Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School
at 10am on Thursday 1 May 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 Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry
Professor Gavin Doherty, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Evangelia Rigaki, School of Creative Arts
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 David Prendergast, School of Law
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 Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Professor Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
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
Professor Ana Perez-Luno, Academic Director, Portal

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)
Ms Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

Postgraduate Representatives:
Guest: TCDSU/AMLCT Education Officer and Deputy President: Mr Eoghan Gilroy

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
Guest: Prof. Joseph Roche, Associate Dean of Research on behalf of Dean of Research

Guest: Ms Rima Fitzpatrick (Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs, TT&L)

In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items:
Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)
Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

Apologies:
Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Professor Wladislaw Rivkin, Trinity Business School
Professor Padhraig Fleming, School of Dental Science
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

TCDSU/AMLCT PGR Representative: Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo
TCDSU/AMLCT PGT Representative: Ms Orla Richard

In attendance for individual items:
Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer, Academic Affairs (TT&L) and Ms Jennifer Pepper (Director, AR) for item GS/24-25/119
Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience) for item GS/24-25/122
Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes) for item GS/24-25/123
Prof. Jake Byrne for item GS/24-25/124
Ms Orla Bannon, Lead (Work Package 4: Triple I) for items GS/24-25/124 and GS/24-25/125

As this was the final meeting of the 2024/25 academic year, the Dean expressed heartfelt thanks to all committee members for their hard work and commitment throughout the year. She extended a special farewell to the DTLPs concluding their terms, acknowledging their dedicated service, and offered her deep appreciation to the Academic Secretary, who is due to retire, for her wise guidance and steadfast support throughout the Dean's entire term. She also conveyed appreciation to Ms Frances Leogue for her efficient logistical support, and to Ms Ewa Sadowska, the Committee Secretary, for her excellent organisation of the meetings.

XX   **Section A**

XX   **GS/24-25/116 Minutes of GSC of 3 April 2025**
The minutes were approved as circulated.

XX   **GS/24-25/117 Matters Arising**
The Dean advised members that all Actions from the April meeting had been completed or attended to and Decisions from the previous meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by Council on the 16th April. All Matters Arising were closed off in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

XX   **GS/24-25/118 Academic merits to introduce generic Postgraduate Certificate (Ordinary) (Pg Cert (Ord)) exit award from direct entry Postgraduate Diploma and Masters courses – Dean of Graduates Studies to introduce discussion**
The Dean addressed the circulated Memorandum, noting that in recent years, between two and five cases annually have come to her attention in which students registered on direct entry Postgraduate Diploma or Masters programmes have been unsuccessful in fulfilling the requirements of the

programme to which they registered. Despite having accumulated a substantial number of ECTS credits (up to 45), these students have been left without an exit award.

The Dean presented the academic rationale for a proposed new award — a generic Postgraduate Certificate (Ordinary) [Pg Cert (Ord)] — analogous in concept to the BA (Ordinary) at UG level. The Pg Cert (Ord) could be recommended by a Court of Examiners in narrowly defined cases where students have achieved 30 ECTS or more, but insufficient credit for a higher Postgraduate Diploma named award. She invited committee members to share their views on the proposal so that the committee could determine whether to explore its feasibility further, addressing potential implementation challenges. The Dean also outlined various scenarios and boundaries that would require consideration should the committee decide to proceed.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:
1) The Dean shared feedback from the Postgraduate Student Support Officer, who expressed support for the proposed new generic exit award but raised a concern that naming it PgCert (Ord) might create an expectation of a corresponding Honours version of the award.
2) Members cited examples from their experience where students — often non-EU — were unable, due to *ad mis* reasons, to complete the 60 ECTS credits required for an exit award from their registered programme. They noted that the availability of the proposed generic award would have been welcomed in such circumstances.
3) The Dean reiterated that no refund of fees will be granted when the generic Pg Cert (Ord) is awarded, regardless of the circumstances.
4) The Dean emphasized that, since the proposed award is not linked to the attainment of specific programme learning outcomes, it may only be used to claim credits under the RPL policy and cannot be used for re-entry into the same programme at a later date.
5) The intention is for the Court of Examiners to recommend the new award for candidates who have accumulated a minimum of 30 ECTS. The new award is generic and will not carry the title of the parent programme on which the student has registered. It expresses a formal acknowledgement that the student has obtained a minimum of 30 ECTS at the exit from the registered programme. Students should not be guided towards it as an "attainment" award as it is intended for addressing an unexpected disruption of academic achievement.
6) The award will be available to students upon exiting from the parent programme as a result of either voluntary withdrawal from the programme or failure to complete the required ECTS taught component of the programme after the rules of compensation, where relevant, have been applied.
7) Members endorsed the progression of the proposed generic PgCert (Ord) award towards implementation. The Dean undertook to contact the relevant College Services to contribute to a proposal of regulations, which will be submitted to the committee at a meeting early in 2025/26. The aim is for the award to be available to students that academic year, even though it will not yet be included in the Calendar.

