



**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 26 February 2026

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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 Xiaoning Liang, Trinity Business School

Professor Gavin Doherty, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education

Professor Breiffni Fitzgerald, School of Engineering

Professor Alice Jorgenson, School of English

Professor Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities

Professor Théophile Munyangeyo, 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 Graham Cross, School of Physics

Professor, David Hevey, School of Psychology

Professor Jude Lal Fernando, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies

Professor Selim Gulesci, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy

Professor Eavan Brady, School of Social Work & Social Policy

Patricia Maguire, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

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

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

Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services

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

*In attendance for all items:*

Professor Wladislaw Rivkin, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme

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

*In attendance for all items (Guest):*

Professor Joseph Roche, Associate Dean of Research, on behalf of Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research

*Apologies:*

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research

Professor Iouri Gounko, School of Chemistry  
Professor Evangelia Rigaki, School of Creative Arts (Research Leave)  
Professor Padhraig Fleming, School of Dental Science  
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology  
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Susan Pike, Academic Director, Portal  
1<sup>st</sup> Graduate Student Representative (PGT): Aziel Zafar  
2<sup>nd</sup> Graduate Student Representative (PGR): Lindiwe Mpofu  
Breda Walls, Director of Student Services  
Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office

In attendance for individual items:

Dr Rionnagh Sheridan and Ewa Adach, Programme Analysts and Coordinators and Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager (Postgraduate Renewal Programme) for item GS/25-26/092  
Jennifer Pepper, Director, and Ambhalika Sounderraj, Change and Transformation Project Lead (Academic Registry) for item GS/25-26/093  
Jennifer Pepper, Director, Director (Academic Registry) for item GS/25-26/094

**XX Section A**

**XX GS/25-26/090 Minutes of GSC of 29 January 2026**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**XX GS/25-26/091 Matters Arising**

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the January 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 University Council on 11 February 2026. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

**XX GS/25-26/092 Horizon 2: PG Renewal Accomplishment Report – Leona Coady, Programme Director (PG Renewal) to present**

Members welcomed Dr Rionnagh Sheridan and Ewa Adach (Programme Analysts and Coordinators) and Mark Sheridan (Senior Project Manager) on the Postgraduate Renewal Programme, who attended for the presentation of the PG Renewal Accomplishment Report by Programme Director Leona Coady. Their attendance was noted in recognition of their significant contribution to the Programme. The report summarised the achievements delivered since the project's initiation in June 2022 positioning Trinity to further advance the postgraduate education priorities set out in the College Strategy 2025–30.

The Dean outlined the context in which the PG Renewal initiative originated and highlighted its key drivers of success. She emphasised the importance of the early decision to develop internal expertise within the College rather than engaging external consultants and underscored the value of establishing an appropriate working methodology to guide the project.

The PG Renewal Director reported on the Programme's successful and wide-ranging collaboration with the postgraduate community. She outlined the initial goals and associated deliverables, noting in particular the development of the Triple I Framework for multi-dimensional skills development—identified as a major achievement and to be implemented by the Graduate Education Hub and the Doctoral Academy in the next five years. She also described key improvements enhancing the PGR and PGT experience, the adoption of a collaborative, Trinity-tailored Way of Working that is now informing wider institutional projects and provided an overview of performance and impact metrics.

Data-driven indicators demonstrated consistent delivery across multiple years of Horizons 1 and 2, beginning with Horizon 1 from 2021/22 and progressing to Horizon 2 from 2023/24. The PG Renewal Director concluded by presenting the value matrix, highlighting specific impact areas for students, Schools, and the wider College representing important milestones within Trinity's graduate education.

The Dean noted that the project initially faced challenges arising from change fatigue in the College community and the diversity of needs across Schools, which made it difficult to standardise delivery. However, the phased, incremental approach taken through Horizons 1 and 2—together with early collaborative wins—helped maintain momentum, built trust, and supported the continued delivery of successful outputs. The Dean concluded by outlining a number of lessons learned, including that small amounts of administrative support can unlock substantial potential for streamlining processes; that understanding all stakeholders' perspectives is essential to developing fit-for-purpose solutions; that it is important to pause and recognise progress; that SITS capabilities exceeded expectations; and that while communication challenges persisted, changes that make work easier quickly gained traction.

