



## **GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School  
at 10am on Thursday 27 November 2025

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**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 Keith Johnston, School of Education  
Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, School of Engineering  
Professor Alice Jorgenson, School of English  
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology  
Professor Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Paul Conroy, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor Micha Ruhl, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics  
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  
Professor Susan Pike, Academic Director, Portal

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

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

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

*In attendance:*

1<sup>st</sup> Graduate Student Representative (PGT): Aziel Zafar

2<sup>nd</sup> Graduate Student Representative (PGR): Lindiwe Mpofu

*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

*In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items - Absent:*

Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

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

*Apologies:*

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research  
Professor Padhraig Fleming, School of Dental Science  
Professor Théophile Munyangeyo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law  
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics  
Professor Stephen Maher, School of Medicine  
Professor Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology  
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services  
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services

*In attendance for individual items:*

Prof. John Gormley and Prof. Emer Barrett from the School of Medicine for item GS/25-26/048  
Dr Margaret Martin from the School of Psychology for item GS/25-26/049  
Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (TT&L) for item GS/25-26/051  
Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) for items GS/25-26/053 and GS/25-26/054  
Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager, and Ms Helen O’Hara, Lead (WP#3) for items GS/25-26/057 and GS/25-26/058  
Dr Jemimah Bailey, Programme Officer (Postgraduate Renewal Programme) for item GS/25-26/059  
Jennifer Pepper, Director of Academic Registry, and Karen Bebbington, Head of Operations/Deputy Director (Academic Registry) for item GS/25-26/064

The Dean of Graduate Studies warmly welcomed to the committee two new Graduate Student Representatives, Aziel Zafar (PGT) and Lindiwe Mpofu (PGR), Prof. Susan Pike, Academic Director of Portal and Prof. Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities DTLP.

**XX Section A**

**XX GS/25-26/046 Minutes of GSC of 23 October 2025**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**XX GS/25-26/047 Matters Arising**

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the October 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 5 November. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean’s memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

**XX GS/25-26/048 New Course Proposal - MSc course in Physiotherapy (to commence in 2026/27) - Prof. John Gormely and Prof. Emer Barrett (School of Medicine) to present**

The Dean welcomed Prof. John Gormley and Prof. Emer Barrett from the School of Medicine and spoke to several slides. She reminded members that, at the previous meeting, the committee had approved in principle (GS/25-26/039) an increased credit volume of 180 ECTS for the two-year, full-time conversion pre-registration professional Masters programme in Physiotherapy.

The proposed MSc in Physiotherapy will be subject to external accreditation and has been designed to meet the Standards of Proficiency set by CORU, Ireland’s health and social care regulator. Traditionally, MSc programmes in Trinity do not exceed 120 ECTS; however, this standard credit load

would not allow for a programme that integrates both the required taught components and the CORU-mandated clinical placement hours.

The Masters in Physiotherapy builds on the long-established four-year undergraduate degree and provides a fast-track NFQ Level 9 route into the profession for suitably qualified applicants holding a science or healthcare-related degree (minimum 2.1). An exit award of Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Health Sciences will be available to students who successfully complete 60 ECTS of taught (non-clinical) modules in Year 1. Unlike the award of MSc in Physiotherapy, the Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Health Sciences will not be subject to CORU accreditation and does not confer eligibility to practise as a physiotherapist in any capacity.

The new Masters programme is expected to launch in 2026/27, with HEA funding secured for five years. The proposal has received a positive external review, and a GSC recommendation will be required for it to progress to Council.