Decision GS/24-25/118: The committee endorsed the proposal to progress the implementation of the generic Postgraduate Certificate (Ordinary) [Pg Cert (Ord)] award, with a view to its introduction in 2025/26.

Action GS/24-25/118: The Dean will contact the Academic Registry, the Registrar, and Academic Affairs to seek their input into the regulatory framework for the proposed generic Postgraduate Certificate (Ordinary) [Pg Cert (Ord)] exit award. Their contributions will inform documentation to be considered by the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) at an early meeting in 2025/26.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX   GS/24-25/119 Academic Policies

The Dean invited Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) to speak to the first three policies.

   i)   Revised Trinity Policy on VLE: The VLE Policy was considered by the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee in March and April 2025 respectively, and additional revisions to address feedback from members at those meetings have been included in the circulated version. The Education Policy Developer went through the major changes. There was no additional feedback from members.

   Decision GS/24-25/119(i): The committee recommended the revised VLE policy for Council approval.

   ii)   Revised Appeals Policy (Academic Progress): The Appeals Policy, last reviewed in October 2023, has been updated to more clearly outline the appeals process at UG, PGT and PGR levels. The Education Policy Developer drew members' attention to some important PG-specific changes. Course Committees have been removed from the levels of appeal for PGT, given that course committees issue a recommendation/decision which must then be appealed to the next School level. For PGR students, the option of appealing the decision of a thesis committee or confirmation process to the School in the first instance has been added with the aim to speed up processes and ensure Schools have visibility on appeals. Feedback from the Postgraduate Student Support Officer has also been incorporated as points 8.10 to 8.12. There will be further consultations with stakeholders over the summer. A final version will be submitted to the GSC early in Michaelmas Term.

   The Education Policy Developer noted that the policy does not prescribe the composition of the Appeals Committee at the School level which is up to the School to determine. However, members agreed that guidance on that will be useful, and the Education Policy Developer has undertaken to investigate this issue during the summer.

   Action GS/24-25/119(i): Further feedback from stakeholders will be collected over the summer to support the submission of the revised Appeals Policy to GSC in September.

   iii)   Revised Programme Suspension and Cessation Policy: The Education Policy Developer pointed out that the policy aims to ensure consistency about Suspensions and Cessations of taught offerings – more common at PG than at UG level – across Schools. The Policy developed in 2017 has not undergone a detailed review since. The current Policy revision has expanded its scope and taken into consideration the process not only for the suspension and cessation of UG and PG degree, diploma and certificate courses, but also of other programme offerings/elements such as subjects, strands and modules (Trinity Electives, Open modules etc.), as well as Micro-credentials and structured PhD modules. Other key changes stipulate that
      i)   a proposal to suspend or cease an UG degree programme offered through the CAO is outside the scope of the Policy, and such a proposal must be discussed with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies before it can proceed
      ii)   requests for suspension of direct entry PGT programmes will normally only be considered for one academic year to constrain the practice of rolling suspensions

iii)   the detail regarding the approval process for suspension and cessation of programmes and programme elements has been moved to a new Appendix 1.

The Dean noted that a significant number of late requests for suspensions reach her during the summer as a result of low recruitment numbers. This is problematic as QQI does not favour Universities ceasing and suspending taught offerings that late. The Dean is generally reluctant to permit such late requests unless the promotional information states that the programme will only run if it has recruited a minimum number of applicants. Should there be applicants in the system, the School has to contact them individually and negotiate alternative arrangements.

Decision GS/24-25/119(iii): The committee recommended the revised Programme Suspension and Cessation Policy for Council approval.

The Dean invited Ms Jennifer Pepper (Director, AR) in leu of Ms Patricia Barry (Head of Service, AR) to speak to the new policy on the Student Garda Vetting

iv)   Student Garda Vetting Policy: A new Student Garda Vetting Policy has been developed by the Academic Registry to outline the requirement for prospective and registered Trinity students on programmes with direct contact with children or vulnerable adults to undergo the Garda Vetting Process. The new policy refers to the current regulations and process regarding the student Garda vetting outlined in Calendar Parts II and III. The policy is a primary safeguard for taught and research programmes involving students' access to children and vulnerable adults and is required under the National Vetting Bureau ensuring University compliance. The Academic Registry is the liaison unit for submissions and disclosures treated as sensitive information.

