Item 1

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held at 10am on Thursday 23 May 2019
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 Nigel Stevenson, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering
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 John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine
Professor Mary Bourke, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Helen O'Hara, Information Technology Services Representative
                    (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative
                    (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies)
                    (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, Trinity Teaching and Learning)
                    Secretary (in attendance *Ex officio)*

Apologies:
Professor Linda Doyle, Dean of Research   (*Ex officio*)

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Joseph McDonagh, Trinity Business School
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law
Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Mauro Ferreira, School of Physics
Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, School of Religion

Prof. Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent
(in attendance *Ex officio*)
Mr Oisin Coulter, Graduate Students' Union President   (*Ex officio*)
Dr Gogoal Falia, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

At the start of the meeting, the Dean noted that the meeting was taking place in the Boardroom of the Provost's House for the last time as from the next academic year the GSC will meet in the College Boardroom in the new Business School building. The Dean also expressed his and members' sympathy for the family of Prof. Seamus Lawless and for his colleagues in the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

In attendance:
Leona Coady, Director of Academic Registry for item   GS/18-19/293

GS/18-19/291 Minutes of 18 April 2019
The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/18-19/292 Matters Arising

Re: GS/18-19/275 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2017/18: The Dean advised that the report received significant discussion by Council in early May and that it would be further debated at the forthcoming Council. In the meantime the Dean was liaising with the Vice-Provost and Chief Academic Officer & Deputy President in relation to the new College Strategic Plan which will provide for significant reforms of the postgraduate space in Trinity.

Re: GS/18-19/278(iii) In relation to the next iteration of the PPA scheme, the Dean advised that a new call will go out by the end of May and asked members to encourage colleagues in their Schools to apply.

Re: GS/18-19/285 A new course proposal: MPhil in Environmental History: The Dean advised that Council had approved the proposal at its meeting in early May.

Re: GS/18-19/288 Policy on Internships and Placements: The Dean noted that the item had been deferred to the next Council due to the lack of time to discuss it at the last meeting.

Re: GS/18-19/289 Working Group on Thesis Committees: The Dean noted that the item had been deferred to the next Council due to the lack of time to discuss it at the last meeting.

Re Action GS/18-19/289.1: The Dean confirmed with the Vice-Provost and Chief Academic Officer & Deputy President that, if Council endorses the thesis committee model, membership of such a committee would be reflected in promotion application forms.

Re: GS/18-19/290
(ii) The Dean congratulated Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, for having organised a well-attended one-day conference on the 9th May in the Long Room Hub to mark the 10th anniversary of the Postgraduate Student Support service in College.
(iii) The Dean noted that the *Postgrads' Got Talent* event (where he himself shone like a star playing the keyboard and singing – something he did not, himself, admit to) organised for PG students on the 21st May was a great success well attended by staff and students. He especially thanked the judging panel, GSC members Ewa Sadowska, Professors Nigel Stevenson, Paula Quigley, Aoife McLysaght and the Dean of Students for so effectively channelling their inner Simon Cowells.

XX   **GS/18-19/293 Academic Registry Annual Report 2017/18**
The Dean welcomed Leona Coady, Director of the Academic Registry (AR), to speak to the circulated *Academic Registry Annual Report 2017/18* already noted on Agenda C and approved by Council on 10 April. He clarified that this was the second annual report that the AR produced on its own whereas the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Dean of Graduate Studies were producing their own reports for that year containing, amongst other things, an analytical narrative in respect of the data contained in the AR 2017/18 report. The AR Director introduced the item by noting that the report has been broken into three parts. The Introduction reviews key projects and challenges in 2017/18, part 2 overviews the AR and its structure, and part 3 deals with service delivery and operations across admissions, registered student data, fees and payments, academic progress, reporting and course developments. The AR Director spoke to a power-point presentation concentrating on postgraduate issues such as processing times for turning around PG applications which she acknowledged would need to be improved, statistics for PG student body in comparison to previous two years, an increased number of PG student cases in 2017/18 in comparison to the previous two years, statistics by Faculty for turning accepted PG applications into admissions and potential reforms in the way in which AR approaches PGR examination. She noted that a high staff attrition rate in the AR adversely impacted on the effective dealings of the area with PG issues over the recent years. The AR Director also dealt in more detail with the unpaid fees for 2018 and Trinity being placed on Heightened Cash Management 1 for US students approved for Federal Student Aid.

