



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 23 October 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 Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Alice Jorgensen, School of English
Professor Théophile Munyangayo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor Paul Conroy, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Andreea Nicoara, 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 Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology
Professor Siobhán Garrigan, 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 Patricia Maguire, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)

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

Ms Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

In attendance:

2nd Graduate Student Representative - Vacant

In attendance for all items:

Ms Frances Leogue, IT support Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items:

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

Apologies:

Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Prof. Breiffni Fitzgerald, School of Engineering
Prof. Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities
Prof. Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology
Prof. Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Prof. Graham Cross, School of Physics
Prof. Susan Pike, Academic Director, Portal

1st Graduate Student Representative – Mr Buster Whaley, SU Education Officer

Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme
Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

In attendance for individual items:

Prof. Baidyanath Biswas, Course Director (Trinity Business School) for item GS/25-26/024
Dr Graham Glanville, Enterprise Development Officer (Careers and Development) for item GS/25-26/027
Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) for items GS/25-26/028 to GS/25-26/030
Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (TT&L) items GS/25-26/034 and GS/25-26/036

The Dean welcomed three new replacement members to the committee: Prof. Susan Pike, Academic Director (Portal), Prof. Christine Morris, School of Histories and Humanities and Prof. Siobhán Garrigan, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies.

XX Section A

XX GS/25-26/022 Minutes of GSC of 18 September 2025

The minutes were approved as circulated.

XX GS/25-26/023 Matters Arising

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the September meeting had been completed or attended to. She also noted that all Decisions on Agenda A and B from the previous meeting were approved by the last Council on 1 October. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

XX GS/25-26/024 Revised Course Proposal: title modification of MSc in Business Analytics and AI for Management and new M.Sc. in Business Analytics and AI for Management (Online) part- time strand – Prof. Baidyanath Biswas (Course Director, Trinity Business School) to present

The item was a continuation of GS/25-26/004 at the previous meeting, where concerns were raised by the SCSS DTLP regarding the proposed Masters course title change to "Business Analytics and AI". The September meeting tasked the TBS DTLP with consulting with SCSS to achieve a mutually agreed revised course title and providing clarification on any remaining queries for consideration at the next meeting.

Reminding members of that context, the Dean invited the SCSS DTLP to share with members the position of the School, and their concern pertaining to the initially proposed course title. The SCSS DTLP, a member of the AI discipline himself, noted that it was not the School's intention to be involved in every course proposal that includes elements of AI. However, the need for PGT courses

to reflect recent educational opportunities enabled by AI must be balanced against the importance of protecting the disciplinary identity and integrity within the School of Computer Science and Statistics, where AI-related research and teaching is a core activity. Since the September meeting, there has been substantial engagement between the DTLPs and Heads of School from both Schools. As a result, a compromise has been agreed: the course title has been revised to “Business Analytics and AI for Management” which appropriately addresses the concerns raised by SCSS by unambiguously linking the use of AI with the Management domain and meets the marketing and strategic needs of TBS.

Discussion which ensued covered such issues as:

- 1) The TBS DTLP acknowledged the value of in-person inter-School discussions over email correspondence and noted that such direct consultation should ideally have taken place earlier in the drafting process. As the proposal had been conceived primarily as a core Business Analytics programme with only some AI components, the importance of consultation with SCSS had not initially been apparent, nor was any potential for confusion for applicants. The broader issue, however, remains relevant — namely, how the institutional process for new/revised PGT course proposals can be both rigorous and flexible, in order to minimise the use of staff resources during the consultation process.
- 2) Some member observed that Schools will be recruiting more academic staff with expertise in AI and another noted that high-level disciplinary expertise is often spread across multiple Schools as a result of research becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. AI expertise similarly already exists across Schools beyond SCSS and the member stressed the importance of recognising these interdisciplinary academics as professionals in their own right. The SCSS DTLP responded that the School was not seeking to assert an exclusive claim over AI-related awards, and the use of clearly discipline-linked AI, reflecting AI applications within respective fields, would not infringe upon the core research domain of his School. He stressed the value of consultation at early stages in proposal development.
- 3) The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies DTLP remarked that, like AI, Religion is a topic increasingly covered in several Schools. She suggested that a protocol be introduced whereby any School proposing a new degree bearing a subject name from another School or discipline ought to consult with that School at any early stage in its development. She noted that the names of all disciplines and Schools are already on the website, and therefore easy to check.

The Dean noted that the optimal solution for tracking disciplinary linkages across disciplines would be a central curriculum management system covering all 24 Schools and 41 disciplines. The Academic Secretary reinforced this point, stating that it will be addressed as part of the new Strategic Plan’s Digital Transformation Agenda.

