



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 31 October 2019
Trinity Boardroom, Trinity Business School

XX = Council relevance

Present: Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)
Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Ex officio)

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Nigel Stevenson, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, 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 Joseph Clarke, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Manuela Kulaxizi, School of Mathematics
Professor Kumlesh Dev, School of Medicine
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Prof. Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Ms Shaz Oye, Graduate Students' Union President
Ms Gisèle Scanlon, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

(in attendance Ex officio)

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience

Mr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning)

Secretary to the committee

Apologies:

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:



Professor Joseph McDonagh, Trinity Business School
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Carlos Medina, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, School of Religion

Observers in attendance for all items:

Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, Head of Trinity Teaching and Learning (TT&L)
Fedelma McNamara, Director of Internationalisation, TCD Global
Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office
Marie Mc Peak, Academic Affairs, TT&L

In attendance for individual items:

Assistant Professor Claire Donnellan (School of Nursing and Midwifery) for item GS/19-20/317
Dr Daniel Rogers, Head of Education, Tangent, Trinity's Ideas Workspace for item GS/19-20/318

GS/19-20/315 Minutes of 19 September 2019

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/19-20/316 Matters Arising

Re: GS/18-19/278(iii) In relation to the current iteration of the PPA scheme, the Dean advised that over 150 applications had come in, been graded by the Faculty Review Panel and shortlisted on a percentage basis (28 in AHSS, 16 in HS and 19 in FEMS) and were being reviewed with an input by the Dean of Graduate Studies from the University of Edinburgh with a view to a formal announcement of successful applicants being made on the 28th November.

Re: GS/18-19/288 Policy on Internships and Placements: The Dean noted that the policy had been approved by the October Council (CL/19-20/005.1).

Re: GS/18-19/294 Electronic Theses: The Dean advised that the issue was being progressed through the IT Services and the AR with a view to having the process in place for the March submissions deadline. The final goal to be achieved in the future is to have all PGR theses to be submitted for examination electronically – albeit that, the final, approved copy of the thesis would still be submitted in hardbound form.

Re: Action GS/18-19/294.3 Viva Guide: The Dean advised that Marie Mc Peak (from Academic Affairs) had temporarily replaced Ms Thornbury and was involved in reviewing the final draft of the *viva* guide and dealing with the



publisher. The *Guide* has been uploaded and will also be emailed to Committee members and to all PGR students as will the 2019 PGR *Student Handbook*.

Re: GS/19-20/302 Facilitated peer support for graduate students & supervisors in 2019/20: The Dean advised that there was a huge uptake for the workshops and thanked the Student Counselling Service and the PG Student Support Officer for the initiative.

Re: GS/19-20/304 Review of postgraduate education: The Dean advised that the review of PG education would be a major pillar of the College Strategic Plan and would commence from the next academic year. Preparatory work was being done and a number of working groups would be set up.

Re: GS/19-20/306 (v) AOB: The Dean advised that the Great Dublin Bike Ride which took place on 29 September had been very successful and well attended by Trinity staff who raised in excess of €16,000 for the Postgraduate Student Hardship Fund. The event also provided a great opportunity for collegial socialising for PG students.

GS/19-20/317 MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing: a new strand proposal in Gerontological Nursing

The Dean noted that members had had an opportunity to review the strand proposal in advance of the meeting. The Dean provided a brief outline of the new strand and welcomed Assistant Professor Claire Donnellan from the School of Nursing and Midwifery to take questions from the floor.

The committee noted that the current MSc in Gerontological Nursing would be closed for entry from 2020/21 and replaced with a new strand in Gerontological Nursing within an existing postgraduate overarching course of MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing enabling the School to streamline its Masters offerings. The aim of MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing is to facilitate registered nurses currently practising in specialist areas to develop further their knowledge and skills, enabling the delivery of evidence-based specialist nursing care as members of the multidisciplinary team and to contribute to the attainment of excellence in health care. The MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing consists of 8 strands and each strand comprises six modules (four specialist including one supervised practice placement, and two core modules in the areas of research and management). Students may enter the Masters course directly or, in line with the Postgraduate Framework approved by Council in June 2014 (CL/13-14/191), via the Postgraduate Certificate or via the Postgraduate Diploma and progress to the Masters (top-up) year during which they complete a dissertation. The latter progression approach gives students an opportunity to exit at each stage with an appropriate postgraduate award. Students who have successfully completed 60 ECTS year 1 of the Masters course may exit with an award of Postgraduate Diploma. Students who exit with a postgraduate diploma also have the option to rescind it and return within four years to pursue the Masters course year 2. The specialist strands are taught in partnership between the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the associated Health Service Providers (St James's Hospital (SJH) and Tallaght University Hospital (TUH)) and



the following specialist nursing strands currently offered are: Cardiovascular Nursing, Cancer Care and Haematology Nursing, Emergency Department Nursing, Intensive Care Nursing, Orthopaedic Nursing, Perioperative Care Nursing, Renal Nursing and the new Gerontological Nursing. The Dean noted that the new strand had received extensive contributions to its contents from a number of gerontological experts two of whom were from the School of Medicine in Trinity and two others were from the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork and from the Department of Nursing and Midwifery at the University College Limerick.

