



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the “virtual” meeting by written correspondence
in lieu of the one scheduled to be held
at 10am on Thursday 26 March 2020
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 Rachel Mary Mc Loughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Sinéad Roden, Trinity Business School
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Nicholas Brown, 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 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 Manuela Kulaxizi, School of Mathematics
Professor Kumlesh Dev, School of Medicine
Professor Cian O’Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Carlos Medina Martin, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Ladislav Timulak, School of Psychology
Professor Gillian Wylie, School of Religion
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 Gisèle Scanlon, Graduate Students’ Union Vice-President
Ms Shaz Oye, Graduate Students’ Union President



(Ex officio in attendance "by email")

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

Mr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative

Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer,
Senior Tutor's Office

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning)
Secretary to the committee

Observers in virtual attendance by email for all items:

Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, Head of Trinity Teaching and Learning, (TT&L)

Marie Mc Peak, Education Support Officer, Academic Affairs, TT&L

Fedelma McNamara, Director of Internationalisation, TCD Global

Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, the decision was taken to operate this meeting by email. Thus, in advance of the meeting, the Dean of Graduate Studies circulated a detailed memo covering all items on the agenda (the papers of the meeting having been previously circulated) and members were asked, if they desired, to respond by email. These minutes cover therefore both the items themselves and responses thereto received by members.

No apologies

No attendance for individual items

The papers for the March GSC meeting were circulated as normal and were followed by a briefing email from the Dean of Graduate Studies who confirmed that due to the coronavirus pandemic and consequent closure of College the meeting will not be conducted live or online but through written correspondence and members were being asked to approve circulated proposals without discussion. Specifically, proposals to be approved are

- (a) the new integrated UG/PG course in Environmental Science and Engineering,
- (b) the new MSc in in Quantum Fields, Strings and Gravity from the School of Mathematics,
- (c) the changes to the Nursing - Advanced Practice (ANP) course in the School of Nursing and Midwifery and
- (d) the revisions to the Academic Awards, RPL and Handbook policies.

Approval by members was required for the proposals to be sent to the April Council.

The Dean invited members who have questions about any of these proposals to contact him directly by lunchtime the following day. He stated that should there be reservations the item will be held over to the April meeting. However, if members had



no questions or reservations they would not need to respond, and their silence would denote consent.

In lieu of the March meeting, the Dean sent also a lengthy Memorandum relating mostly to the GSC agenda issues but also to some COVID related matters. One of the latter items referred to proposed changes to the tests accepted for English language competency for incoming students in 2020/21 and a Memorandum to this affect from Prof. Lorna Carson, Head, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences was attached. That matter will be recorded below under AOB.

In his Memorandum, the Dean expressed a huge thank you to all committee members stating that the current pandemic situation is unprecedented and challenging, but all have risen to the challenge magnificently. He expressed pride in the entire Graduate Studies community – colleagues and students for the way in which they are seeing out the current challenge. In particular, he praised the incredible work being done by the Graduate Students Union leadership and by the Postgraduate Student Support Officer as well as Ms Ewa Sadowska and Ms Marie McPeak.

GS/19-20/370 Minutes of 27 February 2020

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/19-20/371 Matters Arising

Re: GS/19-20/358 Distance-based Postgraduate Research Degrees: The Dean advised that the proposal for the Distance-based Postgraduate Research Study had been approved on a pilot basis by Council at its meeting in March, subject to the inclusion of an appeals mechanism and subject to bringing a proposal on piloting the distance model to a future meeting of Council for consideration and approval.

Action GS/19-20/371.1 (*Re: GS/19-20/358*): The Dean to seek Schools to volunteer to take part in the pilot. He will then discuss with those Schools whether to start the pilot in September or, in view of the current pandemic, postpone the pilot to March. He intends to advise Council of which Schools have volunteered and is seeking prompt responses from members.

Subsequently, DTLPs from the Schools of Religion, Psychology and SLLCS have expressed interest to participate in the pilot.

Re: GS/19-20/359 Revised External Examiners Policy: The Dean advised that the proposal had been approved by Council in March 2020 via the February GSC minutes. He further noted that Covid-19 has impacted on the current situation, and clarified that he can, upon application where appropriate, approve fully remote *vivas* (i.e. everyone in different venues) and remote *vivas* even where it is not clear that the student will pass subject to minor changes. The



School of Education had its first fully remote *viva* the week before and it went well.