The Dean concluded that, aside from the previous uncertainty regarding the proposed course title change, the committee had supported all other intended modifications at the prior meeting. Now that inter-School agreement had been reached on the final course title, “Business Analytics and AI for Management,” the path was clear for the committee to recommend all proposed modifications, including the new Online Masters Strand, for Council approval.

Prof. Baidyanath Biswas, the Course Director, reconfirmed that the documentation submitted to the October GSC meeting has been updated to reflect the agreed title revision, with all other content remaining unchanged.

Decision GS/25-26/024: The committee recommended the proposed modifications to current MSc in Business Analytics delivered by Trinity Business School to commence in

2026/27 including the change of MSc course title to “Business Analytics and AI for Management”, Postgraduate Diploma exit award title change to “Business Analytics and AI for Management” and introduction of an Online 2 Year Part-Time MSc strand in “Business Analytics and AI for Management”.

XX GS/25-26/025 Interinstitutional Agreement for Joint PhD HAP3 project between University of Dublin (Trinity) and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL) – Prof. Joan Lalor (School of Nursing and Midwifery) to present

The Dean spoke to the circulated agreement. The HAP3 (Healthy Adaptation to Pregnancy, Postpartum and Parenthood) project (commenced in September 2024, but students only registered in Trinity in March 2025, and to be completed in September 2028) was successful in securing funding through the MSCA (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) Doctoral network scheme, with the Trinity contribution led by Prof. Joan Lalor. Three students are registered in both universities for the duration of their PhD. Two candidates will spend 3.5 years of their 4-year degree in Trinity (home institution) and six months in KUL (the host institution). The KUL (home) candidate will spend 6 months in Trinity and 3.5 years in KUL. Within the programme, a joint PhD award of *Doctor in Philosophia (Conjunctim)* between KU Leuven and Trinity will be awarded. Three candidates in total will be jointly awarded their PhD by the University of Dublin (*Doctor in Philosophia (Conjunctim)*) and KU Leuven.

The Dean invited Prof. Lalor to speak to her extensive experience with setting up the Trinity-KUL collaboration covering the PhD progression and thesis assessment procedure. Agreeing the terms of the joint award has been a complicated and detailed process, particularly because traditions around the assessment and award of the PhD differ across the two institutions. Prof. Lalor noted that in general PhD collaborations with European Universities are difficult to negotiate as they operate assessment procedures different to Trinity’s. The KUL agreed that PhD candidates will have their thesis examined in accordance with Trinity viva voce procedures with one alternation. Under Trinity’s regulations, two examiners must be appointed, one internal and one external to the university. The proposal for the joint PhD is that each candidate will have three examiners at the viva voce – retaining Trinity’s model of one internal and one external examiner, with the addition of one examiner from KU Leuven.

The PhD candidates will participate in a public defence in order to fulfil the requirements of KUL. This will be done by KUL for all students once corrections have been satisfactorily completed and a recommendation has been made by the examiners post viva voce for the award of a PhD. For students whose home university is Trinity, the defence will be online in the presence of the three examiners for the viva voce. For students whose home university is KUL the defence will be hybrid with the External examiner, Trinity Internal examiner and supervisors attending online. Two graduands whose home was Trinity will graduate in Trinity whereas the other one whose home institution is KUL will graduate there. The funding is for four years but students can have their registration extended to five years with no additional costs to be incurred.

A number of additional issues were raised by the Dean and Prof. Lalor during a discussion which ensued:

- 1) DTLPs should carefully consider the agreement, especially those planning to apply to the prestigious MSCA scheme, as it establishes a blueprint for the joint PhD award. Applicants seeking MSCA funding must obtain the Dean’s initial sign-off at the application stage, confirming that Trinity will operationalise the project within the year following funding approval.
- 2) The Dean emphasised that Trinity will only engage in joint PhD awards rather than dual in its interinstitutional collaborations.

- 3) MSCA applicants should be aware that substantial preparatory work needs to be completed well in advance of the application to align administrative and research assessment procedures between participating institutions.
- 4) Should the application be for the three years' funding model, the Dean will only support it if the School undertakes that fees and expenses for the students will be covered for year four when that year is required for completion.
- 5) A particular initial difficulty for Trinity, albeit addressed at a later stage, was the MSCA requirement that PhD students would be put on research contract salary as employees.
- 6) There are various financial restrictions emanating from the Revenue and visa requirements for Trinity's non-EU PhD-registered students.
- 7) The students registered in Trinity are very highly motivated.
- 8) Off books periods are treated the same way as under the Irish Research Council stipends.
- 9) An institutional knowledge related to the MSCA applications should be centrally captured in one operational centre in Trinity to coordinate support for future applicants. Currently, Prof. Lalor had to liaise separately with numerous units in College including the Secretary's Office, Global, Fees, Academic Registry and the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.
- 10) Schools looking for partners in their MSCA applications should consider LERU universities in the first instance.