The School DTLPs with programmes involving students' access to children and vulnerable adults welcomed the new policy. The AR Director has undertaken to clarify an issue of recognition of varied institutional vetting evidence in a hospital context raised by the School of Medicine DTLP.

Decision GS/24-25/119 (iv): The committee recommended the proposed Student Garda Vetting Policy for Council approval.

The Dean thanked the Education Policy Developer and the AR Director for their presentations and members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX   GS/24-25/120 Proposed change to Calendar III entry on professional copy editing - Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies
The Dean noted that following the discussion at the last meeting in April, the proposed Calendar entry was re-formulated to enhance the requirement to declare compliance with the University's policies on Academic Integrity, Good Research Practice and Guidelines on the use of GenAI. The preferred option selected was that the three relevant Calendar entries regarding copy-editing would be replaced with a requirement that candidates confirm that compliance with relevant policies in the preparation and submission of their work at the Confirmation, Transfer and Thesis Submission points. The School of Law DTLP has suggested that
- compliance with the AI policy should feature in each of the three revised Calendar entries,
- the proposed stipulation that "Failure to comply these policies will be considered a breach of the confirmation regulations." should be taken out from the revised Calendar entry,
- Re Thesis Declaration, the entry should also include the Guidelines on the use of GenAI.
With those revisions, the committee endorsed the proposed revised entries for Council approval.

Decision GS/24-25/120: The committee endorsed the proposed change to Calendar III entries on professional copy-editing for Council approval.

XX **GS/24-25/121 Horizon 2: PG Renewal monthly update (May) – 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 an update on the allocation of TRDAs and the Sanctuary scheme, on the continuing School road shaw, and the successful recent poster exhibition on the PG Renewal Programme deliverables. The Dean thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for her presentation.

XX **GS/24-25/122 Horizon 2: Integration of Postgraduate Adjunct Academic Staff – Memorandum and resources from Prof. Mary Hughes, Lead (Work Package 6: Staff Experience)**
The Dean invited Prof. Mary Hughes to speak to the circulated "Adjunct Local Induction Guide" consisting of two resources, i.e., a customisable "Adjunct Onboarding Booklet" (for adjunct staff to be issued at the local induction), and a local customisable "School Induction Guide and Onboarding Checklist" (for internal use within Schools to guide the onboarding process). The Guide resulted from consultations with adjunct staff involved in postgraduate module delivery and research supervision, School Managers, DTLPs and Faculty Deans, and HR through which further consultation with IFUT will be facilitated. The HR-related issues such as contracts and salaries of the adjunct staff were not part of the Guide scope.

A number of challenges experienced by adjunct staff were identified as were possible suggestions to address them such as access to training resources, improvement in advanced planning by Schools, and setting up a contact administrator and a contact academic within Schools to assist adjuncts in problem solving issues when they arise. All welcomed the introduction of the onboarding booklet (template), and the ability to populate it based on the accepted norms within each School. The proposed resources aim to support the integration and onboarding of adjunct staff teaching on both PGT and UG programmes. If approved, the Guide will be updated in line with members' feedback and finalised throughout the summer for implementation from September 2025. The onboarding booklet will be populated with College-level guidance applicable to all Schools, allowing colleagues to customise School specific information as appropriate. The PG Renewal Steering Group recommended to extend the onboarding resources to clinical and UG adjunct staff.

> **Decision GS/24-25/122:** The committee approved the proposed "next steps" of consultation with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies re making the adjunct onboarding resources available to UG adjunct staff and finalising the resources over the summer for implementation from September 2025.

In a short discussion which ensued the following comments were made in relation to the content of the proposed adjunct onboarding resources:
1) The IT Services representative noted that adjust staff are not in receipt of the same services as full-time staff; there are a lot of differently titled adjunct staff coded by HR in Schools and entitled to differentiated services not licensed for access to some software. The Guide will have to clearly outline limitations of their access to some training for example, and to certain licensed IT products – Schools would need to check entitlements of individual adjunct staff with the IT.
2) Adjuncts are appointed through a nomination process via the HR. The HR-related issues such as contracts and salaries of the adjunct staff were not part of the WP6 scope to develop adjunct onboarding resources.
3) Schools determine locally how they allocate the responsibility of overseeing the adjunct onboarding induction depending on local resources.