Re: GS/19-20/360 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2018/19: The Dean advised that Council noted the recommendations in his Report and approved the Report at its meeting in March 2020.

Re: GS/19-20/361 PG Strategic Reform: The Dean noted that in spite of the practical constraints resulting from the coronavirus pandemic he still intends to get together a document of suggestions for PG reform.

Action GS/19-20/371.2 (*Re: GS/19-20/361*): The Dean to send documentation in a few weeks to members who have agreed to be on working groups, and to set up an electronic meeting to discuss.

Re: GS/19-20/362 AOB

- (i) The Dean advised that the March Council approved that PGR examiners' reports will be sent to the DTLP, the Supervisor and officially to the student.
- (ii) The Dean noted that he had advised Council at its meeting in March that GSC suggested at its meeting in February that Trinity should not require submission of a hardbound copy of a PGR thesis to the library from April 2020. Given the discussion generated, at Council, on this development, the Dean undertook to revisit the issue at a future meeting of GSC and Council.

Action GS/19-20/371.3 (*Re: GS/19-20/362(ii) AOB*): The Dean to prepare a more complete proposal for GSC and Council.

The Dean further noted that because electronic submission of the "approved thesis" is the trigger for a student to go on the Council list and thus to proceed to graduation, he has advised students that, in the current pandemic situation, they can postpone submission of the hard copy until College is reopened, and this will not prevent them from graduating.

- (iii) The Dean noted that he had been advised by the Director of Student Services that FTSE can be split across Disciplines and Schools for the purpose of co-supervision across Schools.

Action GS/19-20/371.4 (*Re: GS/19-20/362(iii) AOB*): The Dean to advise members more fully on the issue at a further meeting.

Re: GS/19-20/363 Stand-alone/Structured PhD (Category 2) module in School of Medicine: "TILDA-FRAILMatics Advanced Analytics Module" from 2020/21: the proposal had been approved by Council in March 2020 via the February GSC minutes.



Re: GS/19-20/364 Structured PhD (Category 2) module in School of Medicine: "PGR External Ageing @ EIT Health Brain PhD School" from 2019/20: the proposal had been approved by Council in March 2020 via the February GSC minutes.

Re: GS/19-20/365 Revised Plagiarism Policy (February 2020): the revised policy had been approved by Council in March 2020 via the February GSC minutes.

Re: GS/19-20/366 Revised Timetabling Policy (February 2020): the revised policy had been approved by Council in March 2020 via the February GSC minutes.

XX GS/19-20/372 A new course proposal: Integrated UG/PG Environmental Science and Engineering

The proposal was a joint submission from Prof. Jennifer McElwain (School of Natural Sciences) and Prof. Laurence Gill (School of Engineering). The Dean noted that the current BAI/MAI model in the School is a precedent for how these integrated courses work. He thanked Ewa Sadowska and Sorcha de Brunner for the massive work they have done on assisting the proposers with the course documentation.

Environmental Science and Engineering is a new integrated undergraduate (4 years) with postgraduate (additional 1 year) degree course that aims to train the next generation of graduates who have the competencies, knowledge and experience necessary to design and deploy engineering solutions that protect and improve the environment and human wellbeing, and that work with rather than against the natural world to foster biodiversity, climate action and sustainable use of Earth's finite resources. Graduates from the Environmental Science and Engineering course will be highly conversant in the theory, use and deployment of emerging technologies for sustainable development including novel IT and nature-based approaches through small team-based design modules, industry secondments and their own independent research projects. The integrated course will provide students with fundamental grounding in the natural sciences and engineering, and in the applied skills required to develop sustainable solutions for major societal and environmental challenges. The unique combination of engineering and natural sciences modules is a new academic initiative in Ireland and internationally.

The total credit volume of the UG/PG integrated course is 300 ECTS consisting of 240 UG and 60 PG credits and comprising 6,000 UG student effort hours and 1,500 PG student effort hours given 1 ECTS on PGT modules equalling 25 student effort hours. The integrated Environmental Science and Engineering course has two routes with specific awards attached to each as follows: the first route is in the Environmental Engineering leading to Bachelor in Science in Environmental Engineering (award to be established) at the end of Year 4, and to MAI (St.) Master in Engineering (Studies) after Year 5 while the second route is in Applied Environmental Science leading to Bachelor in Science in Applied Environmental Science (award to be established) at the end of Year 4 and to Master in Applied Environmental Science (award to be established) after Year 5. The course is due to



commence in 2021/22 and will be set up in SITS on the UG register similar to the existing MAI. It will be based in the new E3 Learning Foundry building currently under construction. The first entry to the PGT Year 5 will be in 2025/26 and the required UG threshold to progress to PGT Year 5 will be 60% (2:1). Progression from UG year 4 to PGT year 5 will be automatic upon achieving required academic threshold. There will be one external examiner for each route i.e. for Environmental Engineering route (UG/PG) and for Applied Environmental Science route (UG/PG) respectively.