Decision GS/25-26/025: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed Interinstitutional Agreement for Joint PhD HAP3 project between University of Dublin (Trinity) and Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL).

The Dean thanked Prof. Lalor and committee members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX GS/25-26/026 Evaluation Report on Trinity INC, response to the Report and Implementation Plan for the Inclusive Curriculum at Trinity - Prof. Vincent Wade (Senior Lecturer and Dean of Undergraduate Studies) and Dr Pauline Rooney (Head of Academic Practice) to present

The Dean noted apologies from the Senior Lecturer and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Dr Pauline Rooney, Head of Academic Practice, and invited Ms Patricia Macguire, Academic Secretary, to speak to the evaluation Report on Trinity INC. The Academic Secretary noted that the committee was asked to consider Trinity's response to the Report recommendations and the associated implementation plan let by the Centre for Academic Practice. As mainstreaming the inclusive curriculum is a strategic priority, much of the focus of the Report and subsequent discussions has been on how best to support a transition towards embedding the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) into teaching and assessment practices in Trinity across all programmes. Five workstreams were set up: professional development, research and evaluation, dissemination, governance, and policy review.

The Postgraduate Student Support Officer underlined his appreciation for the innovative "ambassadorial" way INC had collected student lived-in feedback in real time and the broad perspective on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) covering ethnic and religious minorities in addition to the sectoral obligations for Trinity under Equality Diversity Inclusion (EDI). The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies DTLP proposed that the INC website include a clear explanation of the rationale underpinning the project, to help counteract negative perceptions of EDI initiatives that have emerged internationally. The Dean thanked the Academic Secretary and committee members for their contribution to the discussion.

XX GS/25-26/027 Update on RPL at Trinity – Memorandum from Dr Graham Glanville, Enterprise Development Officer (Careers and Development) to present

The item was deferred from the last meeting (GS/25-26/007). Dr Graham Glanville, Enterprise Development Officer (Careers and Development), the former RPL Project Officer, reminded members that Trinity was a partner in the National Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under the HCI initiative from 2021 to March 2025. With oversight from the Trinity RPL Working Group, chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies, a series of documents and resources have been prepared as outputs from Trinity's involvement with the project: RPL Lessons Learned Report, RPL Continuity Report, RPL website for applicants and RPL Resource Hub on Blackboard for staff. The Enterprise Development Officer provided an overview of the reports and resources already raising awareness of Trinity's RPL Policy across Schools and aiming to promote the RPL Resource Hub and associated tools to help Schools with RPL application processing and decision making and embed these in School procedures.

The Dean noted that the heightened visibility of the RPL project has already led to increased expectations among applicants seeking admission to PGT Level 9 courses in Trinity under the RPL policy, based on portfolios demonstrating experiential learning, skills, competences, and knowledge equivalent to, but without holding, an undergraduate Level 8 degree. Three such candidates were admitted this academic year. She emphasised that none of this progress would have been possible without the robust evaluation processes established through the RPL project.

The Dean highlighted the importance of ensuring that Course Directors and Heads of Discipline are aware of this growing trend and of the resources available to support it - both for academics and applicants. She also acknowledged that there are limitations to the application of RPL, particularly in contexts involving professional body accreditation, such as CORU. Examining professional body requirements and the implications of RPL will therefore be an important consideration in future RPL developments at Trinity. The Dean reminded members that there is no direct entry onto the PhD register under RPL; instead, applicants can be admitted to Research Masters where in year 2 they can apply for transfer to the PhD register.

Dr Glanville's support for the RPL consolidation project in College will conclude in March 2026, after which oversight will transfer to the Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education). In conclusion, Dr Glanville outlined the initiatives forming part of the RPL Continuity Report. The Dean congratulated Dr Glanville on the successful completion of this demanding and significant project and encouraged DTLPs to raise awareness of RPL within their Schools to actively promote admissions.

XX GS/25-26/028 Terms of Reference for a Working Group to review Trinity Guidelines on Recording of Lectures and Memorandum from Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) to present

The Dean welcomed Dr. Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL), to speak on the topic of lecture recording - a practice that became routine during the Covid-19 period but has since declined in frequency. In light of current policy gaps and Trinity's commitment to ensuring accessibility to teaching resources, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies have established a Working Group to develop a Trinity Policy on the Recording of Teaching and Lectures (Synchronous and Asynchronous). Members were invited to volunteer to join the Working Group and to provide feedback on the proposed Terms of Reference, which were recently approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC). The USC added an additional item for consideration regarding the ownership of recordings. The Working Group will comprise a diverse range of professional, academic, and student representatives from across Schools to ensure that all perspectives are considered, with the goal of finalising the recording policy within the current academic year.