4) The adjunct onboarding induction Guide is intended to be a living document owned and annually updated by the HR. It is the first time adjunct-related information has been contained in one set of bespoke resources.

The Dean thanked the Work Package #6 Lead for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX **GS/24-25/123 Horizon 2: Stipend Payment Process (Seeking Stage Gate Approval for conceptual design to proceed to Develop Phase) - Memorandum and Dashboard from Mr Mark Sheridan, Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes) to present and Ms Helen O'Hara (Lead) to attend**

The Dean invited Mr Mark Sheridan, PG Renewal Project Manager, to present an update on the Design stage of the Stipend Payment process and to seek approval to proceed to the Develop stage. Mr Sheridan outlined the key aspects of the Design stage divided into five phases: Data Capture, Power BI Reporting, Short-term Enhancements, Change of Registration Status and Digital Transformation of the Stipend Payment Process. The timelines for the go-live of each phase were under consideration, with the aim of making phases available from the start of the 2025/26 academic year. Approval in principle for these phases has been secured from the PG Renewal Steering Committee and was also required from the Graduate Studies Committee. The delivery schedule will enable a phased go-live as functionality becomes available. The Develop stage is expected to be completed by the end of Horizon 2 in December 2025, in line with the overall Work Package 3 work plan. Mr Sheridan also noted that, depending on the type of award, students will receive guidance on ensuring timely stipend payment, with information provided through their supervisor, School, or the Dean's Office.

> **Decision GS/24-25/123:** The committee expressed its support for the proposed progression to the Develop stage of the Stipend Payment Process under Work Package 3.

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

XX **GS/24-25/124 Horizon 2: Cat 4 PhD 5 ECTS Module 'Integrating inter- and transdisciplinary practices in research' - Memorandum and proposal from Ms Orla Bannon, Lead (Work Package 4: Triple I) and Prof. Jake Byrne to present**

The Dean invited Ms Orla Bannon (WP4 Lead) and Prof. Jake Byrne, the coordinator of the proposed module, to speak to the proposal for the 5 ECTS Category 4 PhD Structured module in "Integrating inter- and transdisciplinary practices in research" resulting from collaboration between Work Package 4 focusing on Triple I (International, Intersectoral, Interdisciplinary) Framework and CHARM-EU. The module is optional as part of the Structured PhD and aims to facilitate PGR students' engagement with practical inter- and transdisciplinary challenges. The module will be included in the 'Dean's Basket' of modules on a Pilot basis offered to the students in the TRDA group-based projects in the first instance and will be delivered in the first Semester of 2025/26. Funding has been provided under a joint action by the Dean of Graduate Studies (under the auspices of the PG Renewal Programme) and the Vice-President for Biodiversity and Climate Action.

> **Decision GS/24-25/124:** The committee supported the proposed 5 ECTS Category 4 PhD Structured module in "Integrating inter- and transdisciplinary practices in research" to be delivered as a pilot in the first Semester of 2025/26 for Council approval.

The Dean thanked the WP4 Lead and the coordinator of the proposed module for their presentation.

XX   GS/24-25/125 Horizon 2: Proposed Blueprint for Triple I and Multi-dimensional Skills Development Framework - Joint memorandum and paper from Prof. Rachel McLoughlin and Ms Orla Bannon (Leads of Work Package 2: Research and Work Package 4: Triple I) to present

The Leads of WP2 (focused on PG Research) and WP4 (focused on Triple I activity) have worked collaboratively across Horizons 1 and 2 of the PG Renewal Programme and developed a joint Framework for a professional multi-dimensional transferable skill set for PGR students. It combines the Triple I focus with multiple touchpoints for engagement beyond specific knowledge and discipline-based research competence as required by the IUA Doctoral Skills Statement.

On the basis of extensive consultations with students and staff in Trinity and external enterprise partners speaking to the intersectoral aspect of Triple I, detailed training opportunities in Trinity were identified and mapped to the Doctoral Skills Statement. The Framework aims to prepare students and staff to work within the fast-moving research environment and to adapt to the rapidly evolving labour market, impacted by technological advancements, economic and geopolitical constraints, and growing social and environmental pressures. It has been acknowledged that only a small proportion of PhD graduates ultimately work in academia whereas the majority will seek alternative non-academic employment, and the University is obligated to provide them with opportunities to acquire a broad range of enabling professional multi-dimensional transferable skills upon exit.

A skills wheel visual has been created identifying six areas of skills, pertaining to research, ethics and social understanding, communication, team working/leadership, experiential and entrepreneurship/innovation. The skills areas were mapped onto the Triple I activities and ultimately the ambition is to develop an interactive online tool. The framework aims to enable students to easily identify skills they have been acquiring through activities already undertaken and through planned new development opportunities.

