19/231 (iii) Postgraduate Entry Requirements:* The Dean advised that last Council had approved the January start day for IRC-funded research candidates and that he would liaise with the Academic Registry in relation to the logistics of this development.



*Re: GS/18-19/232 Working group on PhD and publications:* The Dean advised that last Council had deferred discussion on the recommendations from the working group to the next meeting due to a full agenda.

**XX GS/18-19/240 A new course proposal: MSc in Implementation Science**

The Dean welcomed Prof. Catherine Darker (School of Medicine), the prospective Course Coordinator, who also represented Prof. Catherine Hayes prospective Course Director unable to attend. He then introduced the new course. He explained that it had been designed to replace the existing Postgraduate Certificate in Implementation Science due to discontinue for entry in September 2019. The Masters course is one-year full time or two-year part time due to commence in September 2019. Its aim is to equip students with research and practical skills necessary to design, implement and evaluate policies, programmes and /or interventions that result in sustained improvement in health and social care services. The course will provide students with an opportunity to critically explore the emerging field of implementation science in the health and social care sectors, and its graduates will be expected to promote excellence in implementation science. The course is unique in Ireland in that it brings together the School of Medicine, School of Nursing and Midwifery, School of Social Work and Social Policy, and the School of Psychology, in addition to statutory agencies, non-governmental organisations, and international contributors to deliver a programme focused on implementation science. Its content will be underpinned by the integration of innovative research in dissemination and implementation to ensure a focus on cutting-edge research, which will inform evidence-based practice in those sectors. The new course comprises 90 ECTS and consists of 12 taught core modules and a research dissertation module of 30 credits.

After his summary, the Dean invited Prof. Darker to take questions from the floor. In response to queries, Prof. Darker clarified that consideration had been given to retain the existing Postgraduate Certificate course, but it was decided to discontinue it due to a low number of applicants. The new Masters would be open to research students to attend individual modules which would count towards their structured PhD. The Masters proposal would shortly start on an approval process in the School of Medicine Research Ethics Committee. The training leading to the research dissertation would begin very early on the course giving students ample time to write their dissertation up. Re the course marketing, Prof. Darker clarified that non EU applicants would be welcomed even though no minimum number of non EU students was required to ensure the course financial viability but a non EU and EU student mix would contribute to a greater academic variety of the cohort.

The DTLP from the School of Medicine confirmed that the School welcomed the course on how to best implement the fruit of research.

Before withdrawing Prof. Darker took the opportunity to thank Ewa Sadowska for her assistance with the course proposal.

**Decision GS/18-19/240.1:** The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a positive external review.



**XX GS/18-19/241 A new course proposal: Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Innovation**

The Dean welcomed Prof. Seamas Donnelly (School of Medicine), the prospective Course Director. He then provided a brief outline of the new course noting that it was of one year full time duration worth 60 ECTS. He explained that Trinity was one of academic partners of the Health Innovation Hub Ireland which is an Enterprise Ireland, academic and Health Services Executive (HSE) partnership whose overall aim is to accelerate the development and incorporation of innovation within the Irish healthcare sector. Trinity has specific responsibility for the delivery of educational products to stimulate a culture of innovation within the HSE. It is in that context that the new Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Innovation was developed which is a key deliverable for the HSE, Enterprise Ireland and Trinity. The new Postgraduate Diploma aims to be a key catalyst in transforming the innovation mindset within the Irish healthcare landscape.

After his summary, the Dean invited Prof. Donnelly to take questions from the floor. In response to queries, Prof. Donnelly clarified that the proposed course would be the first collaborative offering between the School of Medicine, Trinity Business School and Tangent. In a short discussion, a number of other members noted that their Schools were also in a process of expanding their suits of postgraduate modules with the aim to share their academic resources with other Schools providing timetable constrains were removed by a fixed timetable. The Dean suggested that the postgraduate education in Trinity arguably merited a significant university-wide revitalisation in the post-TEP era under the new College strategic plan that might include a focus on what Trinity PhD meant and a review of the spectrum of postgraduate offerings.

In terms of recruitment, Prof. Donnelly clarified that the new course would target staff from the HSE with whose CPD model it appears to be compatible. The ambition to recruit non EU applicants was currently limited but the opportunity might be enhanced should the course develop into a Masters which was an objective for the future.

The DTLP from the School of Medicine confirmed that the School welcomed the new course proposal.