The Postgraduate Student Support Officer endorsed the inclusion of a Disability representative, to capture considerations of reasonable accommodation by the Working Group. He also suggested that a learning development perspective should be represented. Furthermore, he recommended including students who are parents or carers, those for whom English is not their first language, and students commuting due to the current accommodation crisis, in addition to the existing SU officer, to ensure that a wide range of student perspectives are captured.

Members also emphasised that the policy should clearly outline student responsibilities regarding the use of recorded lectures. Recordings should be used solely for personal study and must not be shared, copied, or altered, including through the use of generative AI tools. Students must respect copyright and data protection regulations, uphold academic integrity, and understand that recordings are provided as a learning aid rather than a substitute for in-person attendance, unless otherwise permitted.

The Information Technology Services representative noted that the membership of the previous Working Group on the Recording of Lectures, established five years ago, had included staff categories such as the Data Protection Officer and an IT representative, which are not currently proposed for inclusion in the new Working Group. The Dean clarified that the new group will draw on the expertise and documentation developed by the earlier group but will concentrate on contemporary issues, particularly those arising from the potential manipulation of content through generative AI. Members also acknowledged the challenges associated with policing to prevent recorded material from being input into AI systems.

Action GS/25-26/028(i): DTLPs wishing to volunteer to represent STEM and AHSS on the Working Group on the Trinity Policy on the Recording of Teaching and Lectures are invited to contact the Education Policy Developer. DTLPs may nominate an alternative representative if they are unable to serve in this role.

Action GS/25-26/028(ii): The Postgraduate Student Support Officer will advise the Education Policy Developer of a student representative to represent diversity on the working group.

Decision GS/25-26/028: The committee approved the proposed Terms of Reference, with the change in the membership and change to include “processing of the data”, for the Working Group on Trinity Policy on the Recording of Teaching and Lectures (Synchronous and Asynchronous).

XX GS/25-26/029 Review of Procedures for the Transfer to External Examiners of Students’ Assessed Work and Memorandum from Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) to present

The Education Policy Developer spoke to the review of Procedures for the “Transfer to External Examiners of Students’ Assessed Work” (covering exam scripts, coursework and research theses) not updated since 2018. The “Procedures” require revision to align with new “Terms and Conditions of Data Processing for External Examiners” and to reflect changes to the process for sharing research theses with external examiners. The policy concerning remote attendance by external examiners at the annual courts of examiner session has since 2023 been included in the “External Examiner Policy for Taught Programmes” and the “External Examiner Policy for Research Programmes”. The current changes proposed to the “Procedures” were approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee at its meeting on the 14 October 2025 and the Graduate Studies Committee was also invited to consider and approve them.

Members shared their views on the proposed changes and stipulations, including the requirement for a personal sign-off on the submitted hard copy thesis prior to the viva voce, which is regarded as a personal record under GDPR. The matter of encrypting theses containing sensitive data when submitted via Blackboard was also raised. The Information Technology Services representative and the SCSS DTLP will liaise with the Education Policy Developer to agree on appropriate wording for an amendment that best captures these considerations.

Action GS/25-26/029(i): The Education Policy Developer will check with the Data Protection Office re the current requirement of the examiner's personal sign off upon receipt of the posted hard copy of the student thesis.

Action GS/25-26/029(ii): The Information Technology Services representative and SCSS DTLP will liaise with the Education Policy Developer to agree on an appropriate amendment capturing the best wording for encrypting theses with sensitive data on Blackboard.

Decision GS/25-26/029: The committee approved the proposed changes with a few additional amendments to the "Procedures".

XX GS/25-26/030 Review of Procedures for the Conduct of Focus Groups for Student Feedback on Modules and Programmes and Memorandum from Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) to present

The Education Policy Developer noted that the guidelines supporting the convening of focus groups, originally issued in 2019, are now due for review. Many Schools and programmes use focus groups as a more effective means of gathering feedback on programmes and modules than relying solely on surveys. The proposed revisions include updates to the format of focus groups and clarification that they may be conducted online via a College-approved platform. These guidelines have already been reviewed by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC). The Education Policy Developer led members through the proposed changes. Members recommended one amendment — to replace specific references to Teams and Zoom with the phrase "via College-approved platform" — in anticipation of the potential phasing out of Zoom within the College. With this amendment, the Committee endorsed the revised Procedures for Council.

Decision GS/25-26/030: The committee endorsed the revised Procedures for the Conduct of Focus Groups for Student Feedback on Modules and Programmes for Council approval.