The WP2 Lead detailed a set of recommendations aimed at ensuring that PGR students' skills development in Trinity is supported by a searchable register of skills development opportunities. Schools will have a responsibility to provide access and support students in the endeavour. Skills development opportunities will need to be incorporated into PGR orientation and a roadmap with touchpoints for student engagement will be required. Training in skills development and career planning for all PGR students will also be needed. The mechanism to measure student engagement with skills development and Triple I activities will be reflected in transcripts and recognised in addition to capturing research core skills. Transferable soft skills will be integrated into the Supervisor – PGR Student Agreement template.

The committee were asked for approval in principle for the conceptual framework and invited to share their views on its design and potential functionality as a tool. In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

1) PhD students should receive formal transcripts upon graduation. Supervisors have recently observed a growing number of student requests for documentation that captures not only their research achievements but also their transferable soft skills, competencies, and credit-bearing modules completed as part of the core PhD requirements. These records are increasingly needed to support applications for postdoctoral positions and other employment opportunities.

   To meet this demand, a straightforward, self-service mechanism should be implemented to enable students to collect and document this information efficiently. In the short term, this could be facilitated through Blackboard Ultra, allowing students to access and curate

relevant records. In the longer term, integration of an e-portfolio functionality within the VLE would offer a more robust and comprehensive solution. This e-portfolio would empower students to systematically record and showcase their skills, competencies, and academic activities in a format recognized by employers and funding bodies.

2) It is essential to ensure that all Schools, not only the early adopters, progress in step towards enabling their students to develop professional, multi-dimensional transferable skills. All students, regardless of discipline, should have equal access to opportunities for engagement and training that enhance their employability and broader professional competencies. A coordinated, institution-wide approach should be adopted to guarantee consistency and equity in the availability and quality of skills development programmes. This includes embedding transferable skills training into all doctoral curricula, providing access to interdisciplinary workshops, and ensuring alignment of resources and opportunities across Schools. Such an approach will ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the varying pace of adoption and that all can benefit equally from the institution's commitment to fostering professional growth

3) Students make their individual choices in terms of what actual skills they want to develop, while College provides opportunities and captures students' achievements, ideally in an e-portfolio for which an IT system extension is required. The extent to which students engage with the opportunities is the students' responsibility.

4) A question has arisen as to whether the College can formally stand over, or endorse, student self-assessments regarding their skills acquisition. In the current practice, students record the activities they have undertaken—such as modules, workshops, or conferences—and identify the skills developed through these experiences, articulating their relevance and usefulness for their future careers. To strengthen the credibility and consistency of such self-assessments, structured skills audit tools (such as those linked to the annual progress review form) should guide student self-evaluation. These tools would offer a standardized framework, enabling students to reflect systematically on their learning and skill development. Incorporating such mechanisms would provide greater confidence to both the College and external stakeholders (e.g., employers and funders) in the accuracy and validity of student-reported competencies.

5) A clear statement and conceptualisation of what constitutes the Trinity PhD should be shared with PGR students from the start of their research journey to inculcate in them the sense of responsibility for their individual conscious cultivation of their own academic and professional development recognising that such holistic engagement requires significant investment of time and effort going beyond mere tokenism. The orientation event should play a major role in disseminating such conceptualisation of the Trinity-specific PhD "philosophy".

6) WP4 will focus on clearly articulating the rationale for why students should actively engage with the skills framework. A compelling benefits narrative will be developed to communicate how participation in skills development activities enhances academic progress, broadens career prospects, and equips students with competencies valued across multiple professional sectors.

7) It will be important to identify future skills and skills gaps to be addressed such as grant writing. For the skills framework to be relevant and useful, it needs to be continually assessed and updated. The skills requirement will change with the time and therefore the opportunities to be provided will have to be adjusted. The Careers staff are constantly reviewing the external environment to identify skills gaps and requirements.

Decision GS/24-25/125: The committee supported the conceptual skills framework jointly developed by WP2 and WP4 for Council approval.

The Dean noted that after Council approval the Design stage should move into the Development stage, but the implementation of the conceptual framework is not part of the Horizon 2 as time would not allow for it. A proposal can possibly be put together about trying it out as a pilot with some Schools.