In the discussion that followed, the School representatives were asked to provide the following clarifications:

1. Placements on the proposed Masters programme will be unpaid.
2. While there is some overlap between the postgraduate and undergraduate module content, the Masters programme has been designed as a stand-alone NFQ Level 9 course with its own set of bespoke assessments.
3. It is estimated that over 400 physiotherapists will be required in the acute health sector by 2035 due to changing population demographics. The proposed Masters programme, which targets mature students and is expected to produce 20 graduates annually, is intended to help address this shortfall and to complement the output of Trinity's long-established BSc Physiotherapy programme.
4. For dissertation supervision, the cohort will be divided into four project groups of five students each. These groups will be supervised collectively by staff whose teaching duties will be backfilled through new appointments.
5. The School will apply for CORU accreditation after securing Council approval for the Masters programme; however, in line with CORU's practices, the process of accreditation will only be initiated following completion of the first year of clinical placements.

The Dean thanked the School representatives for their attendance and members for their contributions to the discussion. The committee recommended the proposed Masters programme for Council approval.

**Decision GS/25-26/048:** The committee recommended the proposed Masters in Physiotherapy due to commence in September 2026 for Council approval.

**XX GS/25-26/049 New Course Proposal – Postgraduate Certificate in Traffic Medicine “Online” (to commence in 2026/27) – Dr Margaret Martin, Research Fellow and Programme Manager (School of Psychology) to present**

The Dean welcomed Dr Margaret Martin from the School of Psychology and spoke to several slides. She noted that the proposed course aims to support professionals involved in decision-making about medical fitness to drive — a complex area encompassing medical, legislative and technical considerations, with the goal of ensuring that transport mobility is not compromised or rendered unsafe by remediable illness or functional impairment. The course has emerged from long-standing collaborations with the National Office for Traffic Medicine (NOTM), which is part of the Centre for Innovative Human Systems in the School of Psychology. The NOTM serves as an advisory body on traffic medicine to the Road Safety Authority, and its remit includes educating and training medical

and healthcare professionals to provide information, advice and care to patients in line with current national and EU legislation and evidence-based best practice.

Given that the target market comprises busy healthcare professionals, the programme will be delivered online in three 10-ECTS modules, with most learning activities offered asynchronously and a limited number of synchronous sessions to support student interaction. The course aims to recruit up to 25 students by Year 4. As external funding has been secured, the programme's financial viability for the first three years is not dependent on student fees. The programme is scheduled to commence in September 2026.

In the discussion that followed, the School representative was asked to provide the following clarifications:

1. The Road Safety Authority has provided funding to develop the course and to cover its costs for the first three years.
2. The course is expected to be of interest to HSE staff, medical faculties (including public health and occupational health), and professional organisations — such as the Irish Associations of Emergency Medicine and Rehabilitation Medicine, the Irish College of General Practitioners, and the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland — all of which have acknowledged and confirmed the need for education and training in medical fitness to drive.
3. The course will equip participants with specialist knowledge, skills and understanding to: advise patients on how medical conditions may affect their driving and how to monitor and manage these conditions; make decisions regarding patients' medical fitness to drive for licensing purposes; and apply traffic medicine theory and policy to support safe transport mobility for individuals across the lifespan.
4. One of the core aims is to support medical practitioners in managing patients in a way that helps them avoid losing their driving licence prematurely, thereby preventing unnecessary psychological distress and reduced mobility.
5. Market research indicates that the course is likely to recruit strongly in the UK. The only other university offering a similar programme is Monash University in Australia, and the online delivery model positions the course well to attract an international cohort.

The Dean noted that the proposal is currently undergoing external review; a positive report and a GSC recommendation will be required for it to progress to Council. The committee recommended the proposed Postgraduate Certificate programme for Council approval, subject to a positive external review. The Dean thanked the School representative for her attendance and members for their contributions to the discussion.

**Decision GS/25-26/049:** The committee approved the proposed online part-time Postgraduate Certificate in Traffic Medicine for Council approval subject to a positive external review.

**XX GS/25-26/050 Dean of Graduate Studies' Draft Annual Report for 2024/25 - Dean of Graduate Studies to present**

The Dean was pleased to present her 2024/25 annual report to the committee ahead of 2026. She thanked all those whose contributions informed the report, highlighting in particular members of the Graduate Studies Committee and staff in Academic Affairs, Academic Practice, the Secretary's Office, Academic Registry and Student Services.

