

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 30 March, 2006
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Prof. Patrick Prendergast, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Prof. Eunan O'Halpin, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Histories & Humanities
Prof. J Saeed, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), Vice Deanery, Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Prof. Vincent Cahill, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Prof. June Nunn, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Dental Science
Mr Gerard Tobin, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Nursing & Midwifery
Dr John Clancy, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr Richard Timoney, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Mathematics
Dr Stefano Sanvito, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Physics
Dr Richard Porter, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Prof. Kenneth Benoit, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Dr Helen Buckley, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Social Work & Social Policy
Dr Kevin Tierney, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Psychology
Prof. Paul Coughlan, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Business
Prof. Henry Rice, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Engineering
Prof. John Kelly, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Chemistry
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Mr Ryan Sheridan, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Charles Larkin, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Prof. Ian Robertson, Dean of Research
Dr Kenneth Irvine, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Natural Sciences
Dr Andrew Loxley, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), Vice Deanery, Faculty of Social & Human Sciences
Prof. Mark Lawler, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), School of Medicine
Prof. Seamus Martin, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate), Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska, Graduate Studies Office, (*Secretary Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office

193.0 Minutes of 23 February 2006

The minutes of the meeting of 23rd February 2006 were amended as listed below and approved by the Committee:

a) Re: 192.5 TCD – IMI Graduate School of Management in the 2nd bullet point to replace “A related issue of outsourcing executive training by Trinity to an outside institution has been voiced as a strong concern that Trinity may be in danger of possibly losing control over such a partner institution and thus jeopardising its brand name and reputation internationally.” with “A related issue of delivering non-award programmes by the Graduate School of Management would need to ensure appropriate control over such arrangements in order not to jeopardise its brand name and reputation internationally.”

b) Re: 192.5 TCD – IMI Graduate School of Management in the 3rd bullet point to replace “While noting that some of the IMI staff may be involved with executive education only, concern was expressed that only five of the 21 staff listed had Ph.D. degrees.” with “While noting that some of the IMI staff may be involved with non-award programmes only, concern was expressed that only five of the 21 staff listed had Ph.D. degrees.”

193.1 Matters arising

a) Re. 192.3 and 192.4: The Dean advised that the two new course proposals had been formally approved by the University Council.

b) Re. 192.7: The Dean noted that submissions from the three working parties on the strategic planning in College had been forwarded for consideration by the Strategic Planning Coordinating Group which should provide feedback to the Heads of School.

c) Re. 192.9 (3): Prof. Ken Benoit requested that it be noted that the integrated MPhil/PhD in Political Science programme which relates to the College efforts to integrate a taught masters course with research has however no funding provision under ARAM *on par* to a research programme. A solution would need to be found either to re-classify the MPhil as a research programme under ARAM or for ARAM to make a special allowance for such feeder masters to the research register. This is a wider issue that requires urgent consideration if College is to utilize the masters programmes as an effective resource for recruiting students to the research register. It was agreed that the way forward would be for the Dean to make a submission on behalf of the Graduate Studies Committee to the ARAM task force on ARAM-related issues and the Dean advised that he would welcome contributions from the DTLPs.

d) Re. 192.9 (4): The Dean advised that he had written to the Senior Lecturer to request that the former practice of the Graduate Studies Committee minutes being circulated to the University Council be restored.

193.2 M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip. in Biodiversity and Conservation (a new course proposal: 1 year full-time)

In the absence of the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) for the School of Natural Sciences, the Dean welcomed Prof. David Taylor (Head of School of Natural Sciences) and Dr Stephen Waldren to speak to the circulated course proposal which detailed all aspects of the course. He also explained that the proposal is currently being reviewed by an external assessor whose comments would be incorporated into the final submission to the University Council. Dr Waldren explained that the development of the course was closely linked with the strategic development of biodiversity and conservation biology research and teaching within the School of Natural Sciences. The taught part of the course would be available to students in the form of a postgraduate diploma, which would be of special interest to those already engaged in a career in this area (for example, Wildlife Rangers). It is also intended that modules from this course would be used for the development of further postgraduate taught courses. Some of the modules had been designed to be used in other taught postgraduate courses within the School, including the existing M.Sc. course in Environmental Sciences. The current proposal is, therefore, an integral part in the future delivery of an integrated series of taught postgraduate courses within the School, which should fill a gap in the market in Ireland for postgraduate courses, and build on the research expertise available in the School of Natural Sciences. The proposed course would run over a twelve-month period, using a number of learning modules. At any one time, the students would be working on only one module. All modules are divided into three areas such as core theoretical modules, core skills modules and practical research modules. A discussion which ensued focused on clarification of admissions, syllabus, assessment and administrative support issues and the following was agreed to be incorporated into a submission for Council: an allocation of contact hours and ECTS per each module, rewording of a statement on admissions that candidates with relevant experience may be accepted with lower degree or degree equivalent qualifications. It was also noted that the provision for the Library was less than would be expected and that further discussion on this point would have to take place with the Keeper of Readers' Services before the course could be presented to Council; it was confirmed that the course would be considered by the Library Committee at its next meeting. The Committee approved the course subject to those changes being made.

