



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 1 November 2018
Boardroom, Provost's House

XX = Council relevance

Present: Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Rachel Mary McLoughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Sinéad Roden, Trinity Business School
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Philip Coleman, School of English
Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Justin Doherty, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor David Shepherd, School of Religion
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative
(in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative
(in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer
(in attendance *Ex officio*)
Dr Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies)
(in attendance *Ex officio*)



Apologies:

Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research (Ex officio)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering (designate)

Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Mr Oisín Coulter, Graduate Students' Union President (Ex officio)

Dr Gogoal Falia, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (Ex officio)

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Library ((in attendance Ex officio)

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning),
Secretary (in attendance Ex officio)

In attendance:

Ms Ciara Joyce, Student Counselling Services for item GS/18-19/228

Dr Mark Robinson, Student Counselling Services for item GS/18-19/228

Professor Martha O'Hagan Luff, Trinity Business School for item GS/18-19/229

Professor Alexandros Seretakís, School of Law for item GS/18-19/229

Dr Daniel Rogers, Programme Manager (Tangent) for item GS/18-19/230

Ms Catherine Allen, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

The Dean introduced Ms Catherine Allen and noted that Ms Helen Thornbury would be taking minutes of the meeting.

GS/18-19/226 Minutes of 27th September 2018

The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/18-19/227 Matters Arising

Re: GS/17-18/189 PhD by publication: The Dean advised that the recommendations from the working group would be discussed under item GS/18-19/223

Re: GS/17-18/193 Structured PhD module in "Research Integrity and Impact in an Open Scholarship Era": The Dean advised that the module was live on the SITS system from 1 November 2018 and that he would be issuing communications to eligible PGR students and staff to inform them about the module and how PhD candidates can enrol on it.

Re: GS/17-18/200 Provost's Project Awards: The Dean advised that the shortlisting of applications for the Provost Projects Award scheme 2018/19 had been concluded and the shortlisted applications were now under external review. It is expected that the external review process will be completed by November 22nd and individual feedback will then be given to each applicant prior to the announcement of the successful awardees at the November meeting of the University Council.



Re: GS/18-19/212 Review of application and admission procedure:

The Dean advised that he had had an initial and productive meeting with Ms Leona Coady and Ms Jennifer Pepper, Academic Registry and that a follow up meeting to further discuss improvements to the PG application procedures was scheduled for December.

(i) He noted that there will be changes made to the communications that are sent to candidates receiving conditional offers to inform them of the final deadline for meeting the conditions of the offer.

(ii) He reiterated the importance of applicants who are not registered not being permitted to attend classes.

(iii) The Dean advised that where an application is not fully complete there is no requirement to issue an offer but there is a requirement to issue an update to the applicant and to indicate this fact on the relevant application.

(iv) He noted that more regular communications will be sent to applicants under offer and applicants who have accepted offer.

(v) The Dean advised that a number of the suggestions for improvements raised by the committee would require SITS systems changes which were unlikely to be implemented due to cost and human resource constraints during the TEP implementation phase.

(vi) The Dean advised that PGT courses with high applicant numbers should update their course webpages to advise that early applications are essential and can advise prospective applicants that where a course fills before the advertised closing date further applications may not be accepted.

(vi): The Dean advised the committee that if any PGT course had particular admission requirements that could not facilitate rolling admissions these may be considered on a case by case basis but any derogation from the rolling admissions policy would need to be approved by University Council.

Re: GS/18-19/216 QQI Ireland's Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes:

The Dean advised the committee that the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group had declined to endorse the document as it stands and requested further time for fuller university wide consultation on the draft document.

Re: Payment of stipend to new entrant PhD candidates

The Dean updated members of the committee who had raised queries re the timing of the first stipend payments to new entrant PhD students and confirmed that it is not possible to pay candidates until they are fully registered students. He undertook to seek clarification from AR on the possibility of early registration for funded PhD new entrants.

GS/18-19/228 Mental Health and Postgraduate Students

The Dean welcomed Ms Ciara Joyce and Dr Mark Robinson from Student Counselling Services (SCS) who spoke to their PowerPoint presentation.



They explained that the mental health of PG students (particularly research students) has become international news and that a recent European survey found that 1 in 2 postgraduate research students experiences psychological distress during their time of study. Research in the area of PG mental health is still quite new but early indicators are that the PGR cohort is particularly vulnerable to experiencing mental health issues and this can in part be attributed to the challenges in their working environment. Ms Joyce and Mr Robinson gave an overview of the services that are currently available for our PG students and explained that they were seeking to progress an early response initiative in which they would bring training and insight into the PG space through research supervisors and school based initiatives in an effort to assist students to better manage their mental health and wellbeing. They explained that there are currently three separate teams from the SCS involved in this area: Student Learning and Development; Student to Student Peer Support and Student Counselling Services. Ms Joyce and Dr Robinson noted that their attendance records indicate that an increasing number of PG candidates are now availing of these services and of these, the majority are international/ non-EU PG students.