Although the 2024/25 Academic Registry Annual Report has not yet been published, the AR Director shared some data with the Dean and verified a number of figures that the Dean had extracted

directly from Power BI. As in previous years, the Dean's report is structured in three main sections. Section A focuses primarily on data relating to applications, admissions, PGT programme size by Faculty, and demographic information for the PGT and PGR cohorts across Faculties.

The trend of increasing applications and registrations continues, including a modest rise in Year 1 research student registrations. However, the growth in applications significantly exceeds the increase in registrations, placing considerable strain on Schools and the Academic Registry and indicating the need for a review. The Dean drew members' attention to the growth in RPL applications, which also shows a steady upward trend, including 39 applicants without a primary degree, three of whom were successfully admitted to taught Masters programmes on the basis of their portfolios.

The profile of PGR students has remained largely unchanged since the previous year. An increase in Non-EU applicants has been observed, possibly as a result of the pilot fee differential write-down initiative which has reduced the cost to Schools of recruiting international applicants. PGR demographics vary substantially across Schools, with differing age profiles indicating a need for tailored local supports and resources.

PGR assessment data show a slight increase in the number of theses accepted as submitted without corrections, and no students were recommended for a lower degree. The average number of PGR students per supervisor remains approximately three. The vast majority of students submit within four years, and the thesis examination process takes, on average, eight months.

Section B summarises key activities of the GSC and highlights postgraduate developments across Schools. It also outlines new College-wide initiatives, academic policies and practices, PGT course proposals, PGR and PGT student activities, supervision quality and experience, the Excellence in Supervision Awards, the Graduate Teaching Assistant Awards, Travel Awards, and engagement with the LERU DOCT Group and the Irish Universities Association. The PG Renewal Programme is referenced only briefly, as a separate final Horizon 2 report will be submitted to the GSC in January, for consideration by Council in February.

Finally, Section C identifies upcoming challenges and ambitions relating to the planned reorganisation of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean noted that the new College Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 will include the development of a revised office structure designed to meet the distinct needs of PGT and PGR students, incorporating both a Graduate Education Hub and a Doctoral Academy.

The report concludes with a commitment that the Dean's work will continue to address the core pressures affecting PGR and PGT students that remain unresolved.

In the discussion that followed, the following issues were raised or commented on:

1. Concerns were expressed about the vulnerability of admissions to certain PGT programmes due to an over-reliance on recruitment from international markets such as China, India and the USA. Courses are encouraged to explore additional geographical markets to broaden recruitment opportunities.
2. Many Schools reported an increase in low-quality applications, which should be discouraged. A mechanism is needed to attract better-qualified candidates and to streamline the application process so that strong applicants can receive offers more quickly. Some form of pre-screening should be implemented to filter out unqualified applicants at an early stage, ensuring that those who do not meet the required academic threshold are not forwarded to Schools. The Dean confirmed that the admissions process is ready for a fundamental review.

3. Discrepancies were noted in Power BI data, where totals sometimes do not align across categories and summary lists differ from detailed lists within the same system. Schools encountering similar issues were advised to contact Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager for WP#3. Some Power BI reports are accessible through the Academic Registry, while others originate from the PG Renewal project. The Dean also highlighted that AR datasets reflect fixed annual reporting points for the HEA, whereas many Power BI reports are generated from live data.
4. It was suggested that tracking of PGR admissions data for accepted offers should include separate visibility for deferrals, as these frequently result not in registrations but in withdrawals due to lack of funding.
5. A suggestion was made that the Dean's report should track non-completion figures, enabling Schools to investigate potential reasons and circumstances behind non-completion.
6. Although the "default" planned cohort size for most new PGT courses is 20–25 students, data analysis indicates that the dominant course size is approximately 10 students. This may be distorted by the existence of multiple cohorts on the same programme being coded separately—such as the stand-alone course and its framework-based equivalent—resulting in smaller numbers attached to each individual course code.
7. It was proposed that the performance of PGT courses should be evaluated every three years to assess their ongoing financial viability.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion. The committee endorsed the Dean's annual report for Council approval.