XX GS/25-26/031 Framework of Titles Associated with the Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students at Trinity and Memorandum from Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education

The last GSC witnessed a long discussion on the terms used to capture different kinds of supervision roles such as principal, primary, joint, co-, assistant, acting. The Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education) has distilled the dominant suggestions into a list of five titles: Principal Supervisor or Supervisor, Acting Principal Supervisor, Co-supervisor, External Co-Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor. He provided a brief of each role, eligibility criteria and responsibilities. One key change was the proposal for a move away from the Trinity-specific use of the term 'co-supervisor', which to date has been used to refer to someone who met all the criteria to be a principal supervisor and eligible to take on the role of a principal supervisor. Instead, it was proposed that (a) all students must be assigned a principal supervisor; (ii) if the principal supervisor is unavailable for a period of three months or more, an acting principal supervisor must be nominated; (iii) a co-supervisor refers to any other member of the supervision team who may or may not be eligible to be appointed as an acting principal supervisor; (iv) co-supervisors from outside the Trinity community should be designated as external co-supervisors.

In a short discussion which ensued:

- 1) A member requested an inclusion of the Assistant Professor title as eligible to be supervisor.
- 2) A query was raised regarding the “contested” eligibility of staff in the Research Fellow category, as opposed to Senior Research Fellows, to act as research supervisors. The Dean referred to HR’s reservations, noting that research contracts for those in the Research Fellow category typically include restrictions specifying that such staff are appointed primarily to conduct research. Should the need arise for a Research Fellow to act as a supervisor, this will be considered by the Dean on a case-by-case basis, contingent upon the individual’s research contract extending for the full duration of the candidate’s PhD registration and being consistent with the terms of that contract.
- 3) In response to a query, the Dean noted that there is a different framework already discussed by GSC the previous year capturing eligibility criteria for the supervision of PGT dissertations.

Decision GS/25-26/031: The committee endorsed for Council approval the proposed Framework of Titles Associated with the Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students at Trinity.

XX GS/25-26/032 Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy and Memorandum from Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education

The item has been deferred to the next meeting.

XX GS/25-26/033 Proposal for the provision of facilitated online sessions for Non-Resident PhD students - Memorandum from Prof. Frédérique Vallieres, Prof. Eavan Brady, Prof. Brian Keogh and Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education

As recommended by the previous meeting (Action GS/25-26/010), the Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education) reached out to DTLPs and established a Working Group consisting of Profs Frédérique Vallieres, Eavan Brady and Brian Keogh (DTLPs from the Schools of Psychology, Social Work & Social Policy and Nursing and Midwifery respectively) who developed a proposal for replacing the original 5-credit orientation module. The Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education) detailed the suggestions from the Working Group on how best to ensure that non-resident PhD candidates have an opportunity to engage with College Orientation activities and the Dean of Students’ resources that are being offered in hybrid or online format, with a further emphasis on proactive engagement with such candidates to build a sense of belonging to the university and the research community.

Other non-credit bearing proposed actions were:

- 1) The Office for the Dean of Graduate Studies will link with all new Non-Resident students at the start of each academic year to ensure that they have knowledge of and access to all hybrid orientation events being delivered by the Office of the Dean of Students.
- 2) The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies will provide an online introductory session at the start of each academic year with the aim of developing an online network for new Non-Resident PhD students.
- 3) The introductory session will be followed by four facilitated online sessions per year to maintain the online network and provide a link with the wider College community.

The proposed actions will be piloted for one year, after which a report on the pilot will be brought to the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) for consideration. Members welcomed the proposed new opportunities for engagement for Non-Resident PhD students and the Postgraduate Advisory Officer indicated a willingness for that service to be involved. The Dean reconfirmed that Non-Resident students are required to attend their confirmation and viva voce examinations in person and that

they are not eligible to avail of the remote procedure. The Graduate Studies Committee approved the proposed actions.

Decision GS/25-26/033: The committee endorsed the proposed provision of facilitated online sessions for Non-Resident PhD students on one year pilot basis.

XX GS/25-26/034 General Postgraduate Certificate exit award– update from Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (TT&L)

The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) noted that, as discussed at the May meeting (GS/24-25/118), the initial plan had been to introduce a single, untitled exit award - a generic Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) applicable across all Schools. However, this proposal presented several operational challenges and was found to be incompatible with Trinity's reporting requirements to the HEA. An alternative approach has been identified whereby each School may establish its own titled, yet still general, Postgraduate Certificate award that reflects the School's disciplinary area/s. A list of potential titles has been circulated to Schools for consideration from their respective disciplinary perspectives. Once this information is received by Academic Registry, the next stage of implementation of the new awards can proceed as outlined in the circulated submission.