Before withdrawing Prof. Donnelly took the opportunity to thank Ewa Sadowska for her assistance with the course proposal.

**Decision GS/18-19/241.1:** The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a positive external review.

**XX GS/18-19/242 A new course proposal: MPhil in Identities and Cultures of Europe**

The Dean welcomed Prof. James Hanrahan, prospective Course Director, and Prof. Hannes Opelz, prospective Course Coordinator (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies). He then provided a brief outline of the new MPhil proposal



noting that the course was going to be of one year full time duration worth 90 ECTS. He explained that the new course had evolved out of the School review of its MPhil offerings undertaken in 2016/17 and would replace two MPhils in Textual and Visual Studies and European Studies. In order to produce the most competitive and marketable course, the School had the proposal analysed by the Knowledge Partnership, a UK-based higher education consultancy firm that specialises in academic market research. The new course is aligned with the School Strategic Plan (2016-21), which commits the School to the introduction of an interdisciplinary MPhil in Identity Studies benefiting from its association with College's Identities in Transformation research theme. The Dean also drew attention of members to two distinctive features of the programme. One is a three-day field trip during Michaelmas Term to Belgium to be hosted by the Leuven Institute for Ireland in Europe, where students will network with key cultural institutions, organisations, and NGOs on the Continent. The other is an option to take a four-week placement (*Living Identities*) between January and May as one of 10-credit optional modules. The course will offer a small range of pre-approved placements with partner cultural institutions, NGOs, and civil society organisations, although students will also be free to find their own placements.

After his summary, the Dean invited Profs Hanrahan and Opelz to take questions from the floor. In response to queries, Prof. Hanrahan clarified that the course aims to capitalise on its links with the College's Identities in Transformation research theme to be used for its marketing advantage. He acknowledged that the Identities theme was a completely new marketing area internationally and that the course management would be closely working with the Global Relations Office to enhance the course recruitment impact. With respect to a minimum number of 5 students, he explained that that number would be financially viable and that by joining modules offered by other Schools, the five students would be mixing with larger cohorts sharing in their broader academic experience.

The DTLP from the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies confirmed that the School welcomed the new course proposal.

Before withdrawing Profs Hanrahan and Opelz took the opportunity to thank Ewa Sadowska for her assistance with the course proposal. The DTLP from the School of Medicine expressed appreciation on behalf of all committee members to the Dean for his clear summary of all course proposals making the committee work much more efficient.

**Decision GS/18-19/242.1:** The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a positive external review.

## **XX GS/18-19/243 Provost's PhD Project Awards (PPPA)**

The Dean noted that this item was a continuation of AOB GS/18-19/233 (iv) where a specific aspect of the scheme arose i.e. the position of student recipients of the awards acting as Teaching Assistants (TA), and when it was decided to take up this issue as a separate agenda item at the next meeting. The Dean invited members to focus specifically on two areas, namely (1) should students brought in under the



PPPA scheme and whose thesis is different from their PI projects on which they are working (as is the case in many AHSS disciplines) be expected or even permitted to do TA work given that this will involve a significant sacrifice of time that could otherwise be spent on the thesis, and (2) should such students be paid for their TA work as a matter of course or whether it was legitimate for Schools to expect the work to be done for free.

A long discussion followed, and a number of views were expressed re the first issue:

- (i) Some large Schools pay for TAs while others give stipend to students for their PhD work which includes TA teaching for free;
- (ii) In the School of English student research must be related to their PhD thesis, and hence TA work is related to students' PhD theses; PIs in the School of English do not control research carried out by their PhD students;
- (iii) The nature of PI work varies in different disciplines;
- (iv) In some disciplines like Political Science and Economics, there is a significant difference between students doing work for PI projects and for their own theses and the work of a PhD student working on a PI research project might not even contribute to their PhD thesis; students' contribution to PI papers and projects should be co-authored; students' work on data analysis going to the PI research should also be co-authored for the purpose of student PhD; in some cases thesis chapters can also be co-authored but students' contribution to originality needs to be ensured;
- (v) In Chemistry research represents continuity which must be evident in the PhD thesis;
- (vi) There was a suggestion to replace the term "PI" in the context of Arts/Humanities by "supervisor" within the boundaries of the PPPA scheme but it was re-confirmed that the scheme was awarding grants to professors who were PIs, and not to students, towards their research projects; it was emphasised that the term PI was very appropriate in Life Sciences and the PPPA scheme model was very embedded there while it was still fresh and new in Humanities;
- (vii) It was confirmed that the minimum number of hours on the PI project was 24 during a month with the rest of the time devoted to the student own work – albeit that in many disciplines there would be no distinction between project work and thesis work;
- (viii) Concern was expressed that all PhD students need to have an opportunity to do TA work as this is helpful to their future academic careers;