**Decision GS/25-26/050:** The committee recommended submission of the Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report for 2024/25 to Council.

**XX GS/25-26/051 Proposal for General Postgraduate Certificate exit award - Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary – Academic Affairs (TT&L)**

The Dean invited Rima Fitzpatrick (Assistant Academic Secretary, Academic Affairs) to speak to the circulated proposal. The Assistant Academic Secretary reminded members that, in Spring 2025, the committee (GS/24-25/118) and Council (CL/24-25/193.1) had agreed in principle to develop a "general" Postgraduate Certificate as an NFQ Level 9 minor exit award. This award would be available to students leaving a stand-alone Masters or Postgraduate Diploma programme after completing 30–55 ECTS credits, either due to voluntary withdrawal or failure to complete the full 60 ECTS taught component. The new award will apply to programmes without a parallel framework structure, as well as to programmes with a parallel framework structure where an exiting student does not meet the Programme Learning Outcomes specified for the named Postgraduate Certificate award.

The first draft of the "general" Postgraduate Certificate exit award was discussed at the previous GSC meeting (GS/25-26/034). DTLPs were asked to consult with their respective Schools to agree on a title for the new general Postgraduate Certificate exit award and to inform the Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) of the selected title prior to the current meeting. Academic Affairs, in collaboration with Schools, the Academic Registry, and the Dean of Graduate Studies, has drafted the circulated revised regulations and an operational framework, including the proposed award titles. The committee was invited to discuss and approve the proposed titles, regulations, and the Calendar Part 3 entry.

In the short discussion that followed, the following comments were made:

1. The Dean emphasised that DTLPs should ensure that the title of the proposed general Postgraduate Certificate exit award for their Schools preserves the integrity of the School's

other taught awards. The title should clearly indicate a general exit award, not an attainment award, and should not be open to misinterpretation.

2. A concern was raised that some proposed titles (e.g., Postgraduate Certificate in Law, in Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences, in Chemistry, in Pure and Applied Mathematics, in Social Sciences and Philosophy) do not include the word “Studies,” which is intended to signal that the award is not specific to any particular course. Some DTLPs attributed this omission to linguistic awkwardness arising from incorporating the “Studies” designation. The Dean suggested using the format “Postgraduate Certificate in Studies in [subject].”
3. For Masters programmes jointly delivered between Schools, the School that administratively owns the course will decide on the exit award title, regardless of the modules completed by the student.

**Action GS/25-26/051(i):** The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) to insert an additional clarification into the General Regulations in Calendar III specifying that two types of postgraduate certificate awards are recognised in Trinity: general and named.

**Action GS/25-26/051(ii):** The Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) to brief the Careers Director on the distinction between the two types of postgraduate certificate awards — general and named — recognised in Trinity.

4. The Dean clarified that the new general Postgraduate Certificate does not apply as an exit award for Doctoral programmes at NFQ Level 10.
5. Schools that do not currently offer any taught stand-alone PGT programmes (e.g., the School of Chemistry) will not establish a general Postgraduate Certificate exit award. Such an award will be introduced when the School launches a PGT programme.

**Action GS/25-26/051(iii):** DTLPs were asked to check the general Postgraduate Certificate exit award titles listed to their Schools and email the Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs) any revisions before the final version goes to the December Council.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion.

**Decision GS/25-26/051:** With the suggested amendments, the committee endorsed the proposed titles, regulations and a Calendar III entry pertaining to the general Postgraduate Certificate exit award for Council approval.