A discussion ensued around several issues regarding the new general Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) exit award:

1. Title of the Award: One title for the new general PgCert may present challenges for multi-disciplinary Schools. The Dean suggested adopting a title as general as possible, for example, *Postgraduate Certificate in... Studies*, to encompass all disciplines in such cases. The award, granted to students who do not meet the learning outcomes of their registered programme, formalises recognition that they have successfully completed at least 30 credits at postgraduate level in Trinity. It should be clear that the award does not constitute a qualification, does not confer the right to practise professionally, and will not appear on any professional or regulatory register. In the School of Medicine, a suitable title could be *Postgraduate Certificate in Health-Related Studies*.
2. Credit Allocation: The Dean noted that the allocation of 30 ECTS to the new general PgCert is fixed and non-negotiable.
3. Confirmation of Award: A Court of Examiners will confirm the award as a pro-forma category for students who have accrued 30 credits that do not align with an existing titled award.
4. Non-Retroactivity: The new award will not be applied retrospectively and is unavailable to students who have already left the College.
5. Micro-Credentials: The award is distinct from Micro-Credentials and will not be available to participants who have accumulated 30 credits in total through Micro-Credential modules.
6. Implementation: A general regulation for the award is intended to be included in Calendar III for the 2026/27 academic year.

Members confirmed their agreement to proceed with the proposed specifications for the new general Postgraduate Certificate exit award.

Action GS/25-26/034: DTLs will liaise with their respective Schools to agree on a title for the new general Postgraduate Certificate exit award and inform the Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) of the selected title prior to the next GSC meeting.

XX GS/25-26/035 Horizon 2: PG Renewal monthly update (October) – Dean of Graduate Studies to present

The Dean shared an overview slide of recent Postgraduate Renewal developments on behalf of its Programme Director.

GS/25-26/036 Horizon 2 - Final report on the evaluation of the pilot Two-Stage New Programme Development and Approval Process: Profs Richard Reilly and Ashley Clements (WP#1 Leads), Ms Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (WP#1) and Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Coordinator/Analyst (WP#1 Postgraduate Taught) to present

Dr. Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Coordinator/Analyst, joined the meeting for this item. At the May meeting (GS/24-25/127), an interim report was discussed, and members were invited to provide further comments on the two-stage PGT course development process to the Work Package 1 team. This feedback has since been analysed in preparation for the current meeting. Ms. Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) and member of Work Package 1, led members through the final evaluation report.

The pilot aimed to establish a mechanism to ensure that course proposals submitted for review and Council approval were developed in response to clear market needs, designed to recruit target participants, and delivered effectively. The initiative also sought to reduce the volume of documentation required and to introduce efficiencies where possible.

The pilot allowed Work Package 1 (WP#1) to test several strategies:

- Delineating two conceptually separate aspects of a course proposal — the programme’s financial foundation and its curriculum content;
- Moving away from a wide range of word-based submission formats;
- Incorporating engagement with additional professional units within College, including Marketing and Careers.

Each of these aspects was reviewed. Some were found to be useful, while others were less effective, leading to further suggested changes. A number of new changes are recommended:

- 1) Approval Stages: The current sequencing of two approval stages - first for a proof of concept (i.e., business plan) and then for the curriculum plan - should be discontinued. While both aspects are important, the sequential process introduced unnecessary operational delays for proposers.
- 2) Excel- and Word-based templates to be replaced by a web-based application as an interim measure before a central curriculum management system is set up in College.
- 3) Provision of market research data to be centrally facilitated to proposers.
- 4) Sub-Committee Review: Rather than having the entire Graduate Studies Committee review every course proposal, a dedicated sub-committee should be established, similar in function to the Micro-Credential Sub-committee. This new sub-committee would scrutinise all new course proposals and make recommendations to GSC. GSC would retain the authority to question proposals and request additional information but would no longer serve as the primary reviewer.
- 5) Provisional approval in principle of a course proposal for a period of three years is sought.

Members gave their unequivocal approval to the first three recommendations. In relation to the Review Sub-Committee members stated that

- i) It is unrealistic to expect of GSC members to read in detail course proposals of currently huge length as they should and therefore with the sub-committee in place, proposals will get a more thorough scrutiny and a more meaningful feedback.
- ii) Each proposal depending on the discipline is more interesting to some GSC members than others and they could be the “rotating” members of the sub-committee to scrutinise the proposal in their discipline before it goes to GSC for a final sign off.
- iii) Proposals are lengthy and require a lot of work to read from GSC members with sufficient attention to detail.
- iv) There are merits of having a review sub-committee set up to probe the proposal in detail on the understanding that the GSC retains the final say on whether to endorse a