A further discussion followed in relation to the issue of payment for the TA work with the following views expressed:

- (ix) Schools operate very tight budgets; if historically speaking the School did not use to have funding to pay for TA it would not be possible for the School to reallocate new funding to pay for the TA work in a subsequent year;
- (x) The PPPA grant goes to the PI and not to the School which explains why this is conceptually distinct from a situation where a school expects a student to do unpaid work as a demonstrator/TA in consideration for receiving a stipend directly from the School;



- (xi) Funding sources for students and their stipends vary drastically in different Schools so student financial supports are different across the School spectrum;
- (xii) The PPPA scheme has replaced the 1252 award scheme under which students were not paid for TA work,
- (xiii) It was argued that not paying for TA work is unethical and unfair to students and should not be maintained under the PPPA scheme; if students are not paid for TA work the danger is that the PPPA scheme would be devalued;
- (xiv) There is a special case to be made for the PPPA-funded students who come in under the exceptionally prestigious scheme and therefore they should be paid for TA work even in those Schools which historically did not pay for such work under the 1252 award scheme.

The Dean summed up the discussion by saying that there was no uniformity in Schools in terms of practice for paying students for their TA work.

A voting then took place at the Dean's instigation in which majority of members voted that the next core PPPA document should contain a statement that the forty PPPA students are entitled to do TA work and should be paid for it on top of their stipend.

**Decision GS/18-19/243.1:** The next core PPPA document to contain a statement that PPPA students should be paid for their TA work by their Schools in addition to receiving their stipend under the scheme.

**Action GS/18-19/243.1:** The Dean of Graduate Studies to discuss with the Provost whether there might possibly be an additional budget to cover the cost of paying students brought in under the PPPA scheme to work as TAs or demonstrators.

### **GS/18-19/244 Postgraduate students' mental health and wellness**

This item was a continuation of GS/18-19/228. The Dean first noted that the second supervisors' workshop in February would focus on student mental health and wellness and will be open to any staff dealing with these issues in College. He then advised that the Dean of Students was setting up a working group to look at these issues in more detail.

Subsequently, the Dean flagged an idea of his own i.e. whether Trinity should move to a system where each PhD student would have a 'thesis committee' i.e. a three-person body that would include the supervisor and would have responsibility for the progression of that student. Under this proposed model, the two non supervisor members of the committee would meet with the student twice a year at the end of each semester to review progress and to be the "go to point" at all stages if there are issues with supervision or particular pastoral needs. They would also sign off with the supervisor on all progress reports and the confirmation process. The Dean suggested that membership of such committees should feature in School work-load models and be relevant for promotion purposes. He suggested that analysis of LERU universities suggests that this model represents best practice in so far as PhD education is concerned. The Dean acknowledged that some Schools might already have such a committee in place whereas for others it might be a radical



reconstruction of the supervision process. He stated that the increase in workload should not be huge if his proposal is taken at its minimalist, but thesis committees will be free to adopt a broader brief. He also noted that as thesis committees are currently taken to represent best practice, there is a possibility that if Trinity does not voluntarily sign up to this new practice it may be imposed.

A brief discussion followed to gauge the conceptual merit of Dean's proposal in which the following views were expressed:

- (i) The School of English welcomes the idea in general and would be in favour to further discuss it noting though that a postgraduate research pastoral committee might be a more useful way to deal with pastoral issues;
- (ii) The current postgraduate tutorial system should be reviewed to increase the number of tutors available to students making it on par with the undergraduate tutorial scheme with its over 200 tutors;
- (iii) A thesis committee should be involved in the confirmation process but should not have a role in the internal examining of the thesis;
- (iv) A thesis committee will ensure that students across all Schools will be receiving consistent level of support;
- (v) It remains to be established how thesis committees would interact with other pastoral and counselling services already in place in Trinity; there has always been separation between research supervision and pastoral care, so this proposal would be a new departure and could create a conflict of interest and an overlap resulting in inefficiencies;
- (vi) There will be staff resourcing issues in small Schools.