## **XX GS/25-26/052 Postgraduate Research Supervision Policy Review and Memorandum from Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education**

The Dean invited Dr Cormac Doran (Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education) to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Doran drew members’ attention to the recently completed review of the Postgraduate Supervision Policy, which updates the 2021 policy to reflect developments in the supervision environment. Key additions include references to joint supervision and the Principal Supervisor’s role, contingency plans for supervisor unavailability, and alignment with the Academic Integrity Policy and the Supervisor/Research Student Agreement. The updated policy also incorporates references to related documents, including the Off-Site Supervision Policy, the College’s AI Statement, Thesis Committee guidance, best-practice supervision materials, and the Annual Review Report. Newly approved supervision-related titles, ratified by Council in November 2025, have also been incorporated. The committee was invited to consider and approve the revised policy.

In the discussion that followed, the following comments and clarifications were made:

1. It was confirmed that the scope of the policy pertains to the supervision of PGR students (PhD, Research Masters, and Doctoral) and does not cover PGT students.
2. The frequency of supervision meetings varies across disciplines, and it is difficult to standardise this across Schools, provided that effective supervision is maintained. Typically, supervision occurs at least once a month during the statutory term. Similarly, the size of a supervisor's cohort is best managed at the School level.
3. The policy should acknowledge the inherent power dynamics in the supervisor–supervisee relationship, with the supervisor in a dominant position. When tensions arise, the supervisor should proactively attempt to resolve conflicts.
4. Supervisors often have contractual obligations to research funding institutions, which may expect deliverables to be completed by the PhD student on schedule. Funding bodies increasingly are perceived as treating PhD students as research assistants, with the potential for dismissal if deadlines are not met. The Dean suggested that this issue be referred to the Research Committee. Funding agencies need to recognise that PhD students cannot be removed if they are making satisfactory progress as defined by their School. PhD students are expected to make an original contribution to knowledge, whereas research assistants are accountable for delivering on specific projects.
5. Joint supervision is strongly encouraged in Trinity but can present challenges for departments with few academic staff. Solo supervision should continue to be recognised as a legitimate supervisory approach, with flexibility maintained. Mandatory joint supervision for all PGR students could create staffing difficulties for small departments in forming thesis committees.
6. Early-career academics often face challenges in their supervisory roles. Additional support, including joint supervision with a more experienced co-supervisor, may be particularly beneficial for this group.
7. A reference to the thesis committee should be removed from the policy to avoid implying that it has a direct role in student supervision.

**Action GS/25-26/052:** DTLs to forward to Dr Doran their additional comments on the PGR Supervision Policy.

The Dean noted that a significant number of proposed modifications had been made to the policy, which is described as foundational for all PGR activity in the College. The committee decided that the revised version should be considered at the next meeting before it can be submitted to Council.

**Decision GS/25-26/052:** The committee decided to have the revised version considered at the next meeting before it can proceed to Council.

**XX GS/25-26/053 Academic Appeals Process - Updated Appeals Policy (Academic Progress) and Terms of Reference for Academic Appeals Committees - Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) to present**

Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, the Education Policy Developer spoke to the Appeals Policy (Academic Progress), last reviewed in October 2023 (GS/23-24/035), which has now been updated to provide clearer guidance on the appeals process for UG, PGT, and PGR students. The proposed revisions were outlined in the circulated review documents, and the committee was asked to approve them and recommend the updated policy to Council. The committee was also invited to note the new Terms of Reference for Academic Appeals Committees, approved by Council in October 2025 for implementation in 2025/26. An updated Academic Appeals webpage and supporting resources are being developed to accompany the revised policy and procedures.

In a short discussion, the following points were raised:



1. The policy introduces stricter deadlines, supported by the Postgraduate Student Support Officer, for Schools to accept PGT student documentation for appeals.
2. A potential conflict of interest was identified when the same academic serves on a thesis committee and subsequently sits on the appeals panel for the same student.

The Dean noted that a few modifications were proposed to the policy. The committee decided to review the revised version by email before it can proceed to the December Council.

**Decision GS/25-26/053:** The committee will review the revised version of the Appeals Policy (Academic Progress) by email prior to its submission to the December Council.