- proposal for Council approval. The sub-committee could only make a recommendation and the GSC agenda should facilitate sufficient time for its discussion at the meeting.
- v) The Dean reminded members that a few years before, she would have identified select members to pre-review proposals for the GSC meeting – this practice might be revisited. The Dean always reads every proposal from cover to cover.
 - vi) Proposals should be shorter and the approval process more agile. Established programmes should be re-approved after a period. The primary approval should be leaner and an audit after 3 years more thorough.
 - vii) The Academic Secretary noted that it might be externally required to introduce programmatic reviews of PGT courses after 3 years. The Dean noted that Faculty Deans are keen to support such a review cycle to corroborate the financial viability of courses.
 - viii) CHARM-EU proposals will undergo an alternative designated route under the European Quality Assessment scheme. Courses set up in response to successful government tenders tends run to specific government-determined timetable of deliverables.

The Dean noted that the proposed Review Sub-Committee has brought up broader issues which merit further discussion at a future meeting. The discussion will also cover the proposed provisional approval in principle of a new course proposal for a period of three years.

Decision GS/25-26/036: The committee approved the proposed first three recommendations namely two approval stages reduced to one, Excel- and Word-based templates to be replaced by a web-based application and the provision of market research data to be centrally facilitated to proposers.

XX GS/25-26/037 Horizon 2 – Integration of Assessment and Progression of PGR students into SITS: verbal update on March registrants from Dean of Graduate Studies

The item was deferred.

XX GS/25-26/038 Any Other Business

- (i) **Thesis in 3:** The national final of the IUA Thesis in 3 competition takes place on November 19th in the Royal Irish Academy. DTLPs were asked to circulate this information widely to ensure strong support for Trinity's PGR representative, Ms Almudena Borrallo, a former member of GSC.

Action GS/25-26/038(i): DTLPs to share information in their Schools on the national final of the IUA "Thesis in 3 competition" and disseminate the flyer.

- (ii) **TRDA 2026-27.** The awards scheme for TRDAs for 2026-27 is now open and DTLPs were invited to disseminate the information amongst staff and prospective applicants in their Schools.

Action GS/25-26/038(ii): DTLPs to disseminate information to staff and prospective applicants within their Schools that the awards scheme for TRDAs for the 2026/27 academic year is now open.

- (iii) **AR: Assessment and Progression team update** - The Dean flagged that the Assessment and Progression team will attend the November GSC meeting to provide an update on ensuring examination papers are free from errors.
- (iv) **Consultation around the Micro-Credentials** – The Academic Secretary highlighted the upcoming consultation on Micro-Credentials. Standards and guidelines are being developed

across the higher education sector to ensure the future success of the scheme. The Quality Office and Careers teams will attend the next GSC meeting to update members on recent developments and to gather Schools' feedback.

XX Section B for Noting and Approval

XX GS/25-26/039 Approval in principle for increased 180 ECTS credit volume for new (Conversion) MSc course in Physiotherapy from 2026/27 - Memorandum from School of Medicine

The Committee noted that a proposal for a conversion pre-registration professional Masters in Physiotherapy is scheduled for inclusion on the November GSC agenda. The course proposal must meet one of CORU's registration requirements: evidence of the completion of 1,000 hours of clinical practice. Traditionally, MSc programmes in Trinity do not exceed 120 ECTS. However, due to the CORU requirement, it is not feasible to design a programme that includes both the necessary taught components and clinical placement hours within fewer than 180 ECTS. As such, the course team was seeking approval in principle for the programme before submitting the full proposal for GSC's consideration at the next meeting.

Decision GS/25-26/039: The committee recommended for Council approval in principle the proposed increased credit volume of 180 ECTS of a new conversion pre-registration professional Masters in Physiotherapy due to commence in 2026/27.

XX GS/25-26/040 Research assessment of Doctoral Candidates - verbal update from Dean of Graduate Studies

The report from last year's workshop on the reform of research assessment and its potential impact on postgraduate research (PGR) students has been circulated with a request that members ensure that PhD candidates at Trinity are aware of the ongoing movement to reform research assessment and are familiar with the terminology and concepts they may encounter in other European jurisdictions.

XX GS/25-26/041 Revised admissions criteria to MTh course in CITI from admissions to 2026/27 academic year requested by Chair of Joint MTh Programmes Committee

The Church of Ireland Theological Institute, which delivers the Masters course in Theology in partnership with Trinity's School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies, is seeking to amend the current entry requirements for its MTh programme. Under existing regulations set out in Calendar Part III, all applicants are required to have completed a Foundation Certificate covering basic theology. This requirement currently applies even to applicants who already hold an UG degree in Theology, resulting in the unwelcome situation where such applicants must repeat material already covered during their degree. The proposed change is that applicants holding a 2.1 Honours Bachelor's degree in Theology would be exempt from the requirement to complete the Foundation Certificate prior to applying.

