



## **GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School  
at 10am on Thursday 3 April 2025

---

**XX = Council relevance**

*Present (Ex officio):*

Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)

*Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:*

Professor Rachel Mc Loughlin, School of Biochemistry & Immunology  
Professor Wladislaw Rivkin, Trinity Business School  
Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry  
Professor Gavin Doherty, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Evangelia Rigaki, School of Creative Arts  
Professor Padhraig Fleming, School of Dental Science  
Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education  
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, School of Engineering  
Professor Jane Suzanne Carroll, School of English  
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology  
Professor Rachel Moss, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Jennifer Edmond, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Paul Conroy, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics  
Professor Stephen Maher, School of Medicine  
Professor Micha Ruhl, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics  
Professor Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology  
Professor Etain Tannam, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies  
Professor Selim Gulesci, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Professor Eavan Brady, School of Social Work & Social Policy

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience  
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services  
Ms Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

*Postgraduate Representatives:*

TCDSU/AMLCT PGR Representative: Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo

*In attendance for all items:*

Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme  
Ms Frances Leogue, IT support Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

*In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items:*

Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

*Apologies:*

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research  
Professor David Prendergast, School of Law  
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Ana Perez-Luno, Academic Director, Portal

TCDSU/AMLCT PGT Representative: Ms Orla Richard

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)  
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services  
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office  
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)

Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

In attendance for individual items:

Prof. Sarah Alyn-Stacey and Dr Ashley Harris (School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies) for item GS/24-25/095

Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer, Academic Affairs (TT&L) for items GS/24-25/099 and GS/24-25/109

Mr Ronan Hodson, Admissions Officer, and Ms Jenny Barber, Direct Admissions Manager & Deputy Head (Academic Registry) for item GS/24-25/100

Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist (Trinity Library) for item GS/24-25/101

Ms Helen O'Hara, Lead, and Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes) for items GS/24-25/103, GS/24-25/104 and GS/24-25/108

Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience) for items GS/24-25/105 and GS/24-25/106

The Dean congratulated Ms Almudena Moreno Borralló (TCDSU/AMLCT PGR Representative) on winning Trinity's latest "Thesis-in-3" competition.

**XX Section A**

**XX GS/24-25/093 Minutes of GSC of 27 February 2025**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**XX GS/24-25/094 Matters Arising**

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the February meeting had been completed or attended to and Decisions from the previous meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> March. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

Re Action GS/24-25/078(iii): the Dean advised that she had invited Mr Neil Gordon, Director of Portal, to provide an update at the May meeting and is awaiting confirmation of his availability.

**XX GS/24-25/095 New course proposal: Postgraduate Diploma in French for Teachers – Prof. Sarah Alyn-Stacey (School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies) and Dr Ashley Harris to present**

The Dean welcomed online Prof. Sarah Alyn-Stacey, a prospective course director, and in person Dr Ashley Harris (Department of French). She spoke to the proposal for a Postgraduate Diploma course in French for Teachers which won a tender from the Department of Education to deliver an upskilling programme for secondary school teachers to qualify them to teach French. The new course will be a

framework-based part-time Postgraduate Certificate followed by Postgraduate Diploma (Top up) over two years. There is no plan currently to extend the framework structure to include a Masters Top up year which is not part of the secured funding. The proposed course is a collaboration between two Schools (LLCS and Education).

The course proposal was put together in record time as the result of the tender was only made public in mid-January. The Department of Education requires that the first cohort of students register in September 2025. Students enter the course with a minimum of A.2 level of French certified by the Alliance Française, should reach B.1 level at the end of year 1 and upon completion of the whole course they should reach a competence level of B.2. One relatively unusual element of the tender is the stipulation for students to complete a four-week French language immersion programme in France in the summer between years 1 and 2.

After her presentation, the Dean invited Dr Ashley Harris to take questions from the floor which referred mainly to the immersion module. Dr Harris clarified that the module is funded to the tune of €1500 per student by the government tender. As stipulated by the Teaching Council “Subject Requirements” for Teachers of French, the mandatory requirement for attendance in 4-week immersion in French requires that students undertake at least 3 hours of learning daily and engage in afternoon cultural activities. The Module must be completed in a francophone country to entitle the student to graduate with the PgDip in French for Teachers recognised by the Teaching Council for registration to teach French. The University of Caen confirmed its offer for a 2–4 week French language immersive school. Another opportunity is Toulouse Jean Jaurès. In exceptional circumstances, 2 weeks in a francophone country with 2 weeks of intensive language course in Ireland can take place. The Alliance Française has agreed to offer a 2-week ultra intensive option where needed. For the remaining two weeks, the student will still need to go on immersion as soon as it is possible as students cannot register to teach French without the minimum two weeks’ immersion in a francophone country. Should the condition of the 4-week French immersion have not been satisfied, the student may not graduate with the Postgraduate Diploma award in French for Teachers but only with Postgraduate Certificate in French for Teachers on completion of year 1 of 30 ECTS. The PG Cert award will not qualify the student to register with the Teaching Council. A certificate of completion from the immersion institute (e.g. University of Caen) must be submitted to the Course Administrator for the student. The French Immersion requirement will be treated as a Fail/Pass Module with no ECTS credits attached. Exceptionally, on certified medical evidence, for example, students might get permission to complete the immersion in the summer after year 2.