There were no questions from the floor. The committee agreed to support the new strand proposal without it being externally reviewed given the high level of external professional input already noted and the strand's close structural integration with the overarching Masters course.

Decision GS/19-20/317.1: The committee recommended the new strand for Council approval without the need to go for an external review.

XX GS/19-20/318 Postgraduate Certificate in Workplace Wellness: a new course proposal

The Dean noted that members had had an opportunity to review the new course in advance of the meeting. The Dean provided an outline of the new course proposal and welcomed Dr Daniel Rogers, Head of Education at Tangent to take questions from the floor.

The committee noted that the Postgraduate Certificate in Workplace Wellness promotes transversal skills of self-management, resilience and personal effectiveness outlined in the *National Skills Strategy 2025 – Ireland's Future*. Promoting a culture of wellbeing in the workplace does not only benefit employees when they are at work. It will give employees the incentives, tools, strategies and support to maintain healthy behaviours both in and out of the office. The new course will run with a minimum of 20 EU fee paying or HEA/Springboard-sponsored students. The funding has been secured for the first year but thereafter the course will be offered on a fee basis. The course will cover three 10 ECTS modules i.e. Fundamentals of Workplace Wellness, Organisational Culture and Project and Policy Implementation. Innovative assessments will include group reports, individual assessments and online reflective journal given that the course delivery is 60/40 blended (in class/online via live webinars).

During a short discussion the Dean raised the issue of the proposed January 2020 start date which could be tight given that the external review report was not yet available. The proposal was therefore unlikely to make the November Council leaving very little time for marketing before the January commencement if it is not approved until the December Council. The Dean suggested that he would stay in touch with the course director in relation to possible timelines to commence the course (i.e. March being the realistic alternative) depending on the efforts in obtaining an external reviewer's report. In response to a query from a member, the prospective course director confirmed that the PhD student listed as one of the teaching staff on the modules would only be teaching in auxiliary capacity as a TA.



Decision GS/19-20/318.1: The committee recommended the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a favourable external review.

XX **GS/19-20/319 PhD examiners' report and results' options**

The item was carried over from the previous meeting (GS/19-20/303). The Dean expressed thanks to members for providing feedback on the question whether the new proposed examiners' form circulated after the last meeting should be adopted. This would entail (i) pre-*viva* reports (ii) post *viva* summaries of how it was felt the candidate did in the *viva* and (iii) examiners agreeing changes *after* the *viva* (i.e. immediately thereafter save in extraordinary circumstances) and the relevant documents being sent to the Academic Registry (AR) by the internal examiner. The Dean asked members to decide whether the new model should be adopted and formally recommended to the University Council on the grounds that it would significantly reduce the time spent on the examination process for many students.

A number of comments were made, and divergent views were expressed such as that

- (i) the pre- *viva* report will not be circulated to students;
- (ii) there should be an appropriate prescribed time span (for example three weeks) between submission of the thesis and the date of the *viva* giving the examiners sufficient time to prepare the report in advance of the *viva*;
- (iii) currently the AR advises only internal examiners of the thesis dispatch whereas DTLPs should also be so informed;
- (iv) the AR should be pro-active in sending at least three reminders to the examiners to request them to prepare the pre-*viva* report in advance of the *viva* – an incremental prompting system should be put in place;
- (v) supervisors may not be in touch with external examiners during the examination process so that there is no compromising the examiners' independence;
- (vi) a request for a pre-*viva* report may not always be respected by examiners but it is a reasonable expectation to be set up as an aspirational standard in Trinity;
- (vii) currently examiners are expected to return their reports within six weeks after the *viva*.

