

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee on Thursday 17th October 2002 in Room 2026, Arts & Social Sciences Building.

Present (Chair)	Dean of Graduate Studies
Arts (Humanities)	Dr. A. Chantler
	Dr. M.-A. Valiulus
Arts (Letters)	Dr C. Morris
	Prof. D. Singleton
Business, Economic & Social Studies	Dr. K. Benoit
	Dr. E. Mahon
Engineering & Systems Science	Dr. T. Orr
Health Sciences	Dr. F. Falkiner
	Ms. A. Higgins
Science	Dr Tony Kavanagh

In attendance: Ms. G. Hogan (ISS), Ms. Eileen McGlade (Library), Ms. L. Donnellan (GSO), Mr. A. Pole (GSU), Mr. Brian McSharry (GSU) & Ms. Elizabeth Drew (GSC).
Apologies: Dr. P. Kruger, Prof. M. Gibney

163.0 Minutes of the meeting of 13th June, 2002.

The minutes were approved by the Committee, with a correction to the wording of item 162.4, and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

163.1 Matters arising

The Dean reported that he had no further news on the issue of fees for the validated postgraduate diplomas from the Church of Ireland College of Education. The Registrar plans to discuss the fees with the Treasurer before submission to the Finance Committee. The Dean will report to the Committee on this as soon as there is further news.

Regarding the issue of the retention of postgraduate examiners' reports, the Dean reported that there was still no feedback on this from CHUI.

Regarding item 162.4 of the minutes of the 13th June, 2002, the selection of Trinity Postgraduate Awards, the Dean reported to the Committee that the application forms for continuing students would be modified so that both incoming and continuing students would be required to supply 2 references and a recent CV with their applications. Continuing students would be required to list the supervisor as one referee. Dr Mahon asked whether students applying for postgraduate study received a separate award application with their admission application form. Ms. Donnellan said that they did not but that they were required to indicate whether they wished to be considered for an award by ticking a box on the application form.

The Committee then discussed the merits of having separate application forms for postgraduate awards for all students. It was decided that this could possibly lead to confusion since academic departments and the Graduate Studies Office would then be required to keep track of multiple documents for individual students. The departments might then receive applications from students who has not yet been accepted for postgraduate study. Dr Benoit suggested that there was an anomaly between the Calendar regulations regarding award applications and what students were actually asked for in the application form. He felt that all applications received by the Department should be equally matched in terms of information provided. The Dean stated that current Trinity students were asked to supply less information than incoming students because the information was already on file. He undertook to review the process. The Committee discussed the issue of incomplete applications and agreed that the onus was on the student to provide all the relevant documentation. Dr Falkiner queried the extent to which the decision to attend TCD was based on students receiving funding and the Dean said that in many cases it was. Dr Mahon pointed out that the timing of offers of awards was crucial in order to ensure that students did not accept offers elsewhere.

163.2 Partial Fee Refund Scheme

The Dean outlined the history behind the proposal. He reported that the current fee system has been revised in 1996 with the aim of simplifying the transfer from Masters to PhD registers from a fee payment point of view. The re-structured system did away with the submission fee and reduced the burden on students by introducing a 50% continuation fee for students in their 4th year on the PhD register and 3rd year on the Masters register. In addition, the introduction of the Dean's Grace period and the Dean's ability to approve up to a three-month extension without fee in exceptional circumstances provided further flexibility in the system. The Dean stressed that any proposal to alter this existing system would have to be revenue neutral, given the current economic climate and the likelihood of reduced state support for the university. He suggested that though there a number of ways of implementing a partial fee refund, it would be difficult to formalize any proposal without having an idea of the likely uptake of a refund scheme. He therefore proposed to run a pilot scheme this year where he would invite research students in their first continuation year who submit their dissertations before March 30th (or September 30th for April registrants) to apply to him for a refund of 50% of the continuation fee. He reported that he had discussed the scheme with the Treasurer, whose approval it had. The aim of this pilot year would be to establish how many students might avail of the scheme and thus to provide the information necessary for planning. The Dean emphasized that the pilot scheme was not intended to commit College to the adoption of such a refund scheme but was designed to provide the data to inform further discussions. He proposed to report on the scheme to the Graduate Studies Committee at the beginning of next academic year.

The Committee welcomed the proposal and approved it. The Dean said that he would proceed to seek Council's approval for the pilot scheme. Dr Valiulis enquired whether taught course students would be included in the scheme and the Dean replied that they would not initially be included.

163.3 Taught Course Admissions

The Dean introduced the item by outlining some current characteristics and problems relating to the admission of students to taught postgraduate courses. He reported a rise in complaints from course coordinators that the time taken to issue formal letters of acceptance to students was too long, resulting in some cases in the loss of high quality students to other institutions. This was particularly a problem with students applying from abroad. The Dean suggested that the numbers of applications was currently overloading the admissions personnel in the Graduate Studies Office, leading to delays. This was exacerbated by two factors. Firstly, the Graduate Studies Committee had in approving taught programmes allowed course committees complete freedom in setting closing dates for applications. The Dean circulated a list of closing dates to the Committee to illustrate the wide range of dates, including some programmes without closing dates. The Dean suggested that, while course coordinators valued such flexibility, it placed a load on the administrative machinery at difficult times. The second factor was the frequency with which course committees breached their own deadlines because of the pressure on self-financing courses to keep their courses open until their quota has been filled. The Committee discussed the issues. Dr Mahon asked for clarification of the admissions process and enquired whether the answer lay in greater computerisation of applications. The Dean agreed that on-line applications would alleviate the problem but questioned the degree to which this was currently possible. The Committee concluded that the closing dates should be more rigorously adhered to but doubted whether this would in itself solve the problem of delays. Prof Singleton felt that there value in retaining some flexibility in the system. The Dean agreed that tightening closing dates alone would not sufficiently shorten the lag in acceptances and proposed to seek an additional member of staff for the Graduate Studies Office specifically to improve taught graduate admissions. The Committee supported this proposal and discussed possibilities for the funding of this post. The Dean said that he would report back on the issue to the Committee at a later stage.

163.4 Amendment to Doctor in Clinical Psychology Calendar Part II regulations

A proposal to amend the pass/fail criteria for the Doctor in Clinical Psychology programme was put before the committee. The current entry in the Calendar Part II states that ' (ii) failure of a clinical placement can be repeated once only'. The proposed amendment would read (ii) 'failure of a clinical placement can be repeated once only. Failure of a repeated placement will lead to failure of the course.'

The amendment was approved by the Committee.

163.5 Admission requirements to PhD programme in Economics

This item was postponed to the next meeting

163.6 Any Other Business

The Dean agreed to a request from Committee members for papers to be circulated a little earlier.

Ms Drew reported that the Graduate Student's Union were compiling the results of a survey on teaching & funding amongst postgraduate students and that they GSU would present the results of the survey to the Graduate Studies Committee at a later date. Dr Falkiner said that he thought that postgraduate students should be

exposed to teaching practice, as it would be of benefit to them. Prof. Singleton agreed with this viewpoint.

The Dean noted that this was the last meeting for the outgoing President of the Graduate Students Union, Elizabeth Drew, the Vice-President, Brian McSharry and Mr Adam Pole. He thanked them on behalf of the Committee for their contribution to the Committee and for their efforts on behalf of the college's postgraduate students.

There being no further business, the meeting closed.

Signed :

Date: