

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 22 May, 2008
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Prof. Carol O'Sullivan, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Joe McDonagh, School of Business
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Dr Hazel Dodge, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics
Dr Thomas Connor (Acting), School of Medicine
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry
Dr Iain Atack, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Fintan Sheerin, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Mr Michael McGrath, Acting Manager of MIS (*Ex officio*)
Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Gabriel Magee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
Dr Jacqueline Potter, C.A.P.S.L. (*In attendance*)

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology
Dr Anne O'Connell, School of Dental Science
Prof. Biswajit Basu, School of Engineering
Prof. John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Philip Matthews, School of Education
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law
Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, School of Social Work & Social Policy

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

208.0 Minutes of 24 April 2008

The minutes of the meeting of 24 April, 2008 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

208.1 Matters Arising

Matters arising with respect to 207.2 (f) were deferred to be raised under AOB.

208.3 M.Sc./P.Grad.Dip. (exit only) in Respiratory Physiotherapy (2 yr p-t)

The Dean welcomed the proposed course director, Dr Juliette Hussey, from the School of Medicine (Department of Physiotherapy), and invited her to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Hussey explained that the course aims to develop the students' knowledge and skills in the physiotherapy management of patients with respiratory disorders and to enable the student to critically evaluate and engage in research in this area. Respiratory physiotherapy is a core area within the practice of physiotherapy, and basic knowledge and skills are gained in the undergraduate programme. However, in order to achieve the level necessary to practice at a senior or clinical specialist level, advanced clinical training is required. Currently there are no such Masters courses available in Ireland, and physiotherapists wishing to gain appropriate postgraduate education generally register on courses in the United Kingdom. The proposed course aims to provide knowledge and understanding of respiratory pathophysiology and management of respiratory disease, to enhance relevant practical skills and to provide experience and skills required to conduct research in this area. The course will be provided by the Department of Physiotherapy, TCD, in conjunction with the Physiotherapy Department in St James's Hospital. The course will be directed and coordinated initially by Dr Juliette Hussey, and the plan is to appoint a course co-ordinator (0.5FTE) as soon as the course has been approved. The course runs over two years of study, and it will take place on a part-time basis to facilitate physiotherapists working in clinical practice.

The Dean thanked Dr Hussey for her presentation. In a short discussion that followed, a few issues were raised and the following clarifications were obtained:

- a) that the medical library is happy to support the new course;
- b) that the dissertation supervisors will be two senior clinical staff from the Physiotherapy Department in St. James's Hospital;
- c) that additional costs have been inbuilt in the financial costings to adequately cover external and visiting lecturers' costs;
- d) that most of the teaching will be carried out by the existing staff;
- e) that the course, being part-time, targets in the first instance Irish and EU applicants but that a full-time format of delivery may be introduced at a later stage should the demand require it;
- f) that the School of Medicine supports the course for strategic reasons as the area of exercise medicine is one of the major research themes of the division of Physical Medicine in the School, and also because the course will increase the number of postgraduate students and research in the area. It is one example of the joint initiatives that will be facilitated by the Academic Medical Centre.
- g) that there will be significant number of shared modules with the current M.Sc. in Cardiovascular Rehabilitation and Prevention. The degree of overlap may lead one to question the need for two separate courses, but the clinical modules are different due to the distinct difference between the two clinical areas.
- h) that the financial costings, done on the basis of maximum 10 students, should in fact match the stipulated maximum number of 8 students and would need to be revised accordingly for a Council submission.

The Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to reviewing the financial costings as per point (h) above and any other additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

208.4 Chinese Scholarship Council

The Dean welcomed John McPartland, Director of the International Office, and invited him to talk about an agreement between the Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC) and the Irish Universities' Association (IUA) to host Chinese research students in Irish universities. The CSC is interested in expanding the scheme and sending both current PhD students for one year and also students for full three-four year PhD programmes to Ireland. The CSC will provide some stipend per month per annum to each student along with the cost of a return air ticket. However, the CSC's expectation is that Trinity will not charge tuition fees. This is a key component, and a significant issue that needs to be constructively addressed if the Schools are to receive the students. Whilst there currently may appear to be little financial incentive for the Schools to receive the students, College needs to look at this initiative long term and treat it as an investment in relationship building which should bring College dividends over the next few years. Hence, various ways to get around the issue of "waiving the fee" need to be considered as a matter of extreme importance if the scheme were to be embarked on actively. Mr McPartland further explained that the IUA will provide a sum of approx €7,200 to College for each student who enrolls in the CSC programme. In addition, the International Office may be able to source some funds from their successful SIF 2 Internationalisation Strand which could help ease the financial pressure on the Schools. John McPartland provided more detailed information on possible distribution of this funding such as contribution to the establishing of "brand Dublin" as a centre of academic excellence for international students and opening up a number of designated offices overseas to promote "brand Dublin" and its affiliated universities of which Trinity College is one. The Chinese Ministry of Education currently offers 10,000 scholarships to foreign students for study in China, (covering tuition, on campus accommodation, health insurance, and providing a modest stipend). The plan is to expand this programme further in an effort to demonstrate that the Chinese are prepared to give something back in return. Applications for the CSC scholarships close on 20 March for entry the following October, but there is a second round of applications in June this year for 2008/09. Disciplines of most interest to potential Chinese applicants are bioscience, nanotechnology, engineering, and health sciences.