Members agreed that the revised *viva* model should be set up as the standard university expectation of examiners, albeit that (as some pointed out), in some extraordinary circumstances it might not be followed for various reasons. Members were convinced that the new *viva* model will significantly improve life for many students who might otherwise be waiting for a protracted period for results. The Dean undertook to work out the details of the model together with the AR. He agreed that it would be prudent to hold off its implementation until the electronic thesis submission is in place in March 2020. In response to a comment from the Academic Secretary, he recommended that the process be quality-reviewed after a year. In the period before March 2020, the Dean undertook to amend the letters sent to examiners to reflect both electronic thesis submission and also the *viva* requirements under the new forms. The Dean also indicated that the next meeting should consider



the processes and timelines between nomination of an examiner through dispatch of the thesis, to the date of the *viva*. The goal would be to agree a *minimum* time frame between receipt of thesis and date of *viva*. He noted that this would be easier to monitor once electronic submission becomes the norm.

Action GS/19-20/319.1: The Dean to set up a revised *viva* process with the AR for implementation in March 2020 to be QA-reviewed the year after.

The Dean reminded members that they had already debated the issue of (a) replacing the term 'pass subject to minor corrections' to 'pass with changes', and (b) lengthening the timeframe from the current two months' rule. He noted that there had, in members' feedback, been general acceptance of (a) but a considerable diversity of opinion around (b). He opened the floor for discussion on the first issue. It was noted that the nomenclature of the second and third potential results for a PGR thesis (currently 'pass subject to minor corrections' and 'referral and re-examination') should clearly indicate that the former result meant that the student would obtain the degree should s/he execute the stipulated corrections whereas the latter required resubmission and re-examination of the re-written thesis with the possibility that it might be failed or a lower degree awarded. Members noted that a particular concern was that the guidelines for examiners were not sufficiently explicit on the question of what kind of things might, legitimately, be covered under the 'minor changes' rubric.

Parenthetically, some members requested that students be asked to highlight changes they made to their theses to enable examiners to identify them quickly.

The Dean undertook, in advance of the next meeting, to redraft the guidelines sent to examiners to seek clearly to indicate Trinity understandings of what 'minor changes' and 'referral and resubmission' amount to. Having agreed these guideline changes (subject to Council approval), members will then be in a better position to see if they want to revise the nomenclature associated with the various results' categories (and also, possibly, the time lines associated with the 'Pass with (Minor) Corrections' result.

The Dean will bring the new model examiner's report form to the next Council albeit with the caveat that it would not be operative until the electronic thesis submission model was in place.

Action GS/19-20/319.2: The Dean to amend the guideline documents for PGR examiners and seek members' feedback prior to the next meeting.

Action GS/19-20/319.3: The Dean to bring the new model examiner's report form to the next Council.

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GS/19-20/320 PhD tutors

The item was carried over from the previous meeting (Action GS/19-20/302.1). The Dean referred to a discussion of the question whether academic staff in Schools would be available to act as PGR students' tutors, should such a facility become



available. He noted that he had obtained a diversity of responses and opened the floor for further discussion.

Members underlined the scarcity of resources in College to support PGR welfare and the need for their prudent use. All agreed that there does not appear to be funding available to put in place tutors for PGR students as the priority lies with UG students. The newly introduced thesis committees go some way towards enhancing the mental wellbeing of PGR students. Some members noted that mentoring of PGR students comes best from outside of the student's School. In response to a query, the PG Student Support Officer advised that what is mainly needed is the enhancement of pastoral support different to work done by clinicians and counsellors, and that peer support scheme works better at the UG level than for PG students.

The Dean summarised the discussion by noting that, whereas, ideally, it would be preferable to have bespoke tutorial support for each PGR student (if possible, from outside the student's School), the resources are not there. Still deeply concerned for the pastoral needs of PG students, the Dean undertook to meet with the GSU President and Vice President and the PG Student Support Officer to discuss how best PG student wellbeing could be enhanced and to seek to identify financial resources to effect such enhancement.

Action GS/19-20/320.1: The Dean to meet with GSU President and Vice President and PG Student Support Officer to discuss how best PG student wellbeing could be enhanced and to seek to identify financial resources to effect such enhancement.

XX GS/19-20/321 Entrepreneurship and doctoral education

The Dean spoke to the circulated LERU document on entrepreneurship as a component element of doctoral education. He noted that all trends in doctoral education in Europe appear to point to a heightened focus on career readiness of graduates – in particular on careers outside the academy. This approach might therefore be central to meaningful reform of PGR offerings in Trinity, and central to its PhD process. Members agreed that sowing the seeds of entrepreneurship at an early stage is prudent. Accordingly, increasing the visibility of Trinity structured PhD modules and making them as useful for students as possible would be beneficial for PGR students going forward.