The Dean took the opportunity to thank the Postgraduate Student Support Officer for providing a very important service to postgraduate students over the years within the context of the Senior Tutor's Office and noted that the postgraduate section of that office was drastically under-resourced. He then concluded the discussion by saying that there appears to be sufficient conceptual merit and members' interest in his proposal to set up thesis committees to warrant a fuller discussion of how such a scheme should operate in practice at the next meeting.

**Action GS/18-19/244.1:** To include the issue as a discussion agenda item for the next GSC meeting.

### **GS/18-19/245 Recognition of foreign qualifications for admissions**

The Dean introduced the item by explaining that Trinity relies on a body called NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centre) for information on university standards in various countries for PG application purposes. He reported that the Global Relations Office team had asked him to confirm for members that, despite popular perception, universities from Vietnam were NARIC-approved. The Dean also asked members to consider whether it would be proper to allow four universities from the Philippines that are not NARIC-approved to be acceptable for PGT entry purposes. The Dean deferred the discussion on the latter issue pending circulation of a GRO document in relation to the the Philippines proposition.



**Action GS/18-19/245.1:** To include the issue as a discussion agenda item for the next GSC meeting.

### **GS/18-19/246 Report of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement Postgraduate Research Survey Pilot 2017/18**

The Dean spoke to the ISSE Survey report re-circulated for the meeting. He noted that research students were included in the survey for the first time and their comments were of particular interest to the committee although the response rate was rather low, and it would therefore be difficult to make generic interpretations. However, common issues of concern were to do with adequate funding and the lack of understanding how the structured PhD operates. With respect to the latter issue, clarity is being provided by way of a research handbook which has been sent out to all PGR students. Some members raised again the issue of setting up an adequate tutorial system with personal tutors for postgraduate students. The Dean stated that he would discuss how that might be achieved with the Vice Provost and the Postgraduate Student Support Officer and report back at a future meeting. Finally, he noted that he had not received any direct feedback from members in advance of the meeting on whether there should be any additional questions on the questionnaire the following year. Members suggested that there should be more questions drilling down to what the structured PhD should contain research skills-wise. Some members noted that a number of current questions were not relevant for Trinity students. The Dean concluded the discussion by inviting members to email him directly with any further views on this issue.

**Action GS/18-19/246.1:** The Dean to discuss how the current postgraduate tutors' set up can be extended with the Vice Provost and the Postgraduate Student Support Officer and report back at a future meeting.

**Action GS/18-19/246.2:** Members to email the Dean their suggestions for additional questions for ISSE for the next year.

### **GS/18-19/247 AOB**

- (i) The DTLP from the School of Nursing and Midwifery reported a clash between the May date of the GSC meeting with the date of the Court of Examiners in the School.
- (ii) A member reported a discrepancy between some IRC funding for fees and Trinity research fees. The Dean commented that IRC could not increase its fees but that he was currently discussing the issue with the VP/CAO.
- (iii) The Dean clarified that resulting from Council approval of a template for returning Calendar III entries (*GS/18-19/233 AOB (iii)*) new modules on postgraduate taught courses only needed to be approved at the School level while new structured PhD modules and stand alone modules still needed to be submitted to GSC for its approval and recommendation for Council approval. (*GS/18-19/215*)

**Decision GS/18-19/247(iii).1:** New modules on postgraduate taught courses only needed to be approved at the School level while new structured PhD modules and stand alone modules were required to be submitted to GSC for its approval and recommendation for Council approval.

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



**GS/18-19/248 Structural changes to Higher Diploma in Midwifery (H.Dip.) (School of Nursing and Midwifery) and Calendar changes for 2019/20**

**Decision GS/18-19/248**

The committee approved the structural changes to the course required by the revision by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland of the Standards and Requirements for the Midwife Registration Education Post-RGN Programme (NMBI 2017), and the resulting Calendar change for 2019/20.

**GS/18-19/249 A new bespoke PhD research skills module (Category 3): Cognition and the Brain (School of Psychology)**

**Decision GS/18-19/249**

The committee approved the new 10 ECTS bespoke PhD module (Category 3) to be delivered for student (ID No 13323915) in 2018/19 to support the student's development of research skills in the area of neurohumanities. The module will be accredited to the student's academic record as part of the structured PhD programme.

**XX Section C for noting**

**GS/18-19/250** The committee noted Minutes of the Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE ACDC) of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2018.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.55am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 6 December 2018