Ms Joyce and Dr Robinson opened discussion by seeking any practical steps that could be taken to better assist PG candidates with managing their mental health and wellbeing. Ms Joyce and Dr Robinson pointed out the importance of the tone of communications between supervisor and students and the value for students of being able to manage their emotional response to necessary academic criticism and the Dean then advised that he was pleased to see new focus on the wellbeing of research students and postdocs throughout college and noted that under the Trinity/UCD Supervision Workshop Series this year there would be a workshop for supervisors to assist them with how to best to identify and respond to potential mental health difficulties in their students. A member queried if training in this area could be brought into the School for all supervisory staff within the school as it was agreed by members that the different working environments and practises across college would require tailored training in this area. The Dean agreed that this workshop would be made available to anyone in a discipline or school with responsibility for postgraduate students.

The Dean reiterated the importance for supervisors of being able to separate their academic and pastoral care duties to their students to ensure no conflicts of interest. Members discussed the benefits of school based peer to peer supports and it was noted that advice to new entrant candidates should include information on alternative exit strategies for candidates who may not achieve the PhD. Supervisor to supervisor training was welcomed and one member advised the committee that their school has now embedded wellbeing, mindfulness and health into the PG curricula for the school. The importance of the information and supports provided in the pre-sessional PG orientation week was highlighted and members undertook to advise their schools that this week of activity should be highlighted as the start of the PGT and the PGR experience for all new entrants.

The Dean thanked Ms Joyce and Dr Robinson for their presentation and extended thanks to those services in College dedicated to improving the PG experience for



students including the GSU, the Dean of Students and the Postgraduate Advisory Service.

XX GS/18-19/229 New interdisciplinary MSc course proposal in Law and Finance

The Dean welcomed Professor Martha O'Hagan Luff (Trinity Business School) and Professor Alexandros Seretakis (School of Law) and invited them to speak to their interdisciplinary MSc course proposal. The Dean advised that there was significant market demand for an MSc in Law and Finance with Dublin an internationally recognised centre for finance. He noted that both schools had expansion plans and shared a strong and fruitful working relationship in the UG space with a very successful joint bachelors degree in Law and Business. He clarified that the MSc, although jointly conceived and taught would be owned by the School of Law and noted that it followed the standard 1 year full time taught masters model of 60 ECTS taught components and a 30 ECTS research dissertation. An exit award of P.Grad.Dip in Law and Finance would be available for candidates who had successfully achieved 60 ECTS taught modules. The Dean noted that the proposed MSc would draw on existing modules from the LLM and the MSc in Finance and he explained that candidates could choose elective modules in a pattern of 20 ECTS from Law and 10 ECTS from finance or 20 from finance and 10 ECTS from law depending on their background. All candidates would take a 30 ECTS dissertation and 4 mandatory modules totalling 30 ECTS.

The Dean explained to the committee that appeals would be submitted to the school hosting the module under appeal and clarified that general appeals would be investigated by the School of Law. He advised the committee that the examining conventions in the Schools differed with one school having a pass mark of 40% and the other having a pass mark of 50% and he indicated that this had been taken into consideration in the drafting of the course proposal.

The committee welcomed the proposed course and a member sought clarification on whether it would be competing with the current Masters in Law and Business offered by UCD. It was clarified that this proposed course was driven by market requirements for a more specialised Law and Finance qualification and thus was unlikely to be in direct competition with UCD and it was noted that recruitment for both the LLM and the MSc Finance was very strong annually.

A member questioned whether an external (to both schools) member should be appointed to the Course Committee which comprises staff from both schools. Prof O'Hagan Luff indicated that significant work had been put into defining the roles and responsibilities of each member of the course committee and that it was not envisaged that there would be any requirement for an external moderator for this committee – and not least because of the existing excellent relationships between the school in the context of their joint undergraduate programme.

A query was raised as to the differing pass grades for the dissertation module and members agreed that an agreed pass mark (of either 40% or 50%) was essential



given that candidates, irrespective of their specialisation, would be taking the same module and would be examined in the same way. Prof O'Hagan Luff and Prof Seretakis undertook to agree a single pass mark for the dissertation module.

The committee recommended the new course proposal to Council pending this change and a favourable external report.