The PG Renewal Director concluded the presentation by outlining plans for the future, including continued process evolution through automation, digital transformation planned for Horizon 3, the establishment of a Graduate Education Hub and Doctoral Academy, implementation of the Triple I Framework, and enhancements to supervision and interdisciplinary training. As the PG Renewal Programme approaches closure over the coming months, she noted that a case study will be prepared for publication, documenting the journey "From Vision to Value" and capturing Trinity's experience of delivering the project, with the intention of sharing it more broadly. The PG Renewal Director expressed her thanks to the Graduate Studies Committee for its leadership and constructive engagement. The presentation was greeted with applause.

In the short discussion that followed, members expressed their appreciation for the achievements of the PG Renewal project. The Dean reiterated that the accomplishments are still in a transitional phase and will require gradual implementation over the coming period. She noted that more effective approaches to working with Schools will need to be developed to sustain ongoing progress in delivering quality graduate education.

Members acknowledged that while there was initial scepticism about the project, they had been gradually won over and had even adopted some of its principles—such as "small admin support unlocks big potential"—leading to tangible improvements in the efficiency of academic systems and processes within Schools. They also emphasised that the project has helped reveal and activate the significant inherent academic quality within the PGT space, creating new opportunities for future expansion.

The Dean invited all committee members to attend the Celebration Day marking the achievements of the PG Renewal Programme, to be held on 23 March in Regent House.

**Decision GS/25-26/092:** The committee recommended the proposed PG Renewal Accomplishment Report for Council approval.

**XX GS/25-26/093 Academic Registry: HALO (student case management system) update - Jennifer Pepper, Director, and Ambhalika Sounderraj, Change and Transformation Project Lead (Academic Registry) to present**

The Director and the Change and Transformation Project Lead from the Academic Registry (AR) provided an update on the rollout of the HALO student case management system. In July 2025, AR

transitioned from the end-of-life Student Information Desk (SID) to the HALO CRM platform, selected through public tender as a GDPR-compliant scalable system supporting more than 100,000 enquiries and 5,000 student cases managed annually by AR and the Disability Service.

Phase 1 focused on embedding HALO ahead of the annual Registration period. AR digitised 90% of service forms, eliminating paper processes, reducing manual handling, and supporting sustainability goals. Since go-live in June 2025, enquiry-resolution performance has increased to a targeted 95% within 48 hours, compared to 74% under SID.

Phase 2, on which the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Senior Tutor's Office, and the Senior Lecturer, provided input, concerns redevelopment of Student Case processes. The proposed model introduces a more structured student-centred approach in which students submit their own requests with built-in consent and GDPR confirmations. Automated workflows, defined responsibilities, clear escalation timelines, enhanced reporting, and automated updates will streamline processing, reduce delays, and improve transparency and consistency for staff and students. The process will go live in mid-March.

A demonstration of the proposed new student case process in HALO was presented, followed by a discussion that generated a number of suggestions:

- 1) The supervisor or course coordinator should not appear to the student as the decision-maker at any stage of the student case process. Therefore, members recommended to revise the wording in Step 3 of the process, which currently indicates that the system-generated request for review and sign-off requires the academic to "approve/reject" the student application form. It is proposed that this be amended to "progress" the form or even only to indicate "being aware" of the student's submission. The revised wording clarifies that the academic's role is limited to acknowledging familiarity with, and progressing, the student's request for consideration, rather than being perceived as making a decision on the matter.
- 2) To implement within HALO a pre-set menu of academic staff, populated automatically from SITS data, allowing students to select and contact relevant staff (e.g., supervisors and course coordinators) directly through the system. Integrating an inbuilt list of appropriate academic staff from SITS would improve accuracy, reduce manual entry errors, and streamline communication by ensuring that students reach the correct staff member with their request.
- 3) To incorporate within HALO clear signposting directing students, especially research ones, to the Postgraduate Student Support Service, ensuring they are encouraged to contact the Service before submitting a case. Embedding such signposting would help ensure students seek appropriate advice and guidance at an early stage, potentially resolving queries prior to formal submission and supporting more informed case submissions.
- 4) To clarify within the process and associated communications that student requests to withdraw from a course should not be framed as seeking "permission" to leave, as withdrawal is a voluntary decision. Characterising withdrawal requests as requiring institutional permission may create an unintended perception that students must obtain approval to leave. Revised wording should reflect that withdrawal is a voluntary decision, while ensuring students are appropriately informed of any academic or administrative implications.
- 5) To introduce a dedicated field within the form enabling students to specify which academic and/or counselling supports they have consulted in relation to their case. Including this field would provide greater clarity regarding prior engagement and support received, assist in the review of the case, and help avoid duplication of advice or follow-up.

