

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**ITEM 1**

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2015  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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- Present:** Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Ruth Barton, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education  
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering  
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English  
Professor Anne Dolan, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Jürgen Uhlich, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy
- Ms Katie Crowther, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Dr Gianna Hegarty, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President  
*(Ex officio)*  
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative  
*(in attendance Ex officio)*
- Apologies:** Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Frank Barry, School of Business  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Elizabeth Heffernan, School of Law  
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics  
Professor Benjamin Wold, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative  
(*Ex officio*)  
Ms Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian (in attendance *Ex officio*)

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

Ms Mary McMahon and Ms Leona Coady (Academic Registry) for  
item GS/15-16/11  
Dr Daniel Faas (Department of Sociology) for item GS/15-16/12  
Dr Paul O'Grady (Department of Philosophy) for item GS/15-16/13

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### **GS/15-16/9 Minutes of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

The minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated.

### **GS/15-16/10 Matters Arising:**

*Re: GS/15-16/6 Trinity policy on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL):*  
Prof. Jürgen Uhlich advised that his School's Committee Meeting had some concerns with respect to the RPL policy and he was advised to note these so that they could be passed to the RPL Working Group for consideration. Prof. Lalor requested that School of Nursing and Midwifery have a representative on the RPL Working Group.

*Re: GS/14-15/40 School of Business Course Proposals: i) M.Sc. in Financial Risk Management, ii) M.Sc. in International Finance, iii) M.Sc. in Investments, iv) M.Sc. in Marketing, v) M.Sc. in Advanced Accounting, vi) M.Sc. in Management with Finance, vii) M.Sc. in Management with Marketing, viii) M.Sc. in Management with Accounting, ix) P.Grad.Dip. in Accounting:*

The Dean advised that the outstanding course proposals from the School of Business (MSc in Management with Accounting, MSc in Management with Finance and MSc in Management with Marketing) had been submitted to the University Council which approved them on 21 October.

*Re: GS/14-15/43 Policy on Joint and Dual Awards.*

The Dean advised that the policy on joint and dual awards in its revised form was approved by the University Council on 21 October and agreed to circulate to members the final approved policy document.

### **GS/15-16/11 Postgraduate Progression - Information request from Academic Registry:**

The Dean welcomed the Director of Academic Registry, Ms Leona Coady, and the Examinations & Timetables Officer, Ms Mary McMahon. The Director of Academic Registry explained that one of the aims of the Academic Registry Enhancement Programme was to configure SITS to develop and build calculation rules for progression of harmonised postgraduate taught courses. She also advised that

SITS would become the complete student and course data repository and that this would satisfy Trinity's statutory reporting obligations to the HEA.

The Examinations & Timetables Officer spoke to the presentation about the benefits that the implementation of postgraduate progression in SITS would bring. Students would see their results immediately following publication and would be able to access transcripts generated by the Academic Registry. Schools would have an automatic calculation of results and awards which would enhance data accuracy. The Academic Registry would acquire the ability to schedule students for conferring ceremonies without the current need for graduands to apply in advance.

The Examinations & Timetables Officer explained to the committee that some essential information with respect to PG course regulations which has been requested from the Schools was still outstanding and she clarified that the planned re-configuration of SITS could not progress without that information. She further confirmed that all systems and business requirements needed to be fully documented prior to implementation. In response to queries she clarified that training would be provided to Schools by IT Services and user guides would be developed by the Academic Registry to include new functionality. A training plan would be devised to coincide with the rollout of the new functionality, and a plan for phased implementation in 2015/16 would be put in place for all postgraduate courses.

With respect to 2014/15 academic year the Examinations & Timetables Officer noted that there were still many results incomplete for both the annual and supplemental examination sessions.

The Director of Academic Registry then explained that the request for Court of Examiners and Publication of Results dates for 2015/16 was required in order to enable the Academic Registry to schedule graduation ceremonies and she confirmed that it was planned that the 2016/17 PG taught course commencements would be scheduled via SITS. She explained that the use of SITS to schedule conferrals of research graduates was under review, and that Academic Registry was close to beginning the implementation of the research functionality in SITS.