The committee was also asked to note the new Terms of Reference for Academic Appeals Committees, approved by Council in October 2025 for implementation in 2025/26. The Terms of Reference outline the scope, membership, grounds for appeal, preliminary procedures, conduct of hearings, and potential outcomes for Academic Appeals Committees. The committee was asked to note that the new TOR is published on the Academic Affairs website. This webpage is being updated to include resources and process maps to help academics and students navigate the appeals process.

**XX GS/25-26/054 Updated Procedures for the Transfer to External Examiners of Students' Assessed Work - Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TTL) to present**  
Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, the Education Policy Developer noted that revisions to the Procedure for transferring students' assessed work to External Examiners were discussed by the committee in October 2025 (GS/25-26/029). Following that discussion, and after further subsequent clarifications several changes were made as reflected in the circulated document. The committee was asked to review the proposed final changes and recommend the updated procedure to Council for approval. There was no discussion. The Dean thanked the Education Policy Developer for her thorough work on the Procedures. The committee endorsed the Updated Procedures for the Transfer to External Examiners of Students' Assessed Work for Council approval.

**Decision GS/25-26/054:** The committee endorsed the Updated Procedures for the Transfer to External Examiners of Students' Assessed Work for Council approval.

**XX GS/25-26/055 Revised Guidelines on permitted activities for PGR students on stipends - Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies**

The Dean noted that recent years have seen significant changes to the guidelines governing additional activities undertaken by stipend-funded PGR students, driven by Revenue compliance requirements and broader sector trends separating stipends from extra duties. The circulated updated guidelines align Trinity's approach with Research Ireland requirements, and the committee was asked to review and approve the proposed revisions.

In a discussion the following points were raised:

- 1) The Dean clarified that teaching activities should be confined to the statutory term weeks, while other activities may take place outside the teaching terms. Students should not normally be asked to complete a large volume of teaching in a compressed period on the assumption that it averages out within the 150-hour annual cap. Additional activities may be undertaken during the summer months. Students must be able to truthfully declare to the Revenue that they devote full time to their PhD studies. PGR students should be assigned tasks that support their development as researchers.
- 2) The designation of student activities as "voluntary" in the Guidelines could be misinterpreted as "unpaid" rather than as "not mandatory".

- 3) Some Schools require PGR students to carry out lab demonstrations—for example, up to six hours per week in the School of Chemistry. These activities are not “voluntary” but are mandatory for students. The Dean clarified that the Guidelines do not cover demonstrations, which are considered an integral part of the PhD student experience in many laboratory-based disciplines.
- 4) The Dean will liaise with WP#2 to identify synergies with the definitions of teaching and learning activities legitimately undertaken by PGR students as captured by the WP.
- 5) The finalised guidelines will be made available to Schools and PGR students.
- 6) Schools are not required to monitor student activities outside the School, such as invigilation hours. It is the student’s responsibility to self-declare these directly to the Revenue.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion. The committee endorsed the Updated Guidelines on permitted activities for PGR students on stipends for Council approval.

**Decision GS/25-26/055:** The committee endorsed the Updated Guidelines on permitted activities for PGR students on stipends for Council approval.

**XX GS/25-26/056 Horizon 2: PG Renewal monthly update (November) - Leona Coady, Programme Director (PG Renewal) to present**

The PG Renewal Programme Director spoke to the circulated slide, highlighting the requirement for each School to indicate their chosen approach—either PI-led or student-led—for the allocation of TRDAs in 2026/27. The Dean thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for her presentation.