XX GS/18-19/230 New Postgraduate Certificate course proposal in Innovation and Enterprise Development

The Dean welcomed Dr Daniel Rogers and Dr Jake Byrne (Tangent, Trinity's Ideas Workspace) and invited them to speak to their course proposal. They explained that there was significant market demand for the P.Grad. Cert in Innovation and Enterprise Development which would be delivered initially over 5 months beginning in March 2019 with further iterations of the course expected to begin in September annually. The Dean noted the innovative blended learning delivery which will take place in Bank of Ireland Workbenches in four counties. One 10 ECTS module will be delivered face to face and two 10 ECTS modules will be delivered online. The Dean also noted that as Tangent is a unit within Trinity that is not within a school any appeals would be reviewed by the academic oversight committee in the first instance and then by the Dean of Graduate Studies. A member asked if the modules would be available for current structured PhD candidates to take as part of their ECTS requirement and Dr Rogers clarified that they would not be available on the first iteration of the course (as it was funded by the HEA to be aimed at specific cohorts of applicant) but that the academic oversight committee aimed to open the modules and the P.Grad.Cert. to current PGR candidates in the future.

The committee recommended the new course proposal to Council pending a favourable external reviewers report.

GS/18-19/231 Postgraduate Entry Requirements

The Dean opened discussion on the current admission requirements for PG candidates. He asked that the members consider three aspects of the current entry requirements:

(i) Requirement for two academic references:

The Dean reminded the committee that one academic reference could be substituted with one professional reference where this was deemed appropriate by the programme co-ordinator for any PGT programme. He advised that the standard requirement for two academic references would remain but that, in exceptional circumstances, where there was a strong rationale for a PG programme to accept two professional references based on the nature of the course then the course director could apply to the Dean for this permission and that this must be done before the end of November. If permission was granted the Academic Registry PG admissions team would be notified of the change. He noted that the general requirement for all candidates to submit two references would remain.



(ii) Requirement for 2.1 in honors (level 8) degree:

The Dean advised the committee that the Calendar Part III regulations refer to the 2.1 honors degree entry requirement for PG degree programmes only and do not make specific reference to these requirements applying to P.Grad. Dip or P.Grad. Cert applicants. He noted that as both P.Grad.Cert and P.Grad.Dip programmes can now be used as an entry pathway to a Masters under general regulations and sought agreement from the committee to amend the Calendar Part III admissions regulations to include the requirement for applicants to P.Grad.Cert and P.Grad.Dip courses to hold a 2.1 honors degree. The committee agreed that where a derogation from this regulation was required at programme level it should be proposed to the Dean by the course co-ordinator and would be reviewed and considered by the Committee in each case. The Dean further noted that this change would not affect the current case by case process of application of RPL for entry for candidates who do not meet minimum requirements and would only apply where a programme sought to change their minimum requirement for entry. The committee recommended this new approach which will further facilitate non-traditional entrants to PG programmes. A proposed calendar change to reflect this decision will be brought to the December meeting of Graduate Studies Committee.

(iii) Requirement for January start date for IRC funded PGR candidates:

The Dean explained that the IRC had originally funded PhD candidates on its programmes from October annually. This had now changed and the funding start date for most IRC programmes had now moved to January. It was explained that this January start date had been facilitated for candidates to date through a series of workarounds in which the candidate would be registered retrospectively to the previous September and would remain as a September registrant throughout the programme with an extension free of fees granted at the end of study period. It was further explained that this method of working around the January funding start was increasingly problematic for candidates and for the funder and the Dean sought the members' views on the introduction of a January start date for PGR candidates in addition to the current September and March entry points.

A member queried if the proposed new January start for PGR should replace the March start and after discussion it was agreed that the March entry point should remain as is. Another member asked if the January start would only be available for IRC funded candidates and it was agreed that it would be available for any applicant irrespective of funding. It was further agreed that it would not be mandatory for schools to accept candidates to a January start date but that all schools should have the option to do this. It was explained that the requirements for annual progress reports and confirmation at the 18 month mark on register would apply to the January start candidates and that SITS would factor in the start date of the candidate when sending prompts for progress and confirmation reports.

The committee recommended that a January start date be implemented on SITS for entry from January 2019 onwards.

XX GS/18-19/232 Working group on PhD and Publications



The Dean spoke to the circulated memo and reminded the committee that the original query that had led to the setting up of the working group on PhD and publications was whether it might be appropriate for Trinity to allow the submission of a body of published work for consideration for the award of PhD. He advised the committee that the working group had considered the following:

(i) whether Trinity should allow the submission of a body published work, carried out by a candidate who was not at the time registered as a student of the college, for assessment as a PhD.

The committee were in agreement that this should not be permitted.

(ii) whether Trinity should, in acknowledging that we do permit PhD theses to contain published work, recommend the creation of a new strand of PhD named 'PhD by Publication' or whether Trinity should continue to view such degrees simply as PhD simpliciter.

The committee were in agreement that there should be no new strand of PhD and no change in nomenclature.

(iii) what provision should be made for situations where part of the PhD thesis involves paper/s that have been jointly authored and in particular should Trinity only permit PhDs where the candidate has been the main or lead author of published papers, thus ruling out the inclusion of papers that were published collaboratively or papers that had been authored jointly or collaboratively but had not yet been published.