Prof. Sarah Alyn-Stacey pointed out that the proposed course is an important and forward-thinking government initiative in terms of securing quality of French teaching at secondary level. Trinity is delighted to have succeeded with securing the tender for its delivery. The committee recommended the course proposal for Council submission.

**Decision GS/24-25/095:** The committee recommended the framework-based Postgraduate Diploma course in French for Teachers for Council approval to commence in September 2025.

The Dean thanked Dr Ashley Harris and Prof. Alyn-Stacey for their presentations and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/096 Revised Calendar III entry for 2025/26 for the use of professional copyediting services - Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies**

The Dean pointed out that current Calendar III regulations prohibit students from engaging professional copyediting services, unless approved by the Dean at the request of the disAbility

Service. However, recent significant technological developments have blurred the clear boundary between proofreading and copyediting making the definition of what constitutes a “service” ambiguous. The DisAbility Service has raised concerns relating to the Calendar entry and requested that it be reviewed as it is no longer aligned with current practices, student needs, and the Service’s model of sustainable support. Members were invited to discuss (a) removal of the paragraphs pertaining to copyediting and/or (b) strengthening the wording of the declaration students sign when submitting their thesis and introducing a submission declaration for the Confirmation/Transfer report.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- 1) Students should do their own copyediting.
- 2) The current Calendar regulations should be removed as outdated.
- 3) The concept of “originality” is open to discipline-based interpretations. In a medical-based thesis originality is determined by the originality of the research question and generated data. In other disciplines (e.g. English) any changes to language through copyediting could change the content and thereby impact originality.
- 4) The current regulations can be interpreted to imply that students can use a free service but not the paid one like the Grammarly. The language and the spirit of the Calendar entry are outdated.
- 5) It is accepted that proofreaders can correct grammatical mistakes and modify the syntax without re-writing the content but articulating precise boundaries would be challenging.
- 6) Some academics have sympathy for non-native English speaking students who by using copyediting services aim to improve their English. It is difficult to define unambiguously what constitutes “the student’s entirely own work”. The Thesis Declaration might need to be enhanced to express that statement.
- 7) In the School of English many students have professional editing experience and share their skills for free with other students which is deemed acceptable. Most academic papers are collaboratively written, and co-authors do peer-to-peer copyediting work considered good practice.
- 8) There are discipline-specific conventions and some, like in business, permit the use of copyediting services. Intellectual integrity of the student’s work should be safeguarded via the enhanced Thesis Declaration. The Thesis Committee, and external and internal examiners, should play a role in confirming the originality of the student’s final work once the student has declared whether they used copyediting and what type it was.
- 9) The Thesis Declaration might need to call out that the student adhered to the Academic Integrity and AI policies and all other relevant policies of the University underpinning academic integrity.
- 10) Instead of removing the current Calendar entry, consideration should be given to revising it so that it speak to the academic integrity issue by stipulating that at the thesis submission students will be required to declare originality of their work.
- 11) It might be a good practice of enhancing the PGR student awareness early in the research process to include at the confirmation stage a new statement on the Confirmation Form that the student has complied with the relevant policies of the University underpinning academic integrity.

In summing up the discussion, the Dean noted that the preferred option is the one strengthening the wording of the Thesis Declaration students sign when submitting their thesis and introducing a new regulation into the Calendar speaking to the requirement that the student has complied with the relevant policies of the University underpinning academic integrity. The new approach will be flagged at the confirmation stage. The Dean will formulate a revised regulation for Calendar III for 2025/26.