The Dean thanked the WP2 and WP4 Leads for their presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX   **GS/24-25/126 Horizon 2: Research Student-Supervisor Agreement (update on evaluation of Pilot) – Memorandum from Prof. Rachel McLoughlin, Lead (Work Package 2: Research) to present for discussion**

The Dean invited Prof. McLoughlin to speak to the circulated report evaluating the Pilot PGR Student-Supervisor Agreement. Prof. McLoughlin noted that the Pilot initially approved by Council in February 2023 to run in 2023/24, was subsequently reviewed in April 2024 to run through to June 2025. As part of the final evaluation of the Pilot, the PG Renewal team held focus groups in April 2025 conducted by an independent facilitator. The groups included PGR students, and supervisors with most student participants in the first year funded by a Trinity Research Doctorate Award (TRDA) and all supervisors affiliated with TRDAs. The feedback detailed in the circulated Report has informed five draft recommendations for a College-wide rollout of the Supervisor – Research Student Agreement from September 2025. Engagement with IFUT has been sought via HR, and the IFUT input will be brought to GSC in Semester 1 in 2025/26. Feedback from the students participating in the focus group was generally very positive. New supervisors in particular viewed the Agreement as a useful communication tool. Experienced supervisors also found it useful for initiating conversations with students about boundaries and expectations but felt that its value is greatest at the start of the student's PhD journey.

Prof. McLoughlin referred to the proposed recommendations that the PGR Student-Supervisor Agreement
1. should be implemented for all PGR students and supervisors from September 2025 on voluntary basis
2. that the template be reviewed and updated at least annually
3. that the implementation of the Agreement should be supported through its active promotion and integration into training initiatives
4. should be integrated with the Award for Excellence in Supervision of Research Students
5. should be retained as a mandatory condition of the Trinity Research Doctorate Award

The aim is that once IFUT feedback has been obtained over the summer, the revised proposal will return to the Graduate Studies Committee early in 2025/26 for final approval.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:
1) In the School of Medicine, the Agreement has been used particularly by younger supervisors. The School DTLP has found it an especially useful tool to navigate conflict resolution in relation to a number of student cases where the student-supervisor relationship had broken down.
2) There appears to be a tension between Recommendation 1 stipulating a voluntary use of the Agreement and Recommendation 4 requiring an applicant for the Award for Excellence in Supervision of Research Students to have used the Agreement. The Work Package 2 Lead clarified that as the Agreement as a tool enables research excellence hence it follows that applicants should have considered the use of that tool in their supervision. The use of the Agreement is not intended to be mandatory for an applicant.
3) Given that most feedback has conveyed upfront a particular value of the Agreement primarily in the early stage on the PhD journey it might follow that the Agreement could be seen

primarily as a tool in year 1 capturing the student-supervisor relationship and might not have to be revisited at a later stage. The Work Package 2 Lead clarified that the aim is for the Agreement to become in time the Trinity "norm" engaged with by all supervisors irrespective of their level of seniority and the student's PhD year.

4)   It appeared that there was some overlap between the Code of Conduct and the Agreement which should be reconciled and cross-referenced. The Work Package 2 Lead clarified that both documents exist to complement each other.

> **Action GS/24-25/126:** DTLPs were invited to email their further feedback to the Work Package 2 Lead.

The Dean thanked the WP2 for her presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX   **GS/24-25/127 Horizon 2: New 2-stage PGT Programme Approval Process – Interim report on evaluation and seeking GSC feedback - Memorandum and paper from Prof. R Reilly, and Prof. A. Clements (Co-Leads Work Package 1); Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (Work Package 1) and Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Coordinator/Analyst (Pg Renewal Programme) to present for decision**
The Dean invited Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) to speak on behalf of Work Package 1 to the circulated Interim Report on the Evaluation of 2-stage PGT Programme Approval Process endorsed by GSC in April 2023, rolled out as a Pilot from January 2024, coordinated by the PG Renewal team under the guidance of Work Package 1 while course proposals in the new format were managed by Academic Affairs. The aim was to streamline PGT course proposal development and approval by separating the "Proof of Concept" phase evaluating the viability of the proposed course, its prospective marketability and career impact from the academically focused "Curriculum Development" stage to ensure that concise information was provided to GSC in a simplified and shortened format to guide its decisions whether to recommend the programme for Council approval. The current evaluation step, inbuilt in the Pilot, has resulted in the circulated Interim Report highlighting feedback, organized by theme. The Report collected information on firstly, the usability of the new templates and secondly, on evaluation of the new 2-stage process identifying challenges, improvements, and future directions for PGT programme development in Trinity to make the new process fulfil its original objective.