Currently PGR students enhance their non-academic career development by attending modules on the Tangent-delivered Postgraduate Certificate in Innovation and Enterprise Development. The Careers Advisory Service has applied to the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education for funding for a blended learning Careers and Employability (10 ECTS) module for PhD students to be delivered in partnership with industry. The Dean also suggested an introduction of a new type of structured PhD module called "Internship". It would aim to facilitate students who wished to do an internship directly related to their research which would boost their research, give them relevant generic skills and allow them to get credit for doing so. The module would not be mandatory and would need to be approved by the supervisor. The GSU President expressed a strong view that unpaid internships should be excluded. However, the Dean stated that in some



disciplines such as law, students could gain an invaluable benefit, depending on their research, if they worked in a free legal advice centre, where they would not be paid.

A query was raised whether TA work delivered in Trinity could be accepted as “Internship”. Views were mixed with some members saying that some placements in College where PGR students focus on specific projects could be so treated while ordinary TA duties probably not. Another example offered was that sending a PGR Science student abroad to work in a lab could be termed “Internship”. The Dean referred also to a situation where Schools were giving PGR students credit for work done *outside* the University which would not however amount to an internship. He suggested that a School-based structured PhD module called “External” should be set up. That way PGR students could be registered to the “External” module and obtain credit as a result. The Dean said that he would propose a new structured PhD module entitled ‘Internship’ for consideration at the next GSC meeting.

The Dean noted that it was critical that concepts of entrepreneurship and career readiness would become embedded within the structured PhD model. To that end he proposed setting up a working group to discuss how this might happen. Members were asked to self-select for such a group but he would also ask specific members to be involved.

Action GS/19-20/321.1: DTLPs to liaise with GSC Secretary if wishing to set up a generic “External” module in their respective Schools.

Action GS/19-20/321.2: The Dean to propose a structured PhD Module entitled ‘Internship’ at the next GSC meeting.

Action GS/19-20/321.3: The Dean to set up a Working Group looking at how concepts of entrepreneurship and career readiness could be embedded within the structured PhD.

In response to a suggestion from the DTLP in the School of Psychology, the Dean asked members to let him know if their Schools have specific structured PhD modules (as distinct from modules on MSc and MPhil courses) that they would be prepared to open to students outside their School in order that a complete picture of all the structured PhD options available to students could be compiled for College.

Action GS/19-20/321.4: DTLPs to advise the Dean if their Schools have specific structured PhD modules to admit students outside their School to.

Finally, the Dean referred to a suggestion made by a member the previous year that consideration should be given to offer PG students a postgraduate diploma for TA/Demonstrator work. The Dean will seek to progress the idea this year.

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GS/19-20/322 Review of PGT application process

The Dean raised the issue of the rather positive experience in relation to PGT applications/admissions which proceeded much more smoothly during the current year than in previous years. He expressed gratitude to all course directors, primary assessors and administrative staff in Schools and in the AR, who worked very hard over the summer to deal with the very large number of PGT applications. He



acknowledged in particular contributions of Kathryn Walsh, Ella Halfacree, Rebecca Brady, Naomi Baldwin and Ciaran O'Brien in the AR. The Dean postulated that the application process should be set up in such a way that it is the most conducive to ensure the numerically maximal recruitment but also to ensure that no unregistered persons were permitted to attend lectures. He advised members of the key dates for the next year. A closing date for applications to all PGT courses will fall on July 31st, a closing date for recommendations to be made by assessors will be August 10th and a closing date for applicants to accept offers/fulfil all conditions will be August 31st.

The Dean emphasised that no unregistered persons were allowed to attend at lectures and get any credit for work done if they were unregistered. The GSU President sought clarification on the requirement that *no unregistered persons are allowed to attend at lectures*. She expressed concern that rigid adherence to this rule might negatively impact the ability of non-traditional learners to enter Trinity postgraduate degree programmes. Citing the example of her own entry to Trinity under RPL in 2017, she stated that her ability to attend a foundational summer school in the School of Education prior to registering proved to be an invaluable facility in enabling the Course Coordinators to observe and assess her ability to engage with the programme, and in supporting her to decide if she had the capacity for a level 9 degree. The Dean commented that Schools have discretion to offer taster opportunities as a way of allowing applicants to see if they were able for postgraduate courses, but he advised that participating in a taster is different to attending a regular course unregistered. It would be a School decision to set up such tasters locally which would not detract from eliminating unregistered students from attending ordinary courses. The Dean underlined that a requirement to register in a timely manner was a long standing rule in College.

The DTLP from the School of Nursing and Midwifery noted that the online admission system was counter-intuitive and had prevented many applicants in her School to effectively complete their registration. The School had therefore to set up a bespoke admissions committee to hand hold and assist applicants with difficulties using the system to navigate the technology.