**Decision GS/24-25/096:** The committee recommended that (i) the wording of the Thesis Declaration students sign when submitting their thesis be enhanced; (ii) a statement be added to the Confirmation Form that the student has complied with the relevant policies of the University underpinning academic integrity, and (iii) the Dean amend regulations for Calendar III for 2025/26 around the requirement that the student must comply with the relevant policies of the University underpinning academic integrity.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/097 Review of Pilot CPD model (School of Medicine): lessons learnt and future directions - Report from Prof. Stephen Maher (School of Medicine DTLP) for discussion**

The School of Medicine DTLP spoke to a circulated report outlining the work undertaken in the School on developing CPD offerings in partnership with the HSE. The Dean noted that lessons learned might be of benefit to all DTLPs and Schools. She also pointed out that the term CPD is used in a very specific way in the School. The CPD pilot was set up in response to Council-approved strategy for the School of Medicine. The School of Medicine DTLP reported that the pilot has demonstrated strong demand, operational agility, and a potentially viable model for non-credit CPD delivery. With targeted investment and strategic alignment, CPD programmes offer significant potential to enhance professional engagement, generate revenue, and strengthen the College's continuing education portfolio.

Clinical professionals are required to collect 30 CPD points a year and CPD offerings in the School of Medicine respond to their upskilling needs. The CPD offerings do not carry any ECTS credits, are accredited externally and funded by the HSE, run primarily at weekends and in the evenings and are approved for delivery by the School DTLP which facilitates a prompt roll out. There is a robust uptake by applicants with waiting lists on numerous offerings. The School PG administrative team supports the logistics of the administrative process around the CPD delivery. Offerings need to be constantly re-energised to respond to ever changing professional clinical needs. Certificates of attendance are issued by the School.

The representative of the Information Technology Services pointed out that the CPD initiative in the School of Medicine does not operate under any central College policy but offers its courses on an *ad hoc* "unregulated" basis. Unclear are issues such as whether participants are insured while on campus and whether the School is in compliance with GDPR requirements. However, even before integration of such offerings into College structures, from the IT systems- and process-perspective, the administrative activity could be optimized by the use of bespoke add-on management software allowing for consolidation of currently separate multiple functionality such as publishing of catalogues, self-enrolment by applicants, retention of certificates of completion on the system potentially alleviating the staff workload and reducing the need for workarounds. The Dean noted that the new strategic plan is positioning Trinity as "the University for life" with likely implications for current local offerings. CPDs in the School of Medicine are dissimilar to extramural offerings in other disciplines, and therefore a policy will be needed to address issues around them.

The TBS DTLP noted that a prompt approval system of CPD offerings is indeed needed as the current process for new course proposals and Micro-Credentials is too protracted for CPD offerings in professional disciplines and would render them outdated before they come on stream.

The Dean thanked the School of Medicine DTLP for his presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/098 Introduction of Merit Band on PGT programmes – Preliminary Report from Prof. Stephen Maher (School of Medicine DTLP) for discussion**

The School of Medicine DTLP reported on exploratory work related to the introduction of a Merit Band on PGT programmes flagged at the December meeting. He has since canvassed views of DTLPs and circulated the outcome of that consultation showing that many Schools favour the new band, five Schools do not, and some have not yet indicated their preference.

The Dean reconfirmed that she was only willing to introduce the band if the change were to apply across all the Schools to prevent creating inequity for PGT students across disciplines. She clarified that although Trinity offers Masters and Masters with Distinction the award parchment in either case only acknowledges the same award of a Masters degree. Accordingly, should it be decided to proceed with the new Merit Band, it would not be distinguished on the parchment.

The School of Medicine DTLP noted that Trinity is currently the only university in Ireland employing a binary classification system for postgraduate awards. The majority of other HEIs apply at least a three-tier classification model (Pass, Merit, Distinction). The proposed Merit Band seeks to recognise students who perform at a high level just below Distinction thereby improving the granularity of academic recognition, and align Trinity's grade classification system with international standards across the League of European Research Universities (LERU).

The School of Medicine DTLP referred to the main concerns of non-supporting Schools such as an increased workload and risk of appeals, limited added value, philosophical and educational reservations and equity and alumni cohort consistency. He endeavoured to address these concerns, referring to possible mitigating steps and conceptual re-framing of resulting benefits. The Merit Band will provide fairer recognition for students narrowly missing Distinction, reflect student effort more accurately, especially where strong performance currently results in a generic "Pass", increase student motivation and align Trinity with national and international academic norms improving transparency and enhancing the global competitiveness of Trinity graduates. The concerns raised, could be addressed through policy design, improved communication, and shared understanding of the rationale and benefits of the proposed change.