In a short discussion which followed and in response to a query, the AR Director explained that the higher number of PG cases recorded in the report for that year

reflected a more accurate logging of the cases. The AR Director recognised room for improvement in its service provision by strengthening the support assigned to specific activities within the AR, providing better staff training, reducing key-person dependency and incorporating more staff working across multiple functions while retaining subject experts and by providing greater automation to assist the staff. The latter was a priority, in the context of PGR examinations, and will be addressed over the summer in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies. The AR Director advised that documents capturing all key admissions processes had been put together to enable better training of new staff and enhance staff retention. Members suggested that statistics in relation to AR staff attrition rates should be incorporated into the next report.

The DTLP from the School of Medicine noted that some PGR students around clinical work had been de-registered this year. The AR Director explained that this happens when students do not use Trinity email and do not register on time in response to notifications to do so and end up showing as withdrawn on the system. The Dean noted that such students have to be approached to register immediately and that they can set up auto-forward facility on their Trinity email to avoid being cut off College communications. A comment was made by the Administrative Officer in the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies with respect to Table E15 Analysis of outcomes of PGR examination process, 2017/18 that the figure 0 showing for fails for various degree awards was only showing the analysis of an outcome of accepted results without incorporating the results contested by the students. Another issue raised was that the admission data on page 31 in the report does not include numerous admissions made with reference to the RPL policy. The AR Director undertook to incorporate those figures into the next report.

The Director of Student Services advised members that the AR is a special administrative area in College with an exceptionally extensive spectrum of activities, a lot of manually conducted processed and staffed by much smaller numbers than registries in UK universities. In addition, the AR appears to be used as an entry route into administrative jobs in College resulting in its notorious attrition problem.

The Dean thanked the AR Director for the report and the AR staff for their hard work.

XX   **GS/18-19/294 Electronic Theses**
The Dean explained that this item relates to electronic submission of PGR theses at a stage when the student submits his or her thesis for examination (rather than when, following the examination process, s/he submits a hard copy thesis to the library). He mentioned several concerns with the current situation where a student submits two soft bound copies for examination. The first concern is environmental as trees are being felled for papers on those theses, the second is expense – both to the student (in printing theses) and to the College (i.e.to the AR) in couriering theses around to examiners, and the third is convenience for examiners who have complained of the need to carry heavy volumes of paper.

In reference to these concerns, the Dean's proposed that the norm for PGR students should be to submit their theses electronically as one PDF file. The Dean is talking to

the IS Services about the issues that might arise in relation to getting licenses for examiners to enable them to edit PDF files. Once submitted the AR would send out the PDF file to both internal and external examiners as a basis for the examination. Following the *viva*, the examiners can, should they wish, send the marked-up copy of the thesis to the School DTLP for return to the student. When the examination process is completed, the student would both submit electronically *and* in hard copy as is currently in place. In cases where either an examiner wishes a hard copy or where, for any reason, it would be inappropriate that the material be conveyed electronically (like in an area of drama where a thesis might incorporate a creative performance), the thesis will be printed out (not at the student's expense) and sent to the examiners in question.

The Dean put his proposal for discussion and obtained agreement from members that it would be an appropriate way to proceed. Members agreed that the proposed process would be quicker, cheaper and environment-friendly. They noted that the PDF file would ensure that the version sent to the external and internal examiners could not be modified further by the candidate before the *viva* date. This would need to be clearly stated to students and the supervisors. The DTLP from the School of Medicine advised that the proposed process had been surveyed amongst the School PGR students and came back with a 95% positive feedback. In terms of the cost allocation where the thesis needs to be printed members agreed that it should be picked up by College. The Dean suggested that it would be useful to check if the Thesis Centre, which has a long-standing connection to Trinity, could be used as a designated printing and dispatching hub. Finally, in response to a query it was confirmed (a) that the examiner nomination form would be amended so that the DTLP could indicate if it was necessary that a thesis be dispatched other than in electronic format and (b) when a thesis was sent electronically to an examiner, the accompanying letter would explain that this was the norm for Trinity and that, should s/he wish to receive it in hard copy s/he should contact the relevant staff member in Academic Registry.

> **Decision GS/18-19/294.1**: The committee recommended the Dean's proposal for electronic submission of PGR theses in PDF for examination for Council approval.

> **Action GS/18-19/294.1**: The Dean to liaise with the AR in relation to addressing any outstanding issues enabling the introduction of electronic submission of PGR theses in PDF for examination from the following year.