The Dean thanked the Director and the Change and Transformation Project Lead from the Academic Registry for their presentation and members for their contribution to the discussion.

**XX GS/25-26/094 Academic Registry: Review of examination process in December 2025 - Jennifer Pepper, Director, (Academic Registry) to present**

The Director from Academic Registry provided an overview of the December 2025 examination session, outlining what had worked well, the changes implemented since the supplemental session, and key learnings for future sittings. Members were reminded that Academic Registry (AR) had introduced a series of enhancements aimed at minimising errors in examination papers and reducing disruptions during examinations. The review provided an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of these measures and to identify any further improvements required.

The Committee was advised of an overall 12% increase in on-campus examinations compared with Semester 1 of the previous year, alongside a significant decrease in online examinations. A total of 58 venues were utilised. AR printed all examination papers, with the exception of enlarged papers (produced in accordance with individual students' specified LENS requirements) and papers requiring colour printing. In total, over 30,000 papers were printed. More than 450 separate examination papers submitted to AR underwent standard checks across, including verification of paper codes, dates and times, clarity of instructions, and spot checks on formatting.

Across all sittings, 61% of issues arising in examination venues related to questions on the paper, while 33% concerned queries regarding instructions. The remaining issues related to OBA papers, printing errors, or the distribution of an incorrect paper. These figures exclude issues identified prior to papers being issued to students. The main issues identified during the printing and bundling process included unclear instructions, incorrect paper codes, incorrect durations or dates, misnumbering of questions or pages, and graphs or figures that should have been printed in colour.

The Dean thanked the Director of the Academic Registry for her presentation.

**XX GS/25-26/095 Erasmus Mundus funded joint Masters in Theare SPACes (Theatre in Social, Participatory Art, Community and Educational Contexts): new joint award of Master in Education (conjunctim) - Prof. Keith Johnston (School of Education DTLP) to present**

The Associate Dean of Graduate Studies spoke to a slides presentation. He noted that in 2023/24, GSC (Decision GS/23-24/084) and Council approved in principle a new joint Masters programme under the Erasmus Mundus scheme, subject to a successful funding application. Funding has since been secured in September 2025, and a full proposal was presented for members' review. The joint programme will be delivered by three universities: Høgskulen på Vestlandet– Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Coordinating Institution (HVL), University of Dublin, Trinity College and Universitatea de Arte din Targu Mures, Romania (UAT). Funding for the joint Masters has been secured for 6 years. First student intake commences in September 2026 comprising 18 fully funded students plus 4 self-funding.

The Associate Dean noted that entry requirements follow those of the Coordinating Institution (HVL), including a Bachelor's degree in a cognate discipline with a minimum of 180 credits and English language proficiency, typically IELTS 6.0. The selection process involves an online application, portfolio submission, and interview, overseen by a Joint Selection Committee. No more than 10% of scholarships will be awarded to students of the same nationality. Successful and funded applicants are required to sign a Student Agreement. The scholarship provides €1,400 per month for 24 months, with an 80% attendance requirement.