Stakeholders included current and past academic participants in the Pilot, interviewees who, through their role, took on significant responsibility for the development or evaluation of course proposals, such as the Dean of Graduate Studies, Faculty Deans and Faculty Finance Partners, Academic Affairs staff, Directors of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning, and Professional Services staff from Careers, Global and Academic Practice units which support and guide proposers.

The GSC May meeting was an opportunity to ask DTLPs to provide their feedback on the circulated Report and the Pilot. DTLPs were asked to share their views around the following prompts: clarity of templates, efficiency of the new process in reviewing and approving proposals, efficiency of the 2-stage process to encourage or discourage Schools in undertaking new proposals, ease of evaluating the curriculum and pedagogy by DTLPs in other disciplines, whether the GSC should continue reviewing full proposals or focus only on the "Curriculum Development" part, any suggestions for further improvement of the new process and its templates.

In a brief discussion which ensued the following comments were made:
1)   The School of Medicine DTLP noted that proposals in the new format were primarily reviewed in relation to the "Proof of Concept" by the Course Directors Committee whereas

the Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Committee and the School Executive would not involve themselves with any further review of the complete documentation. At the Faculty level, only finances were considered.

2) The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies DTLP whose School approved a new Masters course via the 2-stage Pilot found the process useful but onerous.

3) The Dean has reconfirmed that the 2-stage process can be further adjusted to enhance its efficiency while maintaining its QA. The length of approving a new course proposal, which is a significant academic undertaking, in Trinity is comparable to that in other Universities in Ireland and the UK, and therefore it might not be feasible to shorten that in a future revision.

The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) reminded members of the purpose of the Interim Report, laid out its methodology where information from stakeholders was collected via surveys, in person interviews and collective meetings, and listed its key topics such as documentation usability, feedback on the 2-stages, governance and approval process, recruitment and marketing, finance and staffing, and Quality Assurance. She recounted feedback received at a high level underpinned by the overriding concern to establish whether the new process was encouraging development of new course proposals. She presented an annual graph illustrating that only 3 PGT course proposals were approved via the new 2-stage process in 2024/25 against 8 in 2023/24 and 5 and 7 in the previous 2022/23 and 2021/22 years respectively. She opened the floor to questions on the Report itself.

The Dean noted that the figure of only 3 course proposals approved in 2024/25 might have no causal relationship with the new process. She underlined that stakeholders' feedback captured in the Report was very useful and opens a way towards introducing further adjustments to the 2-stage process such as a possible merger of the current two stages into one process eliminating the time delay in approval at the School level between the two stages and replacement of the sign offs by capturing input from Global and Careers. It has been suggested that the approval process for Micro-credentials via a separate GSC sub-committee could be a model for the approval process for PGT course proposals. Recognising that the meeting was the final one in 2024/25, the committee endorsed the implementation over the summer of minor changes to the "Proof of Concept" and "Curriculum Plan" documentation captured so far while any significant changes would be shared with DTLPs and School Managers in advance. A formal set of recommendations will be submitted to the next GSC meeting in 2025/26.

> **Action GS/24-25/127:** DTLPs were invited to email their further feedback on the 2-stage PGT course development process to the Work Package 1 team.

> **Decision GS/24-25/127:** The committee endorsed the implementation over the summer of minor changes to the "Proof of Concept" and "Curriculum Plan" documentation captured so far and supported that a formal set of recommendations will be submitted to the next GSC meeting in 2025/26.

The Dean thanked Horizon 2 representatives for their presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX   **GS/24-25/128 GSC Annual 2024/25 Survey – Dean of Graduate Studies to introduce**
The Dean reminded DTLPs to complete an anonymous online Annual Survey for 2024/25 evaluating the effectiveness of the GSC in conducting its business. She advised that members were requested to complete the survey by the end of May, and responses would help with the future planning of GSC meetings.

Action GS/24-25/128: The GSC Annual Survey for 2024/25 to be completed online by the 30th May, 2025.

XX **GS/24-25/129 Any Other Business – Dean of Graduate Studies to update**
  i) **Non-standard reasonable accommodation for PGR students:** The Dean provided a brief update on her meeting with Declan Treanor and Declan O'Reilly from the DisAbility Office. More information will be shared with the committee in September.

  ii) **List of approved external examiners:** The Dean asked DTLPs to check if the 2024/25 list circulated for the meeting was complete and correct in relation to their respective Schools before it was submitted for noting to Council.

  Action GS/24-25/129(ii): The DTLPs to double-check on the correctness and completeness of the 2024/25 list of external examiners.