In a discussion which followed DTLPs of non-supporting Schools shared their reservations:

- 1) The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies has to supervise dissertations with second marking of borderline cases of around 45 Masters students and would be concerned that the workload would increase with the introduction of the Merit Band. There is no value-added aspect: grades are on the transcripts and can be flagged on a CV. The new band might create more stress for students by increased competitiveness. In the area of political science, the UK standard is not to have a Merit grade.
- 2) In the School of Education only academic staff returned their feedback. It is important to consult professional staff to be affected by the proposed change.
- 3) The School of Computer Science and Statistics runs big classes and would be concerned about a likely increase in appeal cases linked to the borderline Merit grade. The Merit Band might downgrade the Pass grade. A Masters degree represents a coherent body of advanced knowledge and is valuable in its own right without sub-dividing the MSc award into grades. While there is justification for calling out the exceptional work via Distinction, further differentiation is not warranted.
- 4) The Trinity Business School has around a thousand PGT students and would be concerned about a huge increase in appeals and durations of examination meetings. No obvious benefit is visible as employers have already established institutional rankings of HEIs and appear to hire graduates accordingly.

- 5) The School of Linguistics, Speech and Communication Science is split nearly down the middle with a slight majority in support of the Merit Band. The main reservation was that there might be temptation for grade inflation by nudging the mark towards the 60s Merit grade.
- 6) The School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies DTLP managed to obtain feedback from administrative staff who drew her attention to the current systems complexities with assigning Distinction. The Merit Band will increase the administrative workload of the professional staff.

The Dean thanked members for sharing their views focusing mainly on the challenges anticipated from the Merit Band. She asked the School of Medicine DTLP to liaise with PGT students in his School to ascertain whether there might be another means of showing recognition alternative to the Merit Band. She has left the issue open for further discussion in light of the clear majority of Schools in favour of the new band but underlined again that unless there was consensus across all the Schools, she would not bring the proposal forward.

**XX GS/24-25/099 Academic Policies - Dr Elizabeth Studies to Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) to present**

i) Revision of Trinity Policy on VLE: The Dean welcomed Dr Elizabeth Donnellan (Education Policy Developer) to speak to the revision of the Trinity Policy on the Virtual Learning Environment developed in 2017. The Education Policy Developer took members through the proposed initial changes. She noted that throughout the document, reference is made to Trinity's Learning Management System (LMS), as Blackboard Ultra is the institutional LMS, rather than the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The name of the policy will therefore change to the "Trinity Policy on the Learning Management System (LMS)". The overall responsibility for the Policy will rest with the Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies while the Dean of Graduate Studies will be responsible for the postgraduate aspects. The presented version has integrated amendments proposed by the last USC.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- 1) The School of Computer Science and Statistics DTLP referred to the language of 7.1.3 and 7.1.4 referring to additional technologies which appears to bring academic and pedagogic decisions, normally made at the Module level, under bureaucratic control requiring permission from the Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies. The two clauses are excessively restrictive and unworkable, are likely to undermine the School's ability to deliver quality education in a timely manner, and should be reconsidered.
- 2) The Information Technology Services representative noted that the course material generated by many academics and old assessments of students' who have left Trinity are still in the LMS and should be removed but neither Schools nor the IT Services are clearing it. Different Schools have different requirements of leaving the material in the LMS. The Dean noted that a new clause 7.3.4 stipulates that "All module content in the institutional LMS should be held/archived for five years unless the module coordinator requests otherwise." It appears to imply that the module content should be cleared after five years for the staff-generated content, but the student content needs to be tied in to the student cohort and a separate provision for student work should be included in the policy. The issue had already been raised by the Director of Academic Practice and it might be part of a bigger picture related to data security and retention which may require a separate provision outside the LMS policy.
- 3) The company providing the LMS for Trinity should be advised of the need to develop software features facilitating the removal of unnecessary data from the system.

It was decided to bring the members' feedback to the USC for consideration and a final revised version to the next GSC meeting.

**Action GS/24-25/099:** Feedback from the GSC meeting to be incorporated into the VLE/(LMS) policy for USC to consider and the final version to be circulated for the next GSC meeting.

ii) New Policy: Late Submission of Assessments (Extensions): The Education Policy Developer noted that she had incorporated feedback on the policy from previous discussions by GSC, USC and Schools. The committee considered the submitted final revised version and deemed it satisfactory for approval by Council.

**Decision GS/24-25/099:** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed Policy on Late Submission of Assessments (Extensions).

The Dean thanked the Education Policy Developer for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/100 Admissions Policies and Procedures - Mr Ronan Hodson, Admissions Officer, to present, and Ms Jenny Barber, Direct Admissions Manager & Deputy Head (Academic Registry) to attend**

i) Policy Revision: Admission and Transfer: The Dean welcomed Mr Ronan Hodson, Admissions Officer, and Ms Jenny Barber, Direct Admissions Manager & Deputy Head. The Admissions Officer took members through proposed changes to the policy made to reflect developments in the recognition of foreign qualifications in Trinity and the Irish HE sector, and processes for determining applicants' eligibility for admission and fee status. Proposed are also limitations on deferral of offers and possible grounds for refusal of offers, as well as changes to Transfer of Course and Advanced Entry in undergraduate courses to bring clarity and improve the processing of applications. The committee gave its approval to the proposed changes.