In the discussion that followed it was noted that the *Harmonisation of Assessment and Progression Regulations: One-Year Taught Masters Degrees and Postgraduate Diplomas* document of 2012 would need to be updated to take account of postgraduate courses which are delivered over two years and have 120 credits and any other non- standard models.

It was agreed to circulate the postgraduate progression slides to the committee members.

### **GS/15-16/12 A new joint course proposal with UCD MSc in Comparative Social Change:**

Prof. Daniel Faas, the course director of the Masters in Comparative Social Change explained that the proposed course would be jointly delivered and awarded with University College Dublin as a collaborative initiative between the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy in Trinity and the School of Sociology in UCD. The course proposal had already been approved by the Graduate School Board in UCD on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 and was due to be submitted to the UCD University Programme

Board (equivalent to the University Council in Trinity) on the 26<sup>th</sup> November. Prof. Faas clarified that the new joint course had emerged from a long standing relationship between the academic staff in both universities and that the proposal fell firmly within the *TCD-UCD Framework for Collaborative Taught Programmes/Courses*, approved by the University Council in Michaelmas Term 2014 (CL/14-15/006), whose purpose was to support the development of good quality taught postgraduate courses leading to joint degrees, through the pooling of academic expertise with counterparts in UCD.

In the discussion which followed the issue of the proposed minimum number of students required to run the course was raised. Prof Faas confirmed that the minimum numbers detailed on the proposal were conservative and that he expected that there would be no issue with student recruitment to the course after the initial set up. It was noted that the course modules were to be shared with other cohorts of students which should ensure good class dynamics even if numbers recruited to the course in the first years were low. Prof. Faas explained that the course did not offer a part-time delivery as it was targeting graduates aiming to progress to full time postgraduate education rather than people in employment. Prof. Faas also clarified that the course was intended to be delivered face to face without any online modules as it was targeting applicants already resident or intended to be resident full time in Dublin for the duration of the course. The Dean of Graduate Studies explained that recently developed postgraduate courses tended to be either fully online or face to face without blended delivery. The committee approved the course without any changes.

**GS/15-16/13 A new course proposal MPhil in Philosophy:**

Prof. Paul O'Grady, the course director of the new MPhil in Philosophy, spoke to the circulated proposal and explained that the proposed course aimed to strengthen the current postgraduate profile of the department. He explained that the market for taught masters in this subject area was robust and that UCD successfully runs seven taught MA's in philosophy. He then emphasised the high international ranking of his department and advised that the proposed M.Phil with its emphasis on contemporary philosophy is strongly positioned to enter the vibrant market. Prof. Paul O'Grady explained that his department had clear potential to develop further niche MPhil programmes, as UCD had done, by pooling the module resources. Two such areas for further Masters might focus on ancient philosophy and Berkeley studies. In a short discussion which followed it was noted that the course proposer in consultation with the Global Relations Office had carried out market analysis and developed marketing strategy aimed at increasing non-EU student recruitment, specifically targeting Brazil and India. In response to a financial question Prof. Paul O'Grady explained that the teaching costs were low as the delivery would be done with the current staff resources of the department but that he anticipated that going forward income from the course would enable the recruitment of a teaching fellow thereby increasing the department's current staff numbers. The committee approved the course without any changes.

**GS/15-16/14 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2013/14 for University Council on 23 September 2015 including Postgraduate Admissions Data for 2014/15 (deferred GS/15-16/7 item):**

The Dean of Graduate Studies spoke to the circulated *Report*. She reminded the

members that the *Report* had already been discussed by the University Council in September 2015 (CL/15-16/006). She drew the members' attention to the issues she had highlighted to Council which included a decline in the postgraduate student numbers with the overall trend showing a decline in the period 2009/10 to 2013/14, with a particular decline in the number of part-time students. New entrant student numbers were down by 163 in 2013/14 when compared to 2012/13. She also noted that while the overall breakdown between male and female students on the research register was almost even, there were significantly more females on taught courses, and female students outnumbered male students in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Health Sciences across both the taught and research registers with male students outnumbering female students only in the Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics and Science.