On another issue related to the PGR electronic thesis submission the Dean proposed changes 1) to streamline the nomination process for external examiners and 2) to amend the PGR examination report. With respect to the first, he suggested replacing the current requirement on examiner nomination forms whereby DTLPs have to sign up to certain things and then include the external examiner's CV (frequently appended in hard copy and sometimes of extreme length approximating 120 pages). Instead, he proposed that the DTLP tick a box saying that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the structured PhD, and then tick another box for the examiner's eligibility stating that the appointment is consistent with Trinity's external examiners' policy (with an accompanying paragraph outlining what that entails), then give a brief narrative summary of the external in answer to particular questions

(education, current position) and finally provide a hyperlink to his or her CV. Members agreed that the proposed changes would make the nomination process easier and facilitate that the entire nomination process can be dealt with electronically. Subsequently, it was suggested that the nomination form should allow the DTLP to tick whether it is necessary that the thesis be dispatched other than in an electronic format.

With respect to the second proposed change, the Dean stated that he had in the last three years read hundreds of PhD reports which unfortunately varied in quality. A regular concern that he has is that reports say that changes will be required but do not outline the nature of these changes (vital both to students and needed for the university record justifying the examination result). In addition, some of the reports are very laconic – on occasion only about a paragraph long - or may list changes that are required but do not provide any substantive report into the thesis. This is both impoverishing for the student who has done the work for his or her thesis and also problematic for the university which needs to have proper records of the examination process on file. The Dean therefore proposed to move to a situation (a) where examiners are given report forms in which they are asked to fill in information about the thesis under various headings connected to the university requirements for a PhD (b) that the two examiners should continue to submit individual reports outlining specific changes that would be required to be made by the student should s/he either be referred or be passed with minor changes (c) that examiners would be asked to prepare their reports prior to the *viva* examination, but that an additional section on the report would relate to post-*viva* assessment and (d) that the entire process from nomination of examiners to approval of final reports should, save in unusual circumstances, be operated electronically.

Members were in favour of both proposals. They recommended that the new nomination form be available online to be completed by the School DTLP. They supported the idea that the two examiners should still write separate reports and lists of changes as amalgamating two reports into a large one would create significant amount of extra work for the DTLP. Some *vivas* may result in twenty pages of changes and merging that would be extremely tiresome. With the PDF versions it will be feasible to keep the two reports apart. Members also recommended that it should be requested that the reports be written in advance and then updated after the *viva* to save time and speed up the reports. It was noted that in some Schools examiners give students marked copies with minor changes and include the more central issues in the written report. Some members suggested that it would be helpful to have a template for examiner reports and especially, to have one with agreed upon set of changes to be returned and structured in such a way that it accommodates the different types of PhDs submitted across College.

A short discussion developed around a separate issue of whether mandatory check should be introduced for plagiarism through the Turnitin of submitted electronic theses. Some Schools were in favour (on the grounds that Turnitin protects the work) while others were against the idea (on the grounds for example that if one submits parts of one's work earlier then the system identifies those parts as plagiarised in the final submission of the complete work).

It was decided that, whereas the Dean will communicate with DTLPs throughout the summer on these issues, the precise nature of the proposed new report form, as well as the question of whether PhD theses should be submitted via Turnitin will be discussed at the next meeting of GSC.

> **Decision GS/18-19/294.2**: The committee recommended the Dean's proposal to create online nomination form for research examiners for Council approval.

> **Action GS/18-19/294.2**: The Dean to seek feedback from DTLPs as to the format of the online nomination form and present the final template to the next GSC meeting.

Finally, the Dean stated that he would work over the summer on a *viva* guide for PGR examination tailored to general requirements and will seek feedback from DTLPs for it. He will also update the graduate studies postgraduate research handbook for 2019/20 and include the *viva* guide within it. It was noted that a confirmation process guide is in place in one of the Schools and should be disseminated around College (if the School is agreeable) and contained within.

> **Action GS/18-19/294.3**: The Dean to seek feedback from DTLPs over the summer as to the format of a viva guide for PGR students.

> **Action GS/18-19/294.4**: The Dean to update the research handbook for 2019/20 and possibly disseminate a confirmation handbook.

XX **GS/18-19/295 Applications from Vietnam**
The Dean reminded members that in December the committee authorised (between meetings) that students from Vietnam would be accepted into Masters courses in Trinity even though Vietnam did not appear to have a degree structure that Trinity normally would accept; it appeared that NARIC Ireland recognises Vietnamese UG degrees. Subsequently it turned out that this approach was not correct when the AR advised that the NARIC Ireland system was primarily used for employers rather than HEIs which availed instead of NARIC UK. Subsequently, the Dean had consulted widely in the AR and especially with the Admissions Officer, and on this basis was recommending a proposal from the Global Relations Office, whereby Batchelor degree result of 7.0 from Vietnam would be taken for admission purposes into Trinity Masters as equivalent to 2.1 UG degree in Trinity, but on condition that the Global Office will track the performance of students from Vietnam admitted under such conditions for the first two years and report back to the GSC with their findings to confirm or otherwise whether the proposed equivalence was matched correctly and ensures the necessary academic quality.