**Decision GS/24-25/100(i):** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed revised version of the Admission and Transfer Policy.

ii) Policy Revision: Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: The Admissions Officer took members through the proposed revised policy which reflects developments in the recognition of foreign qualifications in Trinity and the Irish HE sector and provides enhanced agility in assessing applications with qualifications for which Trinity does not yet have set criteria, by empowering the Head of Admissions to make determinations on individual normally undergraduate cases. The committee gave its approval to the proposed changes.

**Decision GS/24-25/100(ii):** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed revised version of the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications Procedures.

iii) Policy Revision: English Language: The Admissions Officer clarified that the English Language Policy was initially approved in 2022/23 and although due for review only in 2025/26, the introduction of a new English Language Framework in 2024/25 requires that the Policy be updated to reconcile details in the appendices with requirements approved under the Framework.

In addition, two other changes were noted:



- 1) The recent insert brought in by the last USC as clause 7.2.7 allowing for re-assessment of English language competency at the end of first UG year included in the circulated version has been subsequently withdrawn upon additional consultation.
- 2) In Appendix I (point 5), a reference to completion of “primary” degree will be removed thereby stipulating that “Applicants for postgraduate courses who have completed a [any] degree through the medium of English may request an exemption from the requirement to present an English proficiency qualification.”

The committee gave its approval for three proposed changes and acknowledged that the policy would be reconsidered by the next USC before it goes to Council.

**Decision GS/24-25/100(iii):** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed revised version of the English Language Policy after it has been re-considered by the next USC.

iv) Calendar: Part II, Admissions Section: The Admissions Officer noted that the only change to impact PG students will pertain to acceptance deposits. PGT applicants will “have” to try to meet the conditions of the offer and the only way the deposit will be refunded is if the applicant failed to meet the condition of the offer or receives a visa refusal. The committee gave its approval to the proposed changes.

**Decision GS/24-25/100(iv):** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed change in Calendar Part II, Admissions Section pertaining to the refund of deposits of PGT applicants.

v) Revised Admissions Appeals Process: The Admissions Officer noted that the current process for applicants to appeal the outcome of an application for admission has been augmented. He listed the main changes and referred to the new form to be introduced to facilitate the submission of appeals. The committee gave its approval to the proposed changes.

**Decision GS/24-25/100(v):** The committee recommended for Council approval the revised Admissions Appeals Process and the new appeals form.

The Dean thanked the Admissions Officer for his presentation, the Direct Admissions Manager & Deputy Head for her attendance and members for their contribution to the discussion.

## **XX GS/24-25/101 Trinity East development: Laidlaw Library – Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist (Trinity Library) to update**

The Dean welcomed Ms Helen Shenton, Librarian and College Archivist, to update members on plans for the Laidlaw Library as a follow on from the Bursar’s presentation on the development of Trinity East at the previous meeting. The proposed library will be Trinity’s first Digital research and innovation library hub for data science and digital scholarship, with access to vast e-resources, databases, e-books and e-journals, funded by a gift from the Laidlaw Foundation. Expected to open in 2027, the library will embrace modern and collaborative working and studying multi-faceted spaces which also address the needs of students with sensory and intellectual disabilities. As sustainable refurbishment is at the heart of development of Trinity East, the library will be created from the refurbishment of an existing building.

Prof. Kevin O’Kelly from the School of Engineering is the project sponsor. The Library, the key stakeholder, is represented by the Librarian & College Archivist, and Mr Peter Dudley, Deputy Head of Readers’ Services (Reading Room Services & Space). Richard Murphy Architects are responsible

for the design. The Librarian and College Archivist took members through visual impressions of the proposed new library. Members were asked for their feedback into the design planning with respect to three questions framed as the main focus of discussions:

- i. What is it that only a (digital first) Library could deliver?
- ii. What current gaps and future needs could the (digital first) Library address?
- iii. Have you experienced any buildings, spaces or services that could provide inspiration?