The Joint Programmes Committee, which oversees the course, approved the proposed change at its meeting on 2 October 2025. The change will apply to admissions for the 2026/27 academic year, notwithstanding the existing admission regulations currently published in Calendar Part III 2025/26.

Decision GS/25-26/041: The Committee recommended for Council approval a change to the current entry requirements for the MTh programme, whereby applicants holding a 2.1 Honours Bachelor's degree in Theology would be exempt from the requirement to complete the Foundation Certificate prior to application. This change will apply to admissions for the 2026/27 academic year, notwithstanding the admission regulations currently published in Calendar Part III 2025/26.

XX GS/25-26/042 Suspension of Master in Education Strands for 2026/27: Mathematics Education, Language Education, Music in Education, Diversity and Inclusion in Education, Science Education, Early Intervention - Request from School of Education

The Committee endorsed a proposal as a continuation of the changes enacted last year to suspend the following six strands on the Master in Education programme: Language Education; Music in Education, Diversity and Inclusion; Early Intervention; Mathematics Education; Science Education for the 2026/27 academic year. The additional suspension will provide the School with the benefit of reviewing the numbers from two intakes and the experience of offering the programme for a full academic year before applying to cease the strands entirely from 2027/28.

Decision GS/25-26/042: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed continuation of suspension of six strands on the Master in Education programme: Language Education; Music in Education, Diversity and Inclusion; Early Intervention; Mathematics Education; Science Education for the 2026/27 academic year.

XX GS/25-26/043 Suspension of Mental Health - Child, Adolescent and Family (part-time MSc/Framework) for 2026/27 – request from School of Nursing and Midwifery

The Committee endorsed a request from the School of Nursing and Midwifery for suspension of part-time MSc/Framework course in Mental Health - Child, Adolescent and Family for 2026/27.

Decision GS/25-26/043: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed suspension of part-time MSc/Framework courses in Mental Health - Child, Adolescent and Family for 2026/27 from the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

XX GS/25-26/044 Cessation of Specialist Nursing - Gerontological Nursing (MSc/Framework) from 2024/25 (submission of outstanding cessation form *re* GS/23-24/167) – request from School of Nursing and Midwifery

The Committee noted that on 23 May 2024, Graduate Studies Committee approved the cessation from 2024/25 of Gerontological Nursing strand within MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing (DPTNM-SNUR-1SNU) and reopening instead of a traditional direct entry MSc in Gerontological Nursing (DPTNMG TNU-1P09) from 2024/25 (*Graduate Studies Committee 23 May 2024 Minutes Ref. GS/23-24/167. University Council 5 June 2024, Minutes Section B, Ref. CL/23-24/234.1: Council noted and approved the draft minutes of the meeting of the 23 May 2024.*)

The Cessation of Postgraduate Taught Programme form relating to the Gerontological Nursing strand within the MSc in Nursing: Specialist Nursing (covering the four course codes specified on the form) was circulated for the October GSC meeting, as the form was not included in the original cessation request approved by GSC (GS/23-24/167) in May 2024. The Academic Registry has since requested that a formal cessation form for the strand be submitted to GSC and Council for approval.

Decision GS/25-26/044: The Committee recommended submission to Council of the outstanding cessation form related to GS/23-24/167, in connection with the already Council-approved cessation of the Specialist Nursing – Gerontological Nursing strand (MSc/Framework), effective from the 2024/25 academic year.

GS/25-26/045 Extension of student course registration end dates until 30 August from 2025/26 on Portal's HEA Springboard+ funded Postgraduate Certificate courses – request from Portal (Trinity Innovation and Enterprise)

The Committee noted that Portal is seeking permission to extend a student registration end date up and including the 30th of August from the academic year 2025/26 for each of the four Postgraduate

Certificate courses in Workplace Wellness, Climate Entrepreneurship, Healthcare Innovation and Innovation and Enterprise Development (respectively) to ensure students remain registered throughout the full duration of the supplemental examination period with uninterrupted access to essential academic systems and student services. There are no additional financial costs associated with this update. The Academic Registry has been consulted and supports the proposed change.

Decision GS/25-26/045: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed extension by Portal of a student registration end date up and including the 30th of August from the academic year 2025/26 for each of their four Postgraduate Certificate courses in Workplace Wellness, Climate Entrepreneurship, Healthcare Innovation and Innovation and Enterprise Development (respectively).

Section C for Noting

There were no agenda item under this Section.

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

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 23 October 2025