> **Decision GS/18-19/295.1**: The committee recommended the Dean's proposal for equivalence between 7.0 from Batchelor's degree in Vietnam with 2.1 in Trinity for a trail basis for 2 years for Council approval.

> **Action GS/18-19/295.1**: The Dean to liaise with the Global Office to ensure their monitoring of so admitted students and subsequent reporting back of their findings to GSC in September 2021.

GS/18-19/296 Graduate Studies Committee self-evaluation survey 2018/19

The Dean reminded members that the annual self-evaluation was a requirement for each principal Committee in College and invited them to complete this year's online survey of the Graduate Studies Committee by 1st July.

XX   GS/18-19/297 AOB

(i)   A member requested that the application form for admission into the PGR register should be redrafted mandating applicants to upload their research proposal in PDF. The Dean undertook to discuss this matter with the Academic Registry team.

> **Action GS/18-19/297(i).1**: The Dean to liaise with the AR team to discuss redrafting the application form for PGR

(ii)   A member requested that all applicants for the Ussher award should be required to include a 500-word summary of their research proposal so written that it is understood by non-specialist. The proposal was not fully supported by all members and the Dean offered to collect feedback from DTLPs subsequent to the meeting and then to discuss this at the September GSC.

> **Action GS/18-19/297(ii).1**: The Dean to collect feedback from and bring proposal to the GSC at a later date.

(iii)   The Dean advertised that as many as four applicants from Trinity were awarded a place on the prestigious LERU Summer School 2019 due to take place in Edinburgh.

(iv)   The committee agreed to allow teaching to take place outside teaching terms on two postgraduate courses i.e. Postgraduate Certificate in 21 century Teaching and Learning and MSc in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy.

> **Decision GS/18-19/297(iv).1**: The committee endorsed derogations for two postgraduate courses to allow them to carry out teaching outside teaching terms for Council approval.

(v)   The Dean advised that Tangent was successful in just securing recent Government "Springboard" funding to offer a new postgraduate certificate course from September 2019 based on three already approved modules offered on existing Tangent courses. The Dean had consulted the Vice-Provost and Chief Academic Officer who advised that the approval process of the new postgraduate certificate course could exceptionally and without creating a precedent take place in the "summer session" and will require a concise new course proposal to be submitted by Tangent and a positive review of the new course proposal by the external reviewer.

> **Decision GS/18-19/297(v).1**: The committee endorsed the Vice-Provost and Chief Academic Officer's recommendation for an exceptional permission to enable a new postgraduate certificate course proposal to be considered in the summer session 2019 for Council approval.

> **Action GS/18-19/297(v).1**: Ewa Sadowska to liaise with the course proposer to ensure the academic quality of the new postgraduate proposal for approval.

(vi)   The Dean advised members that following an earlier agreement the outstanding work to do with the newly reformatted Calendar 3 changes process is being delegated to a subcommittee.

(vii)   Finally, as this was the last meeting of the academic year, the Dean extended a warm "thank you" to all DTLPs and especially to those who are stepping down as their term of office was coming to an end. In particular, he commended DTLPs from the Schools of Medicine and Dental Sciences who generously assisted him with advice over their exceptionally long four-year service on the committee. He acknowledged with gratitude huge work by all members and reassured them that he noticed their commitment with unreserved appreciation. The Dean emphasized that it had been a huge pleasure working with all members throughout the year. In conclusion, he extended especial thanks to Ewa Sadowska, GSC Secretary, for masterly managing the GSC agenda and for her efficient work on course development across College, and to Helen Thornbury, from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies for her vital invaluable work in ensuring that the day to day operation of graduate education in Trinity proceeded smoothly.

XX   Section B for noting and approval
GS/18-19/298 Structured PhD module in School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (Category 2): "Key Skills for Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Research"

> **Decision GS/18-19/298**
> The committee approved the proposed module from 2019/20.

GS/18-19/299 Calendar III changes 2019/20: validated postgraduate courses from MIE

> **Decision GS/18-19/299**
> The committee approved changes proposed to the validated postgraduate courses from the Marino Institute of Education as recommended by the MIE ACDC on 9 May 2019.

XX   Section C for noting
There were no issues.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.20am.

Prof. Neville Cox   Date: 23 May 2019