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- 1) The Librarian and College Archivist underlined that as teaching and research methodologies keep constantly changing, the new library will be an essential venue for future types of learning, a “go to” library for exclusively digital material storing no physical books. It is critical because Trinity uniquely for the island of Ireland has access to electronic UK legal deposit material which can only be accessed on a library site. The Laidlaw Library will become an anchor of the UK e-deposit. All other e-material will be available online.
- 2) The current plan will integrate existing industrial with modern architectural features. The entrance will lead into one big internal space with a zigzag mezzanine on the one side and various smaller noise-cancelling spaces underneath and specifically designed areas ensuring controlled and varied sensory environment.
- 3) The library could function as a home for performances: video, music audio of theatre productions, music performances by staff and students and for scores deposits, and the like. A meeting with Lir is scheduled to explore opportunities around showcasing creative output.
- 4) The library could provide a showcase for digital humanities.
- 5) The library could showcase research output of PGR students and provide a venue for research poster events.
- 6) The entrance area to the library in front of the swipe barriers could function as an exhibition space open to the public.
- 7) The library could provide dedicated space for collections, e.g., the geological one, already housed on Trinity East site.
- 8) The donor would like to see the Laidlaw Library well frequented by staff, students and the public.

**Action GS/24-25/101:** Members were asked to return further feedback on the design of the Laidlaw Library via a survey link <https://forms.office.com/e/x7GbLpdC1U>.

The Dean thanked the Librarian/College Archivist for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/102 Horizon 2: PG Renewal monthly update (April) – Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director (PG Renewal) to present**

The PG Renewal Programme Director spoke to selected issues listed on the circulated slide such as update on the TRDS applications for 2025/26, School road shows, forthcoming evaluation of the pilot roll out of PGT course proposals (two emails will go out, first to Schools participating in the pilot and the second to GSC members to ascertain the ease with which they can consider PGT course proposals in the new format), a strategy to develop PGR students’ skills set, and evaluation of the pilot implementation of the PGR student-supervisor agreement template.

The Dean thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for her presentation and reiterated her invitation to an event, to be opened by the Provost, showcasing achievements of the PG Renewal Programme due to take place on Tuesday, the 15th April from 1pm. Members were asked to freely share the invitation within their Schools.

**Action GS/24-25/102:** DTLPs to extend the invitation to colleagues and students in their Schools to attend PG Showcase Event on 15 April.

**XX GS/24-25/103 Horizon 2: PG Research Assessment and Progression - Seeking Stage Gate Approval for Develop Phase (to note and approve) - Memorandum and presentation from Ms Helen O'Hara, Lead, and Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes)**

The Dean welcomed Ms Helen O'Hara, Lead, and Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes). The Project Manager provided an update on the completion of the Design Stage for the integration of the research progression into SITS. The presenters reported that the research progression was reviewed for bottlenecks and unnecessary workarounds with a view to designing an efficient and transparent 'to-be' process. Meetings with 19 Schools were held, including 9 School managers, 12 DTLPs, 19 PG administrators and 4 supervisors; Schools identified valuable enhancements subsequently incorporated into the design. Approval for implementation budget came from the PG Renewal Programme Director's existing programme funds and those from the Vice-Provost of the Academic Services Division. The new design aims to ensure 75% of PGR students are flagged for progression in SITS by their approved deadline, dynamic and on demand reports to capture what stage of the process students are at, provide a facility for Schools to be able to flag students' records for progression in SITS and ensure 90% of PGR students have a Thesis Committee established 3 months in advance of their progression deadline. Individual academics will be able to access the system to check which thesis committees they are on.

The Work Package 3 Lead was seeking Committee's approval to start developing the integration by August 2025 with a view to being ready to go live with the developed solution by October 2025. The full transition will take place subsequently during Horizon 3. The committee gave its approval to the Stage Gate and subsequent implementation.

**Decision GS/24-25/103:** The committee recommended for Council approval the endorsement of the Design phase of the integration of the research progression into SITS and transition to the develop stage with a view to going live by October 2025.

The Dean thanked the Project Manager for his presentation, the Work Package #3 Lead for her attendance and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/104 Horizon 2: PG Research Students: Enhancements to Power BI Reporting - Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes) to present**

Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes) took members through slides illustrating details of extensive updating of the Power BI reports capturing data related to PGR Students. The original roll out of Power BI the previous year went well and subsequent continuous improvements pertaining, for example to the Thesis Committee and admissions and progression trends, considerably enhanced its functionality thereby increasing its additional value. Power BI data can be exported to excel but care needs to be exercised with setting up alternative data locations separated from the core data set thereby not adhering to the GDPR regulations on data protection and privacy. The revised version of Power BI is yet to be going live.