The Dean of Graduate Studies drew the members' attention to an overall increase in the number of postgraduate taught courses and raised concern that approximately half of those courses ran in 2013/14 with fewer than 10 students. The vigorous discussion that followed noted the efforts by Schools and PG course committees across College to increase postgraduate student numbers and to introduce new postgraduate courses. The committee raised their concerns about the sustainability of this effort under the current financial and budgeting model. Members agreed that a brief discussion document outlining the concerns of committee members regarding quality and sustainability of PG taught courses within this model would be forwarded for consideration by the relevant groups.

A member raised a query with respect to the issue of external examiners covered in the *Report* which lists the examiners in place for a given academic year thereby legitimising them in their role. The member noted that although the *Report* comments on the positive feedback in the majority of external examiner reports it does not provide examples of such feedback. It was agreed to include examples of external examiners reports' feedback in the next *Report*.

The Dean of Graduate Studies also drew the members' attention to the high number of research degrees approved in 2013/14 by Board and Council. She expressed serious concern at the number of candidates that failed their PhD or were recommended for a lower degree and she confirmed that in almost all cases candidates submitted appeals against these results.

A member commented that the long-standing practice in Trinity of allowing students to submit their research thesis without the approval of the supervisor may result reputational damage both to the College and the supervisor in these cases where the work was awarded a lower degree or failed outright. The Dean explained that the College practice ensured that the student took full responsibility for their work at submission time. It was agreed to survey the thesis submission practises in other universities and circulate the information.

The area of postgraduate admissions was also discussed. Admissions data for 2014/15 shows that there were 4,568 applications for taught courses, 3,343 offers were made with 2,435 acceptances leading the registration of 2,060 students. Members expressed concerns that the online process lacked a personalised touch with some applicants getting lost in the system for various reasons. Members were advised to monitor the next round of admissions closely and pass their concerns

directly to the Academic Registry management not as action points but as comments for feedback so that conclusions can be drawn to improve the online admissions system overall.

### **GS/15-16/15            AOB**

The Dean of Graduate Studies also drew the members' attention to *James M. Flaherty Program* under the Ireland Canada University Foundation. She explained that this international exchange programme was designed to promote greater dialogue and partnership between the universities of Ireland and Canada in commemoration of Canada's former Minister for Finance, and great friend of Ireland, James M. Flaherty. The programme has two exchange tracks, one for students (James M. Flaherty Scholarship) and one for academic staff (James M. Flaherty Visiting Professorship), and the Dean invited interested members to check the terms on the Foundation's website and bring *James M. Flaherty Program* to the attention of their students.

### **Section B for noting and approval**

#### **B1.    Amended *Framework with UCD*:**

The Committee noted changes to the "University College Dublin and Trinity College Dublin Framework for Collaborative Postgraduate Taught Programmes/Courses Leading to Joint Awards" originally approved by the University Council in 2014 (CL/14-15/006) evident in Appendix 1 of a new joint course proposal with UCD *MSc in Comparative Social Change* approved by UCD Graduate School Board on 7 October.

The approved changes referred to *Section A5 Agreed Mark/Grade Scheme and Appeals (vi)* amended to: "The aggregate mark for the award is calculated using the credit-weighted average of the Trinity marks and the UCD grades for all successfully completed modules. The single joint award will have a Trinity award classification when Trinity is the Administrative Hub or a UCD award classification when UCD is Administrative Hub, based on the table above."

The committee were advised that there will be other changes once the review of the whole document in the context of a new joint PME course development currently under way is complete.

#### **B2.    *MPhil in Chinese Studies*: a new optional module in "Early 20th Century Chinese History"**

The Committee noted and approved a new optional module in "Early 20th Century Chinese History" proposed by Dr Adrian Tien, Associate Professor In Chinese Studies. The new module is intended to be taught in Hilary Term of the current academic year.

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> October 2015