The Associate Dean also noted that the title of the degree award varies by jurisdiction. In the partner institutions, it is Master of Arts (MA), while in Trinity, which does not award MA based on academic

attainment, Master in Education (MEd) (conjunctim) will be awarded by the University of Dublin. As it is a jointly delivered programme, both awards will appear on one parchment handed over to the graduate at the Graduation Ceremony organized physically at HVL. Students will be invited to graduate but must arrange their own travel and visa, if applicable. In exceptional circumstances a student can participate online, or the degree can be awarded *in absentia*. An exit award will not be available. No overall grade classification will be awarded as per the Norwegian system. The diploma supplement will list each module and the grade achieved in every partner University. Registration and finance have been approved by Academic Registry. Data protection provisions have been approved by College Data Protection Officer.

The School of Education in Trinity will teach the Summer School Module (ET7203) taking place at the end of Year 1 with grading based on attendance. It will also be responsible for the Dissertation component (Module ET7208) in Semester 2 Year 2, where all MEd dissertation processes and regulations, including external examining, will apply. Dissertation students must apply for Ethics approval via the Trinity process (REAMS). Students will also attend (audit) the Research Methods: Creating Research in Education Module (ETPT2502).

The DTLP from the School of Education highlighted several ways in which the proposed programme differs from Trinity's MPhil/MSc structures. These include marginally lower English-language entry requirements aligned with partner institutions; Programme Learning Outcomes and Module Learning Outcomes expressed in terms that do not follow Bloom's taxonomy; additional opportunities to re-take or repeat modules (supplemental assessments permit students to avail of 2 additional attempts); and the absence of an exit award for students who do not progress to the dissertation stage. The title of the award will vary across the three partner institutions. Members noted the strong early interest already expressed in the programme, signalling a promising start for the new offering.

In a discussed the following comments were made in relation to the raised queries:

- 1) Recruitment is expected to be strong, given the generous student scholarship and the high level of interest, with over a thousand applicants for the twenty places in the first cohort. However, recruitment targets will need to be closely monitored to ensure future course viability.
- 2) There is provision for students breaking up their studies by going "off books", and their scholarship will be suspended for a year.
- 3) The parchment, listing both degree awards, must clearly indicate that the student is graduating from a single joint programme rather than receiving two separate degrees. In addition, the Diploma Supplement will also be issued to the graduate.
- 4) The proposed Master in Education (MEd) (conjunctim) will require approval by the University of Dublin Senate.
- 5) Academics should consider pursuing additional opportunities to apply for taught joint Erasmus Mundus programmes. Support is available through Trinity Global and can be accessed by contacting Diana Santos, International Partnerships Officer.
- 6) To be eligible for Erasmus Mundus funding, all partner universities must confirm in principle that a programme is ready to be delivered once funding becomes available. However, developing a jointly delivered programme between multiple partner institutions is a complex and time-consuming process making it a real "chicken-and-egg situation", as committing significant effort is difficult without assurance of successful funding. Should Schools plan such joint programmes, they should carefully select their partners. Concerns are significantly reduced when partners are familiar and their regulations are already understood, bearing in mind that often the most challenging issue to agree on is the title of the joint award on the graduation parchment.

**Decision GS/25-26/095:** The GSC endorsed for Council approval the programme proposal for Erasmus Mundus funded jointly delivered Masters in Theare SPACEs (Theatre in Social, Participatory Art, Community and Educational Contexts) with a new joint award of Master in Education (conjunctim) to be awarded by the University of Dublin recognising that the Master of Arts (MA) be awarded by Høgskulen på Vestlandet– Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, i.e. the Coordinating Institution and the Universitatea de Arte din Targu Mures in Romania.