The committee acknowledged that one of the criteria for the PhD in Trinity is that it is both original and is "a candidate's own work". They recognised however that it is common practise in some disciplines that a PhD would involve a series of papers (published or unpublished) bookended by an introduction and conclusion and that some, if not all, of these chapters may be jointly authored. The committee also recognised that in certain disciplines papers are authored collaboratively, without a lead or main author. It further noted that Part III of the University Calendar contains inconsistent statements on this issue.

It was acknowledged that as there are different practises across disciplines it would be inappropriate for Trinity to only operate one model of PhD where publications were included. It was further acknowledged that where chapters in a PhD thesis are in the form of jointly authored papers the candidate must satisfy the examiners as to the candidates' precise contribution to the papers/chapters.

The committee recommended that the specific nuances of how a discipline approaches the idea of a PhD thesis that contains published or publishable papers, including jointly authored work, should be determined locally by the relevant discipline but must be made explicit in the school's postgraduate research student hand books.

The committee also recommended that, where chapters in a PhD thesis are in the form of jointly authored papers, the candidate must, at the beginning of each chapter give a detailed account of the precise nature of her or his own contribution to that chapter/paper.



Finally, the committee reviewed the proposed Calendar Part III changes and recommended that these changes and the recommendations of the working group on PhD and Publications be presented to University Council for approval.

GS/18-19/233 AOB

- (i) *Use of Turnitin software:* The Dean reminded the committee of the requirement to use Turnitin through the VLE from October 2018 and not through the standalone Turnitin site. A member queried how the work which is to be assessed for a PhD candidate's confirmation on register process can be submitted through Turnitin and was advised that the School should set up a new module on Blackboard for administrative purposes to facilitate this.
- (ii) *Dissertations for Professional Doctorates:* This item was raised in relation to the relevance of supervision of professional doctorate theses in so far as promotion applications and school workload models are concerned. It was noted that supervision of such theses is extremely onerous – far more onerous than supervision of a PGT dissertation – yet there does not appear to be provision in college promotion forms for someone to indicate supervision thereof. The Dean undertook to raise this matter with the Vice Provost/Chief Academic Officer.
- (iii) *Calendar Part III project:* The Dean spoke to the circulated memo and template and explained that Calendar Part III entries for PGT programmes had expanded and changed over the preceding years with some now containing significant information including dates and deadlines and others containing only the regulations for the programme itself. It was now proposed that the entries would be somewhat standardised and the Calendar Part III would contain the regulations for each programme whilst the more detailed information on modules being offered and dates for submission of work would be contained in each programme handbook. The Dean noted that this should reduce the incidences of duplication of information and noted the proposal would include a link to the programme handbook on the individual programme listing within the Calendar Part III. It is envisaged that this change will result in a more accessible Calendar Part III and a reduction in workload for the academic and administrative staff who are involved in the annual Calendar part III changes process.
The committee welcomed the proposed changes to the Calendar Part III programme entries and it was clarified that the new template would be populated by Trinity Teaching and Learning staff for each School rather than the Schools being required to undertake this task themselves.
- (iv) *PhD candidates on Provost's PhD Project Awards (PPPA)* The Dean explained to the committee that he had received queries on whether the candidates for the PhD under this scheme were expected to undertake (unpaid) TA or demonstrating work as part of the scheme. He noted that in some schools internally funded PhD students carry out unpaid work of this kind whilst in other schools Teaching Assistants are paid for their hours. He further explained that he was seeking the committee's view on this issue for the candidates on the PPPA only and that uniformity across the schools was important for this cohort.



After a broad discussion on the lack of funding available to pay teaching assistants and demonstrators in some disciplines, and the reliance of schools on the invaluable work that they carry out it was agreed that this matter would be discussed as a standalone item at the next GSC meeting. A member proposed the establishing of a TA/demonstrating diploma which candidates could earn based on the number of hours of teaching and demonstrating that they undertake during the course of the PhD and the Dean undertook to look into this further to explore how this could be introduced.

XX Section B for noting and approval

GS/18-19/234 Stand-alone module (Category 5): Case Studies in Drug Discovery & Development (under the auspices of Clinical Research Development Ireland)

The committee approved the new 2.5 ECTS module for delivery from 2018/19 available to postgraduate students registered at any third level institution in Ireland.

GS/18-19/235 Structured PhD Module in the School of Law (Category 2)

The committee approved the new 5 ECTS module for delivery from 2018/19 to facilitate PGR student exchanges between the School of Law and participating LERU partner institutions.

XX Section C for noting

GS/18-19/236 The committee noted the Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated Colleges Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 30th May 2018.

GS/18-19/237 The committee noted the email from the Registrar dated 4 October 2018 requesting amendment of the GSC terms of reference with relation to gender balance.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.35am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 1 November 2018