

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 14th April, 2005
Arts Building

Present: Chair: Dean of Graduate Studies (Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast), Mr Trevor Peare, Mr John Murphy, Dr Alan Kramer, Dr Alan Moore, Prof. Terence Brown

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska, Ms Helen Thornbury

Apologies: Dean of Research (Prof. Ian Robertson), Dr Evelyn Mahon, Dr Brian Lucey, Dr Frederick Falkiner, Dr Trevor Hodgkinson, Dr Vasilis Politis, Dr Christine Morris, Dr John Donegan, Mr Gerard Tobin, Prof. Vincent Cahill, Mr Ryan Sheridan, Mr Charles Larkin, Mr Ronan Hodson.

186.0 Minutes of 24th March 2005

The minutes of the meeting of 24th March 2005 were approved and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

186.1 Matters arising

Re. 185.3: The Dean advised that Council had approved the proposal for the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) at its meeting earlier in the week. In relation to the proposal for Graduate Schools, the Dean clarified that it had been discussed further at the recent Deans' Committee meeting. The issue which had been considered in more detail was to do with a possible link between the Graduate Schools and research centers (such as CRANN or IIIS) and how centres would be funded.

Re. 185.4: Dr Alan Kramer advised that the Centre for European Studies offers an English language course called "Academic Writing" for incoming undergraduate Socrates students with teaching provided by an on-campus company "Integrate Ireland". It was agreed that the Director, Dr J. Barkhoff, should be contacted to establish if that course could be made available to postgraduate students. It was proposed that, ideally, two dedicated English language courses for Science and for Arts should be available to postgraduate students.

186.2 Dual Supervision

The issue has arisen because the Dean of Research has recently awarded twelve jointly-supervised interdisciplinary Ph.D. studentships funded from the Science Foundation Ireland Annual Overhead Investment Plan. Currently, a student is allocated a principal supervisor and a co-supervisor and most students fit into the structure. However, only the principal supervisor becomes coded on the electronic record and can be tracked down for funding purposes, even though both supervisors are active in the student's supervision. Under the ARAM model the issue of resources following the supervisor would need to be addressed. During a discussion it has emerged that the Committee were not supportive of the idea of dual supervision on academic grounds, expressing concern that the student might be caught between conflicting advice of two supervisors with equal supervisory roles. The Committee were supportive of interdisciplinary research in the context of several academics making an input into the student's research, but with supervision firmly delegated to a principal supervisor. It was suggested that it would be best to divorce this academic issue from its financial component, and it was agreed that when there is a principal and a co-supervisor both supervisors should be coded on the student's electronic record, and that the College IT service (MIS) would need to look into the ways of making this coding possible for admissions into the academic year 2005/06. Once coded on the system, the information can be pulled out from the electronic record for ARAM purposes. Since the Dean of Research was not present, it was decided not to close the matter of dual supervision completely but rather to discuss it again with him at a future meeting of the committee.

186.3 A Digital Archive for PhD Theses

The Dean welcomed Ms Niamh Brennan, Research Support System Administrator, who reported on a proposal to develop a digital archive for research theses. Ms Brennan outlined the background to the Committee. The Research Committee had recently been given additional funding for the creation of an Institutional Digital Archive. This covers 6 months of MIS time to implement a system (probably Open Source), and 1 year administration time subsequently to populate the Archive. The Archive would have the potential to store many kinds of research-related documents such as journal articles, theses, etc and even dissertations, final year projects and "grey literature". A separate development is that the Dean of Research would like to have postgraduates included in the Research Support System (RSS) which is currently restricted to Staff only. This would help in integrating postgraduate students into the research community by linking their research profiles to those of their supervisors'. In relation to the archive Ms Brennan mentioned a number of advantages, such as: 24-hour access for multiple users, remote access from outside of TCD, reduction of

duplication of business processes, greater visibility of Trinity research, enhancement of Staff and Schools' research profiles, adding to scholarly record available to all users, improved efficiency and lowering the cost of thesis submission, creation of greater transparency of research to tackle plagiarism. The Committee welcomed the intended development. During a discussion a number of issues were raised such as copyright costs and restrictions likely to arise with some estates and publishers, possible licence agreements, restrictions of access, exploration of intellectual copyrights, and advance comprehensive training of postgraduate students necessary for them to avail of the scheme.

Ms Brennan explained that there were no preconceived ideas as to how to set up this archive. The Committee agreed that Ms Brennan should directly contact the faculties and schools to identify area-specific requirements. An initial pilot would involve the Computer Science department where students already post their theses on the web, but the choice for the second participant (preferably in an arts-related area) in the pilot would still to be made.

The Committee discussed also the related issue whether the archive should also record communications between the supervisor and student, events such as the transfer onto the PhD Register, and if documents such as Transfer Documents and Examiner's Reports should also be archived. The Committee felt that digital-born documents such as emails and their attachments pertaining to communications between the supervisor and student should be separated out from the archiving of theses; while the Committee supported archiving of theses there was no agreement that archiving of student-supervisor communications would be a good idea.

The Committee therefore supported the digital archive initiative in terms of development of policies on access to the archive and related issues. It welcomed the opportunity and decided that in particular the issues of copyright should be further reflected on locally in departments and Schools and reported back to the Committee at a future date. It also approved that, when a satisfactory system is developed, it will be mandatory for students to deposit electronic theses into the electronic-theses archive, and to contribute their research profiles to the Research Support System database. The Committee reiterated that the issues of restricted access to everything other than the final published thesis would need to be addressed carefully. Ms Brennan would report back to the Committee on the progress of the project at a later stage.

186.4 Graduate Studies Office Annual Report 2003/04

The Committee thanked the Dean for the report and the Dean expressed his thanks to Ms Helen Thornbury for her assistance in the preparation of the report. The Dean spoke to the report in detail, drawing the Committee's attention to all the sections of the report. In particular, he referred to the average completion rate on the research register being 5 and over 5 years, rather than the expected 3 or 4 years advocated under the ARAM. He thanked the Trinity Foundation and Trust for their generous support for the postgraduate research student travel grant. He advised that this year's report presents admissions data for the first time, and that he would aim to include information on course quotas in the next year's report to give an idea of the possible capacity for postgraduate students on taught courses in College. He referred to the number of non-EU fee paying postgraduate students in College being at the level of 6% and steadily raising over the last few years, even though no specific resources had been put in place to promote postgraduate courses internationally. He explained that the International Students Affairs office only recently took it into their remit to promote postgraduate studies overseas. The Committee felt that significant resources should be channelled into this area if College were to achieve its targets as stated in the strategic plan. There is a need to explore a possible collaboration between the Graduate Studies Office and the International Students Affairs office to enhance recruitment of overseas students to the postgraduate register in College. Mr Trevor Peare referred to a significant number of part-time students on taught master's courses who require specific services from the library usually in the evenings or on Saturdays, and this is when the Library services are scaled down. Mr Peare confirmed that the issue is currently under investigation so that the issue could be satisfactorily addressed as speedily as possible.

186.5 AOB

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.30 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 12th May 2005 in the Conference Room 2026 in the Arts Building.



Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast.

Date: 12 May 2005