Action GS/19-20/322.1: The Dean undertook to liaise with the AR about whether the online system could be made more intuitive.

Action GS/19-20/322.2: The Dean advised that he would send out a document to be circulated to all course directors/primary assessors for PGT courses outlining important admissions deadlines and rules in relation to the operation of PGT courses in the next application cycle.

Action GS/19-20/322.3: *The* Dean invited members to give him feedback in advance of the next meeting in relation to *their* experience of the applications process.

GS/19-20/323 AOB

- (i) The Dean advised members that a call for applications for the 2019/20 Postgraduate Teaching Awards will come out very shortly, and asked members to advertise this through their Schools.



(ii) **Re CA700 (mandatory structured PhD module):**

Action GS/19-20/323.1(iii): The Dean to liaise with Niamh Brennan to establish whether it is possible for students other than those registered from September 2018 onwards (i.e. those for whom the module is *not* mandatory,) to be permitted to take aspects of the module other than the research integrity component.

Action GS/19-20/323.2(iii): The Dean to liaise with the AR to establish whether nominated staff within Schools can be given access to the relevant SITS file to check if students within their Schools have completed the module.

(iii) Dr Geoff Bradley spoke to his Memo on Irish National Digital Engagement Survey 2019 to raise awareness of the event, which Trinity is participating in. The survey goes live for three weeks on Monday 11th November.

(iv) The Dean advised that since the previous year when GSC decided that new modules on existing postgraduate taught courses only needed to be approved at the School level (*GS/18-19/233 AOB (iii)*) new templates for approval of such modules and of existing modules with significant changes were made available on the Dean's Office website to support Schools in their local approval process. Once approved module descriptors were to be updated in SITS by course coordinators/directors.

Decision GS/19-20/323.1(iv): Schools to use templates for approval of new modules and existing modules with significant changes on already existing PGT courses available on the Dean's Office website.

Action GS/19-20/323.1(iv): GSC Secretary to circulate to DTLPs the two templates to be used by Schools for approval of new modules and existing modules with significant changes on already existing PGT courses.

(v) The Dean advised that the intensive pre-sessional English language course would be launched in the of Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (CELLT) from May 2020. The "pre-sessional" summer course was predominantly attended by applicants conditionally or unconditionally accepted onto taught programmes. He urged members to draw the attention of such applicants to this excellent course.

(vi) The Academic Secretary advised that replacement for Ms Thornbury was in progress.

XX Section B for noting and approval

GS/19-20/324 New course entry/exit/progression routes: Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in Christian Theology of existing MPhil in Christian Theology and Calendar III changes for 2020/2021 (School of Religion)

Decision GS/19-20/324:

The committee approved the proposed structural changes to the course as outlined in the proposal circulated for the meeting, and the resulting Calendar III change for 2020/21.



GS/19-20/325 New course entry/exit/progression routes: Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma in Digital Humanities and Culture of existing MPhil in Digital Humanities and Culture and Calendar III changes for 2020/2021 (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies)

Decision GS/19-20/325:

The committee approved the proposed structural changes to the course as outlined in the proposal circulated for the meeting, and the resulting Calendar III change for 2020/21.

GS/19-20/326 Stand-alone/Structured PhD module in School of Medicine (Category 2): “Assessment and management of frailty in aging adults”

The Dean advised that the three stand alone modules were being brought to the committee for consideration in relation to the pilot project approved by GSC at its meeting on 24 March 2016 (GS/15-16/34 and CL/15-16/158).

Decision GS/19-20/326:

The committee noted the double status of the module to be set up accordingly by the AR and approved it from 2019/20.

GS/19-20/327 Stand-alone module in School of Medicine: “Dementia and Alzheimer’s Disease: Foundational biological, clinical and socioeconomic factors”

Decision GS/19-20/327:

The committee approved the proposed module from 2019/20.

GS/19-20/328 Stand-alone module in School of Medicine: “Intervention & impact: leadership, communication, & research skills”

Decision GS/19-20/328:

The committee approved the proposed module from 2019/20.

GS/19-20/329 Changes to Doctor in Medicine (M.D.) Degree and revised Calendar III entry for 2020/21

Decision GS/19-20/329:

The item was withdrawn. Inclusion of financial statement approved by the Faculty Dean is required.

GS/19-20/330 Clarification of ECTS requirements on the structured PhD register in the School of Medicine – the item was withdrawn

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Section C for noting

GS/19-20/331 The committee noted the Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 21st February 2019.

GS/19-20/332 The committee noted the Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 1st May 2019.



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

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 31 October 2019