193.3 Admissions data (research and taught courses) for entry to 2005/06

Ms Helen Thornbury presented the admissions data for 2005/06 for research and taught programmes; this will be included in the Graduate Studies Annual Report for 2004/05. Prof. Benoit drew attention to the anomaly of the taught MPhil in Political Science as year 1 of the Integrated PhD which does not seem to appear in either the taught or research section of the document. Considerable interest was expressed in the time of likely implementation of the on-line application system and the Dean confirmed that the project was being treated with utmost priority. He thought it would be unlikely however to expect that the scheme would be available for 07/08 admissions, though perhaps some pilot version could be run.

A discussion followed on the issue of viability of some taught courses which run with fewer than 10 registered students. The Dean made a proposal that such courses be reviewed in order to establish if they should be consolidated into larger courses or perhaps discontinued; some Directors spoke in favour of this but in general

the idea was not widely supported on the grounds that some courses that attract few students are nevertheless important for the development of expertise in speciality disciplines.

The Committee found the submitted data extremely interesting and requested that additional information on the actual number of registered students be provided next year to supplement admissions data for taught courses.

193.4 Transfer to the PhD register

The Dean spoke to the circulated document and advised that it was a result of deliberations of the GSC working party on the PhD transfer which had reviewed the transfer practices and procedures College-wide in order to formulate a general PhD transfer formula as a Calendar entry. A discussion followed which led to the following suggested changes to the proposed entry:

- (i) delete as too restrictive that the nominee of the DTLP to the transfer panel may be the Head of Discipline or another academic staff member of equivalent standing;
- (ii) insert that the 2nd reader may not be the student's supervisor;
- (iii) insert that, in the case of disagreement amongst the transfer panel members, the DTLP will adjudicate;
- (iv) the supervisor will still be expected to attend the transfer interview but may not have the sole responsibility to write up a report as determined by the chair of the panel and therefore this reference is to be re-phrased to say that the report is approved by the panel members and signed off by the supervisor before it is circulated to the student.
- (v) consideration should be given to the wording: the student would need to prepare a transfer *submission* rather than a transfer *report* as the *transfer report* term is reserved for a document as an outcome of the transfer panel review of the student's transfer;

The Committee agreed that they would not put in a regulation for the actual number of attempts to undergo a transfer process the student may be allowed to take as these should be determined locally by each School so long as it is not fewer than two. The Dean undertook to re-draft the entry along those lines and bring it back before the Committee for its approval at the next meeting.

193.5 Working Party on Academic Titles

The Dean stated that he chairs a sub-group on academic titles which was set up by the Heads' Committee and would report back to it and that the work of this group was in progress.

193.6 Erasmus Mundus procedure for new course proposals

The Dean spoke to the circulated document on a proposed procedure for making submission under *Erasmus Mundus* to the European Commission. The Committee was happy to approve the proposed procedure for a course proposal under the *Erasmus Mundus* scheme which would require that before making such a submission to the Commission, the course proposal must be signed off by the Head of School and passed for signature to the Dean of Graduate Studies who has the power to request amendments with reference to the academic content of the proposal. Once the proposal has been signed off by the Dean of Graduate Studies it may then be passed for the final approval to the Registrar.

193.7 Graduate Students Union issues

a) Partial fee refund scheme:

The GSU Vice President spoke to the circulated document and explained that the view of the GSU was that the current regulation appears unfair to those students who for reasons of research methods or exogenous factors have been unable to complete their work within the stated period of time and therefore a re-examination of this provision would be welcomed so that students who are registered for the 4th year and all subsequent years on the Ph.D. register or the 3rd year and all subsequent years on the Masters register might become eligible for the "partial fee refund scheme". Prof. John Saeed, a former Dean of Graduate Studies during whose term the scheme had been introduced, explained that it was intended as a mechanism to assist students who slightly go over the normal 3-year funded research in terms of making a submission and that it had never been intended as a permanent fee reduction for students submitting in later years than the first continuation year as this would in fact remove a financial incentive to finish earlier. The Committee did not therefore feel that it could support the GSU proposal.

b) Part-time fees

The Dean invited the GSU Vice President to speak to the issue. He stated that the current situation that students are expected to pay full fees for a partial registration is unacceptable to the GSU. The access to materials for a part-time student is substantially reduced, as is their exposure to supervision and that it is unfair to argue that students will continue their studies and burden the College facilities to the same level, as if they were on the full-time register. The Dean advised the Committee that the Fees Office had been made aware of the GSU position and expressed willingness to consider the issue further. The Dean undertook to develop a part-time fee proposal for the 07/08 admissions. It was noted that it might be difficult to quantify the actual use of resources by part-time students and Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services, advised that in his experience part-time students use the Library resources to a comparable level with that used by full-time students.

193.8 AOB

- (1) The Committee approved as read the Calendar part 2 changes to postgraduate courses under Item B1.
- (2) **Re Item B2:** The Committee endorsed the "Best Practice Guidelines on Research Supervision" as an official College document for academic staff and students and agreed that DTLP bring it strongly to the attention of all supervisors in their respective Schools after a revised version has been finalised. The Committee did not approve a GSU request that the document be signed by supervisors and students on the grounds that it is a guidelines document which was not intended as a legally binding one but as an advisory supportive tool.
- (3) **Re Item B3:** The Committee approved the proposed entry to 2.8 on the Role of Supervisors as circulated subject to three minor changes.
- (4) In response to a query from one of the Directors, the Dean advised that the Support Services Task Force and the College Secretary were continuing to examine the best way in which adequate resources would be put in place to support the DTLP at the School level and whether additional remuneration would be possible.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.30 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 27 April 2006.



Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast

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Date: 27 April 2006