**XX GS/25-26/057 Horizon 2: PGR Assessment & Progression: portal development and management implementation update - Memorandum from Helen O’Hara (Lead) and Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes)**

Mark Sheridan, the Senior Postgraduate Renewal Project Manager provided an update on the Implement stage of the PGR Assessment and Progression deliverable. User testing concluded in September, covering 72 test cases across all relevant user groups (students, supervisors, Thesis Committees, PG Admin, and DTLPs) from ten schools representing all faculties. The project has entered a hyper-care period, during which the Postgraduate Renewal Programme Team is actively monitoring the system and responding to queries. As of mid-November, sixteen queries have been received from nine Schools pertaining to functionality enhancements and taught-module issues, process issues (DTLP progressing a student they supervise); deadline-related questions and miscellaneous issues (registration gaps, supervisor records, supervisor availability). User engagement with students and supervisors within the first six working days has been significant. There is still significant amount of work to carry out such as continuing hyper-care support and monitoring, releasing further development at the end of November to resolve taught-module visibility issues and improve user experience and developing the agreed data-retention approach in collaboration with the Dean of Graduate Studies, Academic Registry, IT Services, and the Data Protection Officer. The DTLPs thanked the WP#3 for their thorough work on the PGR Assessment & Progression project.

**XX GS/25-26/058 Horizon 2: Thesis Examination Functionality (Design update) – Memorandum from Helen O’Hara (Lead) and Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager (Work Package #3: Systems & Processes)**

Helen O’Hara, Work Package #3 (Systems & Processes Lead) provided an update on the design stage of the thesis examination functionality. The existing thesis process is extremely complex and requires over 230 steps. The team has therefore divided it into eight sub-processes covering everything from intention to submit through the final archiving of the hardbound thesis. “To-be” process flowcharts have been completed for the first two subprocesses (Intention to Submit and

Submission; Thesis Embargo), with all eight scheduled for completion by the end of November. There is still significant work to be completed. Although the current scope covers only the Design phase through to the end of 2025, a meeting on November 20 between the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Director of the Postgraduate Renewal Programme will define the scope of work planned for 2026. The DTLPs thanked the WP#3 for their thorough work on the Thesis Examination Functionality project.

**XX GS/25-26/059 Horizon 2: PhD Peer Guidance Network pilot – Memorandum from Leona Coady, Programme Director, and Dr Jemimah Bailey, Programme Officer**

Leona Coady, the PG Renewal Programme Director introduced Dr Jemimah Bailey, a part-time Programme Officer recently appointed to lead a 15-month specific initiative pilot establishing a PhD Peer Guidance Network, designed to improve wellbeing and community support for PGR students. Delivered through the Postgraduate Renewal Programme with Student Support Services, the initiative responds to growing evidence of mental health challenges among PhD students and aims to ease early-stage transitions while developing leadership skills among peer mentors. The pilot will begin in March 2026 with the new cohort of PhD entrants (more vulnerable than the September new entrants) and aims to involve about 100 first-year PhD students and 12–15 trained mentors, drawing on successful peer-led models and cross-institutional collaboration. It is co-funded by the Postgraduate Renewal Programme, the Trinity Alumni Fund/ASD, and the Director of Student Services, and seeks input from Schools with similar initiatives.

**XX GS/25-26/060 Horizon 2: Update on next steps on the Two-Stage New Programme Development and Approval Pilot - Memorandum from Profs Richard Reilly and Ashley Clements (Work Package #1: Taught Co-Leads), Rima Fitzpatrick, Assistant Academic Secretary, Academic Affairs (TT&L) and Dr Rionnagh Sheridan Programme Coordinator/Analyst (Postgraduate Renewal)**

The Graduate Studies Committee approved at its last meeting in October (GS/25-26/036) the final report of the Two-stage New Programme Development and Approval Pilot and endorsed its three recommendations: improving the usability of Proof of Concept and Curriculum Plan documents, ensuring programme proposers have access to up-to-date market research, and replacing the current two-stage approvals process with a streamlined single-stage model. Work Package 1 will advance recommendations 1 and 3, aiming to deliver an enhanced application process by the end of the year, and will explore how to address recommendation 2. A fourth recommendation—creating an academic sub-committee to review PGT proposals—was not approved but will continue to be considered as the project moves into its next phase focused on curriculum-plan quality assurance. After the discontinuation of the PG Renewal, Academic Affairs will take over the activities from January 2026 and will provide updates on ongoing developments at future meetings.