In a discussion which followed the following issues were raised:

- a) the Dean noted that there is no "fee waiver" *de facto* in College as if students are not required to pay their fees, some alternative funding needs to be identified to pick up that charge, and that given the strategic importance of this issue a proper forum to discuss it in any detail should be at each Faculty level;
- b) that the Science Foundation Ireland has run a scheme for Irish-Chinese collaboration but an inhibiting factor was the lack of information on Chinese research groups;
- c) that there is a strategic merit to admit proper PhD students from China but the 1-year scheme does not appear to have any major benefit to the Schools;
- d) that it may be worth exploring if an exchange of final year undergraduate students from China on a short-term stay in Trinity could be possible so that research potential of Chinese near-graduates can be assessed with a view to inviting the most promising individuals to study for a PhD in Trinity.

The Dean thanked John McPartland for his presentation and invited the Committee members to contact him directly with their views and queries in order to advance this very promising initiative without undue delay.

208.5 Any Other Business

a) Prof. David Little, Head of the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences has asked the Dean to let the Committee members know that each Michaelmas term the School provides a four-week module in academic English

for overseas students admitted to its MPhil in English Language Teaching. The module runs for the month of September and is funded from the School's non-EU fee income. With effect from Michaelmas term 2009, the School is prepared to open this module to taught and research postgraduate students, for whom English is not their first language, admitted to other Schools. The Committee considered the offer a very positive initiative and were happy to support it.

b) Prof. John Kelly has raised a concern that the item of acceptance of applicants directly to the PhD register was approved by the Committee at the last meeting under AOB and was not included as a main agenda item. Prof. Kelly was absent at the April meeting and could not therefore contribute to the consideration of the item and had overlooked the subsequent including of the item on the Council main agenda. He outlined to the Committee his view that the School of Chemistry had developed a very stringent PhD transfer procedure from the Masters register and expressed his preference that the old system should be retained – he explained that the UCD partners within the Dublin Chemistry Graduate Programme had recently been persuaded to change over to the Trinity system.

In response the Dean clarified that the item had come up within the context of *Calendar Part 2* changes, and during discussion it emerged that there was unanimous support for it from the Committee, who recommended that the Dean bring a proposal to Council for further discussion as a main agenda item. When the item was discussed at the last Council meeting it received the same unanimous support. She further clarified that the Council *de facto* expanded into the main point of entry to the research register the already existing provision for admitting students directly to the PhD year 1 on probation, which to date was only used sporadically. A directly entry to the Masters has been retained for those students specifically aiming for such a degree or being transferred out of the PhD register proper. The expanded direct entry to the research register *via* PhD will be consolidated further by new stringent *Calendar* regulations for confirmation of the continuation on the PhD register to be brought to the next meeting. The Dean also tabled data from the HEA website and returns, showing that the current situation can clearly lead to Trinity's level of research and PhD students being seriously mis-represented *vs* other Irish Universities. Such misinterpretations could clearly be very damaging to Trinity's reputation as a research intensive university.

In the discussion which followed, the Committee confirmed that they were still satisfied that thorough consideration had been given to this item at the April meeting, and that they were happy to ratify their decision and its subsequent approval by the University Council and Board. The Dean recommended that the transfer or confirmation process be completed by the 18th month in order that the student could transfer to the Masters register, if appropriate, in good time to submit by the end of year 2. Prof. Kelly expressed concern on behalf of the School of Chemistry with respect to the possible feasibility of this timeframe. Further discussion will continue at the next meeting when new *Calendar* regulations are to be discussed.

c) Dr Fintan Sheerin raised a number of issues with respect to deferred item 207.2 (f) under Matters Arising. He explained that currently, the School of Nursing and Midwifery has a number of taught MSc programmes which have clinical components, whose exit diplomas fulfill the An Bord Altranais requirements for working in specialist areas and obtaining a specialty allowance. These include: gerontology, mental health and palliative care. Furthermore, according to the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery, the Specialist P.Grad.Dip. (normally worth 60ECTS) is the educational basis for advancement along the clinical pathway towards accreditation as a Clinical Nurse Specialist. Further advancement along that path towards accreditation as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner, required the completion of at least an MSc along with an add-on skills module. The main problem lies in the fact that, upon completion and graduation with a diploma in any of the above specialties, the nurse may, after a couple of years, return to pursue the MSc in order to continue his/her career progression. As it stands, this will require that he/she must again do the taught component of the Masters course (normally equivalent to P.Grad.Dip. 60 ECTS) and then undertake the dissertation. As the Health Service Executive is the funding agency for such courses, and in light of their recently-published Review of Postgraduate Nursing and Midwifery Education and focus on value for money, it is unlikely that such funding would be available to put a nurse through the "same" taught programme twice. This problem is becoming more acute as there is currently in place a number of stand-alone P.Grad.Dip. courses in Specialist Nursing and Oncological Nursing which, at level 9, should be integrated to allow onward progression along the path to an MSc. This, along with the gender and age profile of current postgraduate students may be seen to be disadvantageous to nurses/midwives and may be out of line with service and career requirements. Finally, the fact that UCD, UL and DCU allow progression from P.Grad.Dip. to MSc places Trinity at a distinct disadvantage to them, and this may be contributing to the fact that, in 2008/09, a number of those P.Grad.Dip. programmes will not run due to lack of applicants. In UCD, the progression from P.Grad.Dip. to MSc is facilitated by the ability of graduates to rescind their diploma and re-enter the MSc programme.

The Dean noted the issues raised and advised that they would be passed to the Registrar and the Bologna Desk for consideration.

d) The Committee noted and approved the proposed *Calendar Part 2* changes for 2008 as listed in Section B on the agenda (items 1,2 and 3) and the Procedures for the Review of Graduate Education as part of the School review (Section B item 4) for implementation by the Quality Office as of 2008/09.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.15 am.



Prof. Carol O'Sullivan

Date: 12 June 2008