In responses via email, members noted that the proposed course was a very useful initiative. A member noticed that a number of modules would depend on new hires and surmised if these were all part of the bigger E3 budget plan. The TCD GSU President noted that (1.47) the EEAES Course Committee composition states that there will be one student representative for each year on the committee. From a graduate perspective she asked that GSU postgraduate representation is specified for the final and fifth postgraduate year. Email feedback indicated that members were happy to recommend the proposal to Council as they returned no queries or reservations.

Decision GS/19-20/372: The Committee recommended the proposal to Council subject to addressing the TCD GSU President's request and subject to favourable external reviews.

XX GS/19-20/373 A new course proposal: MSc in Quantum Fields, Strings and Gravity

The proposal was submitted by Prof. Andrei Parnachev (School of Mathematics). The Dean noted that whereas the proposal comes from the School of Mathematics, the School of Physics is happy to endorse it.

The M.Sc. in Quantum Fields, Strings and Gravity offers advanced education in modern High Energy Theory and Mathematical Physics. The topics include String Theory, Conformal Field Theory, General Theory of Relativity & Cosmology, Quantum Field Theory and Lattice Gauge Theory. The students will have an opportunity to study cutting edge research and perform their own M.Sc. dissertation work under the supervision of the School of Mathematics staff, who are world class experts in the field. The aim of the new course is to give undergraduate students an excellent opportunity to advance their knowledge and skills up to a level required for doctoral level research. The course provides a significant degree of flexibility with regards to the preferred research direction – both formal and lattice high energy theory modules and dissertation projects are provided. The course also allows for a variety of educational backgrounds and offers two tiered packages of modules (fundamental and advanced) which are tailored to the level of incoming students.

The new course will be delivered full time over one year. It will comprise 90 credits for the Masters award and 60 ECTS for an exit Postgraduate Diploma. The final mark will be based on a credit-weighted average of the mark awarded in each module. The course is currently due to commence in September 2020.



Email feedback indicated that members were happy to recommend the proposal to Council as they returned no queries or reservations.

Decision GS/19-20/373: The Committee recommended the proposal to Council subject to a favourable external review.

XX GS/19-20/374 Amendments to the Nursing - Advanced Practice (ANP) (M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip/P.Grad.Cert) with effect from 2020/21

The proposal came from Prof. Fiona Timmins (School of Nursing and Midwifery). The Dean noted that the School of Nursing and Midwifery currently runs a Masters course in Nursing - Advanced Practice (ANP) of 110 credits together with a related group of bottom up courses starting from Pg Cert, with progression to Pg Dip top up and then on to MSc top up. This group of courses was developed in response to a successful consortium bid to an earlier HSE tender. The new HSE tender covers September 2020 intakes onwards and the School needs to be flexible in responding to HSE (the funding body) requirements. The HSE is tendering now for equivalent training for midwives. The alignment of curricula across the five consortium partners is a requirement of the HSE tender and all revisions are mandatory if the School of Nursing and Midwifery is to remain a viable player in the market of Advanced Practice – Nursing and Advanced Practice – Midwifery. The consortium is the only tenderer to have reached stage 2 of the new HSE tendering process and an award is awaited.

In order to accommodate midwives, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI), the regulatory body has made several conditions, including that the teaching offering to be delivered from 2020/21 must have two course titles. This will necessitate replacing the current course titles and codes as specified in the circulated Memorandum for new entrants in 2020/21. To ensure that Trinity offerings are professionally compliant for both nursing and midwifery professions and given no changes in structure and delivery of the teaching offering effective from September 2020, the School of Nursing and Midwifery is seeking permission from the Committee, to create separate course titles and course codes with respect to the course offering for which they currently receive funding. The School requests permission to set up new course titles of the same offering for Advanced Practice (Midwifery) and Advanced Practice (Nursing). This will necessitate the suspension of the current Nursing - Advanced Nursing Practice (ANP) for all *new entrants* with the exception of progression pathways and retaining codes for current progression purposes and to accommodate progression of current cohorts of Nursing – Advanced Practice and of Nursing - Advanced Practice (ANP). A dual curriculum will be required for 2 years approximately for graduates who wish to top up under the approved structures of the Trinity Framework for Postgraduate Programmes.