**XX GS/25-26/061 Any Other Business**

**i) LERU Doctoral Summer School 2026 in Leuven in September 2026 - Call for Nominations**

**Action GS/25-26/061 (i):** DTLPs were asked to share the information on the LERU Doctoral Summer School 2026 in Leuven in September 2026 with their PhD students, particularly those in years 3 and 4 and encourage them to apply.

**ii) PG Teaching awards 2025 - Call for Nominations**

**Action GS/25-26/061 (ii):** DTLPs were asked to share information about the call for Graduate Teaching Awards nominations to ensure submissions from their Schools are received.

- iii) **Dean's update on EU/non-EU fee status for PGT applicants.** The Dean noted that Planning has approved the proposal that EU citizens who complete their secondary education and their UG studies in the EU, but then move outside the EU for work, can still be eligible for EU fee status if they choose to pursue postgraduate study in Trinity. The proposal has moved for final consideration to the Finance Committee.
- iv) **Dean's update on the fee differential write-down pilot.** The Dean and the PG Renewal Programme Director will submit a report on the pilot's impact to the Finance Committee for consideration on 18 December. The Finance Committee will then make its final recommendation to the **Board** regarding the scheme's sustainability for future intakes.

## **XX Section B for Noting and Approval**

### **XX GS/25-26/062 Suspension of Postgraduate Certificate in Leading & Implementing Sustainable Finance for 2026/27 – request from Trinity Business School**

The committee endorsed a request from Trinity Business School to suspend the Postgraduate Certificate in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance for 2026/27. Despite a comprehensive marketing effort, the School was unable to secure a viable class size. The decision to suspend the course will allow the School time to further strengthen industry engagement, revise the programme structure in line with evolving market and regulatory demands, and enhance the marketing and recruitment strategy to ensure its successful relaunch in the 2027/28 academic year.

**Decision GS/25-26/062:** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed suspension of the Postgraduate Certificate in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance for 2026/27 in Trinity Business School.

## **Section C for Noting**

### **GS/25-26/063 Horizon 2: Onboarding Booklet for Adjunct Staff involved in the delivery of Postgraduate Programmes**

The committee noted two resources recently finalised by Work Package #6, in collaboration with HR, for implementation in Semester 1, 2025/26, following their approval by the committee in May 2025 (GS/24-25/122).

The first resource, the Onboarding Booklet for Adjunct Staff Involved in the Delivery of Postgraduate Programmes, provides College-level guidance applicable across all Schools. Part II of the booklet may be locally customised for use by adjunct staff during their School induction. The second resource, the Adjunct Staff: School Induction Guide, includes a comprehensive checklist intended as an internal resource to support Schools in delivering their local induction processes for adjunct academic staff. The checklist should be adapted locally to reflect School-specific information.

The Onboarding Booklet for Adjunct Staff will be available on T-Net – Your HR as part of an adjunct staff information hub. Schools will be notified once the resource has been uploaded.

### **GS/25-26/064 AR Assessment and Progression Team's update – Memorandum from Jennifer Pepper, Director of Academic Registry, and Karen Bebbington, Head of Operations/Deputy Director (Academic Registry)**

The Academic Registry representatives spoke to an issue of a significant number of queries associated with examination papers during the 2024/25 academic year. They presented a review data for 2024/25 and proposed collaborative processes with Schools and Programme Offices with a view to improving the staff and student experience and the accuracy of examination papers.

**GS/25-26/065 Report of the Taskforce on Academic and Institutional International Links**

The Graduate Studies Committee noted for consideration the circulated Report of the Taskforce on Academic and Institutional International Links and Related Matters, but the item was deferred for discussion to the next meeting.

**GS/25-26/066 Draft Minutes of Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 4 November 2025**

The draft minutes of RIAM ACDC of 4 November 2025 were circulated to members.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 13.05pm.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 27 November 2025