**XX GS/25-26/096 Any Other Business – updates from Dean of Graduate Studies**

- i) Working Group on Recording Lectures: The Dean noted that the group’s report recommending guidelines on the recording of lectures will be circulated for the March meeting.
- ii) Inaugural European Doctoral Day (<https://www.eurodocday.org/> celebrated on 13 May: The Doctoral Day will be designated as the European Doctoral Day to highlight the vital role of doctoral education and the impact of doctoral graduates as key agents of innovation helping society shape Europe’s scientific, economic, industrial, and technological future. The Dean provided a brief update on what events are being planned in Trinity. A call will come out to PGR students in year 3 and 4 to engage in a workshop to improve their communication skills around the theme of amplifying the impact of research collaboration in science. A competition will select a few winners with an opportunity to produce a professional video on cross College research collaboration to be shown at a College event in Portal on the Doctoral Day.
- iii) PhD Peer Guidance Network (<https://www.tcd.ie/graduatestudies/peer-mentoring/>): PhD students were invited to join a new pilot mentoring initiative, co-funded by Trinity Development & Alumni and delivered under the Postgraduate Renewal Programme in collaboration with the Postgraduate Advisory Service and Student Counselling Service. The programme supports PhD wellbeing and an inclusive research community. The Dean provided a brief recruitment update and noted that although PGR students starting in March 2026 are the priority target for the provision of mentoring, DTLPs are encouraged to direct PGR students who are at risk of getting ‘lost’ or of isolation to the network. Volunteer mentors must complete mandatory training on Tuesday 3 March to mentor new PGR students focusing on the March registrants.

**Action GS/25-26/096(iii):** DTLPs to guide PGR students in need of support towards the PhD Peer Guidance Network.

- iv) Upcoming Calendar changes on part-time registration, supervision responsibilities (to familiarise themselves with Calendar III regulations including those pertaining to off books) and inclusion of the current UG regulation for the use of Generative AI to be incorporated in Calendar III for School consultation: The Dean has highlighted those Calendar III changes to be submitted at the March meeting. This early notice allows DTLPs time to consult with their Schools and provide feedback.

**Action GS/25-26/096(iv):** DTLPs to consult with their Schools and bring feedback to the March meeting on part-time registration, the use of Gen AI and supervision responsibilities to familiarise themselves with Calendar III regulations pertaining to PGR students, to be incorporated into Calendar III for 2026/27.

- v) Advance notice of planned policy discussions for the March agenda: The Dean reported that the March meeting is expected to include several significant policy items, including Academic Integrity (to incorporate a reference to Generative AI), Joint and Dual Awards, and Awards Policy (to include a reference to the rescission of an award). Members were advised in advance to allow adequate time for gathering feedback from Schools.
- vi) PGR progression: Leona Coady, Postgraduate Renewal Programme Director, provided an update on behalf of Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager, on the latest data pertaining to the March cohort and outlined emerging issues. Questions from the floor were also addressed.

**XX Section B for Noting and Approval**

**XX GS/25-26/097 Request from School of Nursing and Midwifery to cease Community Health course (MSc FT/MSc PT/Framework) from 2026/27**

The committee endorsed a request for the cessation, from 2026/27, of the PGT programme in Community Health, which has been suspended for the past three academic years, in order to enable the School to explore options for a more contemporary PGT offering.

**Decision GS/25-26/097:** The committee recommended for Council approval the cessation of Community Health programme on all course codes from 2026/27.

**XX GS/25-26/098 Request from School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences for 1 year suspension of part-time MSc in Clinical Speech and Language Studies in 2026/27**

The committee endorsed a request for a second suspension of the part-time MSc in Clinical Speech and Language Studies for 2026/27 due to continued low student numbers.

**Decision GS/25-26/098:** The committee recommended for Council approval the suspension of the part-time MSc in Clinical Speech and Language Studies for 2026/27.

**Section C for Noting**

**GS/25-26/099 Academic Registry: Annual Report for 2024/25**

The committee noted the Academic Registry Annual Report for 2024/25.

**GS/25-26/100 Minutes of Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (MIE) ACDC of 1 December 2025**

The minutes of MIE ACDC of 1 December 2025 were circulated for noting.

**GS/25-26/101 Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 7 October 2025**

The Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 7 October 2025 were circulated for noting.

**GS/25-26/102 Reminder: Calendar III Changes for Academic Year 2026/27**

Members noted a reminder regarding the call for Calendar III changes for 2026/27. DTLPs were requested to circulate the notice to the relevant staff within their respective Schools to ensure that all proposed changes are gathered and collated. All proposals must be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies at [genadgso@tcd.ie](mailto:genadgso@tcd.ie) by 13 April.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.15pm.