Under the new tender, *Nurse* graduates of the course will be eligible to apply to Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) for registration as a Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner (RANP) and *Midwife* graduates will be accommodated on the offering, as they avail of the same course structure and content as has been available to nurses. The learning outcomes remain the exact same. *Midwife* graduates will be eligible to apply to Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)



for registration as a Registered Advanced Midwife Practitioner (RAMP). There are no new complications to fees which will continue as per the previous tender award and the College-approved derogations. This transition to two new courses (Nursing and Midwifery) is purely for administrative purposes in compliance with the regulator's requirement and therefore new courses will be exact duplicates of the existing courses.

Decision GS/19-20/374: The Committee recommended the proposal to Council.

XX GS/19-20/375 Academic Awards Policy (revised February 2020)

The Dean noted that only minimal changes have been introduced to the policy and members approved them. No queries or reservations have been returned to the Dean.

Decision GS/19-20/375: The Committee recommended the revised Academic Awards Policy for Council approval.

XX GS/19-20/376 Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (revised February 2020)

The Dean noted that only minimal changes have been introduced to the policy and members approved them. The TCD GSU President commended the policy a very welcome and useful framework to support Schools in exercising their autonomy to determine the application procedures for RPL best suited to their situation. She asked the Dean to clarify at what level or grade is RPL assessed in order for applicants to be eligible for consideration to PGT programmes of one full year duration, for example Digital Marketing or Creative Writing. She assumed that applicants' portfolio of work is assessed at level 7 or 8 on the NQF and wondered whether it should be specified in the policy document or devolved to the School.

Decision GS/19-20/376: The Committee recommended the revised RPL Policy for Council approval subject to the Dean's consideration of the TCD GSU President's suggestions.

XX GS/19-20/377 Handbook Policy (revised March 2020)

A Memorandum from the Dean of Graduate Studies and Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) was circulated which clarified that the Programme Handbook Policy, approved on 20 April 2018, has been updated to reflect feedback from Schools on the need to reduce duplication of information across programme handbooks. Members noted the updated policy and its Appendices. Schools/Departments have been advised to develop a separate stand-alone document that presents information of a general/generic nature e.g. contact details for School/Department staff, student support-related information. It was noted that student services will develop a stand-alone resource that captures that student support-related information to be then referred to in the School/Department handbook. Information specific to a programme only will be contained in a separate programme/course handbook. Templates have also been created that can be used to develop School/Department and programme handbooks (available from Appendix II).

In subsequent feedback returned to the Dean by email members noted that templates will be immensely helpful and very handy to have as a resource by



Schools and Departments. The TCD GSU President agreed that a template for School handbooks would be a welcome addition for Schools, but alerted the Dean to the issue that is most often brought to the attention of the GSU which is inconsistencies between information in the handbook, and instruction that is given on courses by tutors in relation to, for example, submitting assignments or referencing. She also suggested that a section on language would be a useful addition in consideration of the number of international PG students. There is an assumption that new entrants to Trinity understand the colloquial language, for example, Michaelmas, Fellows, Tutors etc. but Trinity-specific language comes up regularly as something new entrants have to grapple with. The TCD GSU President proposed that a link to TCD new Strategic Plan "Community and Connection" would be a useful addition and that Section 4.5 should include links to TCD Equality policies.

Decision GS/19-20/377: The Committee recommended the revised Handbook Policy for Council approval subject to the Dean's consideration of the TCD GSU President's suggestions.

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GS/19-20/378 AOB

The Dean brought up a number of Covid-19 related issues:

- (i) **Assessment changes:** The Dean asked members asap to fill in the Academic Registry templates for changes to PGT assessment and to email him with non-examination-based changes (e.g. changes to weightings for various aspects of assessment). He underlined that it is critical that this is completed promptly in order to advise students accordingly, but before this can happen, the changes must be approved by him. The Dean also asked members to let him know of those courses in their Schools which do *not* require changes so that he could compile this information for his records. He reminded members who have jurisdiction over accredited courses to ensure that proposed changes to exam modalities are acceptable to the accrediting bodies.