The Dean thanked the Work Package #3 Project Manager for his presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/105 Horizon 2: Proposed Conflict Management Framework - Seeking Stage Gate Approval for Develop Phase (to note and approve) - Memorandum and framework from Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience)**

The Dean welcomed Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience) who reminded members that in June 2024 her Work Package obtained Council's approval to proceed to the Design Stage of developing best practice supports for conflict management and resolution in relationships between supervisors and PGR students. The WP Lead spoke to the proposed conflict management framework built around 6 Rs: Recommend(ed) actions to avoid conflict; Recognise (when conflict arises); Reflect; Resolve; Refer - all underpinned by an ethos of Respect - and referred to a suite of supports, existing and aspirational, for conflict prevention and resolution incorporated into each phase. The WP Lead was seeking the Committee's approval for the framework with the imbedded existing resources so that the team could proceed to the Develop Phase and permission to explore setting up new resources suggested in the framework with due consideration to be given to a possible timeframe and costings.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were shared and clarifications made:

- 1) The framework can be used within the Thesis Committee guidelines, but the overall objective would be to enhance the culture of conflict prevention in relationships between supervisors and PGR students.
- 2) PGR students appear unwilling to formally escalate conflict due to a close relationship with their supervisors and possible negative repercussions for future career. The WP Lead noted that the power imbalance in the student supervisor relationship is recognised, and resources will be developed to address that.
- 3) Supervisors complain of the lack of effective redress when their students do not perform to the required academic standard especially when that is undermining the grant. The Dean suggested that a reference to the Postgraduate Advisory Service be incorporated in Refer Stage 5.
- 4) A student-supervisor conflict which may arise in relation to differing views on proposed measures of non-standard reasonable accommodation, could be ameliorated by arrangements already outlined in the supervisor/student research agreement. The proposed framework does not thereby aim to replicate existing resources but makes a reference to them to guide the arisen conflict resolution.
- 5) It was not within the framework remit to contain guidelines about interviews screening applicants for admission for compatibility across four identified domains. The Dean noted that some initial work has taken place in College on how to objectively assess applicants' competence and confidence during PGR recruitment and how to ensure student-supervisor compatibility. The identified resources can be shared with DTLPs and new students.

**Action GS/24-25/105:** The Dean to share resources with Schools on how to objectively assess student-supervisor compatibility during PGR recruitment.

Members appreciated the proposed Conceptual Design of the framework and supported the move to the Development Stage.

**Decision GS/24-25/105:** The Committee recommended for Council approval the proposed Conceptual Design of the Conflict Management framework and supported moving it to the Development Stage.

The Dean thanked the Work Package Lead for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/24-25/106 Horizon 2: Proposed Code for Conduct for Supervisors & PG Research Students (for discussion) - Memorandum and draft paper from Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience)**

Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience) stayed on for the next Agenda item and spoke to an initial draft of Code of Conduct for supervisors and PGR students which was one of the resources flagged in the previous item. The proposed Code of Conduct speaks to the culture of dignity and academic freedom and offers guidance on what constitutes a positive and healthy working environment. Recognising the inherent power imbalance, the guidelines define the behaviour and responsibilities of both parties in maintaining a respectful professional relationship, establishes clear boundaries for acceptable conduct, identifies the behaviour that may undermine its integrity and provides guidance for circumstances when a conflict of interest may arise emphasising the importance of disclosing any potential conflicts of interest—such as prior friendships or employment relationships—to the relevant Head of School or Faculty Dean.

The proposed document was extensively benchmarked and co-designed with Human Resources and has had input from Work Packages #5 (Student Experience) and #2 (Structured PhD and Doctoral Programmes), Postgraduate Advisory Service, Dignity, Respect and Consent Service, Senior Dean, Student Counselling, PGR students, and SU Education Officer and consultation with IFUT. The Dean of Research recommended that it be brought forward to the Research Committee for a discussion. GSC represents further consultation stage for the WP.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were shared and clarifications made:

- 1) The last line in the section on “Joint Responsibilities” to “actively seek guidance and feedback from the supervisor, while also respecting their time and expertise” should be moved to the “Responsibilities of the research student” section.
- 2) The line to “advise your supervisor when personal or medical difficulties may impact your progress or your ability to meet agreed goals or deadlines.” should be moved to the “Joint Responsibilities” section as the supervisor can also be affected by personal issues impacting on goals agreed with the student.
- 3) Rewrite the line “Support student in accessing information about financial remuneration including pay for providing teaching and learning supports and stipends” to “Provide clear expectation on pay available and stipends for the full duration of the PhD” – the aim being that supervisors should transparently signpost to their students the available financial resources including teaching to facilitate the financial cover for the duration of their PhD.
- 4) The conduct should be revised to differentiate between “recommendations” and “expectations”, and similar expectations currently listed separately under “student” and “supervisor” should be moved into “Joint Responsibilities”.
- 5) The line to “conduct all interactions in line with College Equality policy” should be moved into “Joint Responsibilities” as the policy applies equally to students as it does to supervisors.
- 6) The guidelines require that the “student-supervisor romantic relationship” be avoided but if entered into disclosed and at that point the relationship falls under the HR remit.