XX **Section B for Noting and Approval**

XX **GS/24-25/130 Combined Calendar III changes for 2025/26 including a revised Calendar III entry for Language of Instruction**
The Committee endorsed the proposed Calendar III changes for 2025/26 including the entry for Language of Instruction. Some mis-match between General Regulations and specific course entries, especially in relation to the repeat of dissertation vs the repeat of the whole course and the automatic entitlement to a Postgraduate Diploma exit award, have been noticed for revision. Minor changes can be incorporated in the version circulated for the final Council while changes submitted afterwards will need to be approved by Council through Vacation procedures.

  Action GS/24-25/130: The DTLPs to double-check on the correctness and compliance with General Regulations of the PGT course entries of their Schools.

  Decision GS/24-25/130: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed Calendar III changes for 2025/26 including the entry for Language of Instruction subject to completion of Action GS/24-25/130.

XX **GS/24-25/131 Changes to Calendar III Section for validated PGT courses in 2025/26 from MIE and RIAM - Memorandum from Prof. Neville Cox (Registrar)**
The Committee endorsed changes to Calendar III Section for Validated PGT Courses in 2025/26 from MIE and RIAM approved respectively by the MIE ACDC on 15th April 2025 and by email on 1st April 2025 in leu of the cancelled RIAM ACDC.

  Decision GS/24-25/131: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed changes to Calendar III Section for validated PGT courses in 2025/26 from MIE and RIAM.

XX **GS/24-25/132 Suspension of validated Master in Education Studies (Leadership in Christian Education) for 2025/26 – request from Marino Institute of Education**
The Committee noted a request to suspend the in-person course for another year in 2025/26. MIE obtained permission for suspension of this MES in Leadership in Christian Education in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and is seeking to extend it for 2025/26. The course has never run since it was approved. The MES in Christian School Leadership is an online format of the MES in Leadership in Christian Education. Continued suspension would give MIE the opportunity to review the success of the new online format of the programme which should run for the first time from September 2025; MIE aims

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to recruit at least 10 students due to the longer recruitment window. The request was endorsed to proceed to Council via the GSC May draft minutes.

> **Decision GS/24-25/132:** The committee recommended for Council approval the request to suspend the in-person Master in Education Studies (Leadership in Christian Education) in 2025/26.

XX **GS/24-25/133 Suspension of Framework-based Mental Health – Psychosocial Intervention for 2025/26 - request from School of Nursing and Midwifery**
The Committee endorsed a request to suspend the Framework-based Mental Health – Psychosocial Intervention for 2025/26 to enable recruitment of a new staff member for the education and clinical lead of the programme.

> **Decision GS/24-25/133:** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed suspension in 2025/26 of the Framework-based Mental Health – Psychosocial Intervention.

XX **GS/24-25/134 Cessation of Postgraduate Certificate in 21st Century Teaching and Learning from 2025/26 – request from School of Education**
The Committee endorsed a request to cease the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (21st Century Teaching and Learning) from 2025/26. Council granted permission in November 2024 to suspend the programme in 2025/25. However, approval is subsequently sought to void the suspension and to cease the course from 2025/26. Discontinuation of the course is sought as the external funding for the programme ceased a number of years ago and recruitment onto the programme declined to the extent that the programme is no longer viable.

> **Decision GS/24-25/134:** The committee recommended for Council approval to cease rather than to suspend the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (21st Century Teaching and Learning) from 2025/26.

XX **GS/24-25/135 Cessation of Postgraduate Diploma in Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies for 2024/25 and 2025/26 – request from School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies**
The Committee noted a late submission A14(iii) circulated under AOB and endorsed the request to extend the suspension of the Postgraduate Diploma in Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies retrospectively for 2024/25 and to continue it in 2025/26 to provide a further opportunity for strategic evaluation of the future provision in the discipline.

> **Decision GS/24-25/135:** The committee recommended for Council approval to extend the suspension of the Postgraduate Diploma in Conflict and Dispute Resolution Studies (DPDRE-CDRS-1P09) retrospectively for 2024/25 and to continue it in 2025/26.

Section C for Noting
GS/24-25/136 Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 15th October 2024
The Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 15th October 2024 were circulated to members for noting.

GS/24-25/137 Draft Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 28th January 2025
The Draft Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 28 January 2025 were circulated to members for noting.

GS/24-25/138 Draft Minutes of Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE) ACDC of 15th April 2025

The draft minutes of MIE ACDC of the 15th April 2025 were circulated to members for noting.

GS/24-25/139 GSC submission and meeting dates in 2025/26
Submission and GSC meeting dates in 2025/26 were circulated to members for noting.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.45pm.

Prof. Martine Smith   Date: 1 May 2025