Action GS/19-20/378 (i): Members to advise the Dean of changes to PGT exam modalities.

- (ii) **Revised date for SITS input of results:** The Dean noted that thanks to the Director of Academic Registry and the Head of Business Support & Planning, the date for submission of results into SITS for PGT courses has been pushed back two weeks to June 5. This should enable academic colleagues to give extensions for submission to students who most need them because of disruption.
- (iii) **Proposed temporary revisions to English Language Entry Requirements (UG and PG) during COVID-19:** The Dean noted that as College is seeing off the challenges of the current year, it must also look to the challenges of trying to recruit to the PG register the following year. One issue relates to English language training for prospective entrants. For various reasons the standard options (IELTS/TOEFL etc) may not work for many applicants. As such he attached a Memorandum from Prof. Lorna Carson outlining a proposed change to the tests that will be acceptable to Trinity in so far as language competency is required. This has been carefully thought through and members were reassured that the proposed *new* tests that would be recognised are robust and



effective. The proposal would be for immediate promotion for cohort to commence in September (or whatever alternative date to be agreed) as an interim measure.

The DTLP from the School of Dental Science has subsequently advised the Dean that he supported the proposed changes. However, he also noted that the DDUH has to abide by the Dental Council rules which require from applicants to obtain a minimum score of 7 across all bands (IELTS) which is higher than the Trinity requires.

Decision GS/19-20/378 (iii): Members agreed that the proposed changes as outlined in the Memorandum made sense; no reservations have been returned to the Dean.

- (iv) *Next Year Start Dates:* The Dean underlined the importance of this item. He noted that the COVID-19 pandemic is going to present huge challenges in so far as the following year is concerned. Many of Trinity courses are aimed primarily at international students and the simple reality is that prospective candidates may well be unlikely to apply until the uncertainty of the current health situation is lifted. Unless constructive steps are taken, College may suffer very considerable losses both in terms of revenue and also in terms of its capacity to deliver meaningful PGT courses in 2020/21. The newly found enhanced capacity to teach electronically will be useful in Trinity PGT pedagogical mission but even with that provision it is likely that recruitment numbers will be significantly affected. Changes may need to be made to enable meaningful recruitment to Trinity suite of PGT courses. The Dean stressed that this would be a College-based decision but sought the views of members as to two possible approaches the university could take to offset these losses. He would then feed members' comments into College deliberations on these matters.

Approach 1: Move PGT course start dates from September 2020 to January 2021. The Dean was not suggesting that *all* start dates would be moved automatically, but rather that Schools consider whether they would like the next iteration of their courses to start in January 2021.

Approach 2: Have two start dates for the next academic year, i.e. September 2020 and January 2021 operating in parallel. The Dean was proposing this approach as an option for Schools. This would obviously maximise chances of recruiting students but, equally obviously, would generate additional teaching workloads. It might be especially useful in courses where there is a good deal of blended learning.

The Dean underlined that either of these approaches would need careful thinking through and full supports in terms of orientation weeks etc.

Action GS/19-20/378 (iv): Members to bring to their Schools for discussion both approaches and advise the Dean subsequently whether *their School* would be in favour of one or both of these options for the courses that it offers.



The DTLP from the School of Law has subsequently advised the Dean that the issue of PGT start dates was discussed at the recent Law School Executive. The view was that it would be a good idea to align PG teaching with any delayed start to the UG year (and she noted that an online start may be a reality). The School of Law is foreseeing practical difficulties in having two streams running in parallel given timetabling constraints and the operation of dissertation groups by staff.

The DTLP from SLLCS has subsequently emailed the Dean that he had consulted MPhil director colleagues in the School and their position as a School was that the School would find either suggestion (January 2021 start for the next year and two different entry points) very difficult. However, the first option is preferred in SLLCS if teaching cannot resume in September, but a dual intake would not be possible for the School.

The DTLP from the School of Dental Science has subsequently advised the Dean regarding the start days for the next academic year, that the only option for the School would be Approach 1. From the clinical point of view, it is impossible to have two start days. Overall though the DTLP did not think that the School will have a problem recruiting PGT students and starting in September/October. Personally, he was concerned about the current final year PGT students not being able to finish on time or wanting to stay longer in order to get more clinical experience and value for money as they will miss a big number of clinics.

The DTLP from the School of Education noted that the offerings in that School needed to align with the operation of the secondary school academic year and their courses would continue to start in September.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 26 March 2020