The Dean underlined that consultations on the proposed Code of Conduct are ongoing. She thanked the Work Package Lead for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**Action GS/24-25/106:** Members to email additional feedback on the proposed “Code for Conduct for Supervisors & PGR Students” directly to the Work Package #6 Lead.

**XX GS/24-25/107 Any Other Business - Dean of Graduate Studies to update**

- i) **Blackboard Ultra**--The Dean reminded DTLPs to complete the training to be ready to migrate their modules by the middle of June.
- ii) **Non-standard reasonable accommodation for PGR students - deferred**

- iii) **LERU Doctoral Summer School 2025, June 22-27** –Two successful candidates were identified.

**XX Section B for Noting and Approval**

**XX GS/24-25/108 Horizon 2: Online Application Form (OLAF) - Seeking Stage Gate Approval for Transition Phase (to note and approve) - Memorandum and presentation from Ms Helen O'Hara, Lead, and Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes)**

The Committee supported a request from Work Package#3 to move to the Transition stage for both technical and process-related supports for the online application process to become fully operational and removed from the Postgraduate Renewal Programme for ongoing management and mainstreamed and incorporated into Annual Reports. The recommendation was approved by the Postgraduate Renewal Programme's Steering Committee at its meeting on March 24.

**Decision GS/24-25/108:** The Committee recommended for Council approval a request from Work Package#3 to move the management of Online Application Form out of WP3 into operational support outside of PG Renewal.

**XX GS/24-25/109 Policy Revision: Return of Coursework – Memorandum from Dr Liz Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)**

The Committee endorsed a revised version of the "Return of Coursework" Policy discussed at the previous meeting with feedback shared with Schools and changes suggested from USC and GSC incorporated.

**Decision GS/24-25/109:** The Committee recommended for Council approval the proposed revised version of the "Return of Coursework" Policy.

**XX GS/24-25/110 Cessation of Postgraduate Diploma in Health and Safety in Construction from 2025/26 – request from School of Engineering**

The Committee supported a request from the School of Engineering to cease the Postgraduate Diploma course in Health and Safety in Construction from 2025/26 due to low recruitment numbers as a result of an increased external market competition of new routes to obtain health and safety in construction qualifications (e.g. companies providing in-house training and courses available online).

**Decision GS/24-25/110:** The Committee recommended for Council approval the proposed cessation of Postgraduate Diploma in Health and Safety in Construction from 2025/26.

**XX GS/24-25/111 GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials – Draft Minutes of 11 March 2025**

The Committee endorsed Draft Minutes of the GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials dated to 11 March 2025.

**Decision GS/24-25/111:** The Committee recommended for Council approval Draft Minutes of the GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials dated to 11 March 2025.

**XX GS/24-25/112 GSC PhD Structured "Optimization" 5 ECTS Module – request from School of Engineering**

The Committee supported a request to introduce a stand-alone Category 2 "Optimization" 5 ECTS Module as part of the Structured PhD offered by the School of Engineering.

**Decision GS/24-25/112:** The Committee recommended for Council approval “Optimization” Category (2) Structured PhD stand-alone module (5 ECTS) offered in the School of Engineering available from January 2026 for a period of 5 years.

**XX GS/24-25/113 GSC PhD Structured “Fundamentals in Healthcare Research” 10 ECTS Module - – request from School of Nursing and Midwifery**

The Committee noted a request to introduce a stand-alone Category 2 “Fundamentals in Healthcare Research” 10 ECTS Module as part of the Structured PhD offered by the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

**Decision GS/24-25/113:** The Committee recommended for Council approval “Fundamentals in Healthcare Research” Category (2) Structured PhD stand-alone module (10 ECTS) offered in the School of Nursing and Midwifery available from Semester 1 in 2025/26.

**XX GS/24-25/114 Suspension of Non-Resident PhD Induction Module for 2025/26 – request from Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)**

The Committee noted a request from the Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education) to suspend the 5 ECTS Non-Resident PhD Induction Module for 2025/26 for a review.

**Decision GS/24-25/114:** The Committee recommended for Council approval the suspension of the Non-Resident PhD Induction Module in 2025/26 for a review.

**Section C for Noting**

**GS/24-25/115 Deadline of 14 April for Schools to submit Calendar III changes for 2025/26 - Memorandum from Ms Frances Leogue, Administrative Officer (Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies)**

The Committee noted that Calendar III changes from Schools need to be returned to the Office to the Dean of Graduate Studies via [genadgso@tcd.ie](mailto:genadgso@tcd.ie) by 14th April.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.55pm.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 3 April 2025