

## GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School  
at 10am Thursday 27 April 2023

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**XX = Council relevance**

### ***Present (Ex officio):***

Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)

### *Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:*

Professor David Finlay, School of Biochemistry & Immunology

Professor Laurent Muzellec, Trinity Business School

Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry

Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts

Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education

Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering

Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology

Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities

Professor Jennifer Edmond, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies

Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences

Professor David Prendergast, School of Law

Professor Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics

Professor Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences

Professor Mary Hughes, School of Nursing & Midwifery

Professor Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology

Professor Gillian Wylie, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies

Professor Tara Mitchell, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy

Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative

Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education, TT&L

Ms Ewa Sadowska Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

### *In attendance for all items:*

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office

Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme

Frances Leogue, Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

Ms Sian Bradley, Administrative Officer, IT support

Mr Viktor Jelen, temporary nominated graduate student as GSC member

### *Not in attendance – Vacant:*

Graduate Students' Union President

Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

Director of Internationalisation, Trinity Global

*Apologies:*

Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research

Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science

Professor Ivana Dusparic, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English

Professor Catherine Darker, School of Medicine

Professor Carlos Medina Martin, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Hongzhou Zhang, School of Physics

Professor Erna O'Connor, School of Social Work & Social Policy

Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo, temporary nominated graduate student as GSC member

Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience

Dr Aiveen Mullally, Marino Institute of Education, for item GS/22-23/107

Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs, TT&L, for item GS/22-23/115

*In attendance for individual items:*

Dr Seán Delaney, Registrar Marino Institute of Education (MIE), for item GS/22-23/107

Prof. Joanne Banks, School of Education, for item GS/22-23/108

Prof. Rachel Hoare, Academic Project Director, Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project, for item GS/22-23/109

Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer, for item GS/22-23/110 and GS/22-23/111

Prof. Lorna Carson, Founding Director of the Centre for English Language Teaching & School of CLCS Head, for item GS/22-23/111

Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator, PG Renewal, for item GS/22-23/114

Prof. Rachel McLoughlin, WP#2 Lead, PG Renewal and Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator, PG Renewal, for item GS/22-23/116

Mr Mark Sheridan, Senior PGR Project Manager, for item GS/22-23/117

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Ms Frances Leogue, a new Administrative Officer in the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies.

**XX Section A**

**XX GS/22-23/105 Minutes of GSC of 23 March 2023**

The minutes were approved as circulated with two minor changes:

- 1) GS/22-23/097 page 7 from "Schools are considering whether the final research project can be eliminated from the Masters courses." to "Schools are considering how to change the assessment format of the final research project on the Masters courses. The Dean noted that the proposed five models for research output format should ensure flexibility and asked the DTLP from School of Engineering reviewing the research element from their Masters to liaise with her."
- 2) GS/22-23/099 page 9 from "The Dean commented that there are two equally important PhD outputs i.e., the research and the researcher (...)." to "The Dean commented that there are two equally important PhD outcomes from the PhD i.e., the research and the development of the

researcher (...).”

**XX GS/22-23/106 Matters arising**

The Dean advised members that most actions from the previous meeting had been completed. The Dean also noted that all GSC decisions, recommended at the March meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by the last Council. Matters arising were covered in the Dean’s memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

**XX GS/22-23/107 New validated MES course proposal: Master in Education Studies in Christian School Leadership (online) from Marino Institute of Education – Dr Seán Delaney (MIE Registrar)**

The Dean welcomed Dr Seán Delaney from Marino Institute of Education to join the meeting on Zoom and invited him to speak to a presentation on the essential parameters of the proposed course. Dr Delaney noted that the proposal builds on an earlier in-person validated Master in Education Studies in Leadership in Christian Education (PTED-EDLC-1V). The new offering is a 90 ECTS, Level 9 course leading to a Master in Education Studies award and an exit award of Postgraduate Diploma in Christian School Leadership. It will be delivered over a two-year period fully online to make it accessible to a wider audience thereby, hopefully, increasing recruitment as was inferred from market research undertaken in 2021.

The Dean advised that the proposal has already received feedback from the School of Religion, Theology and Peace Studies. It was also externally reviewed. The report acknowledged that whilst there is good recognition of the need to integrate theory and practice, a more intentional and structured approach is required to the integration of the variety of disciplines employed through the course. In particular, a clear focus on integrating theological and social science / psychological / pedagogical disciplines would improve the overall outcomes of the course. The Dean noted that the development team are working in Marino to address the report’s recommendations and opened the floor for comments. Members were positive about the new course but expressed concern about the heavy workload in year 1 of the part-time course. They noted that 6 modules of 10 ECTS constitutes *de facto* a full-time workload on a postgraduate diploma of 60 credits while year 2 comprises only 30 credits. The Dean noted the concern but reminded members that the 60/30 split is a long standing course structure in College on part-time Masters of 90 ECTS over 2 years. She also suggested to Dr Delaney that consideration might be given to avail of a 3 year framework-based structure which limits the credit volume to 30 ECTS per year. Dr Delaney undertook to consider the 3 year structure in future projects. He clarified that the Marino development team were aware of the workload in year 1 while designing the proposal and that students in Marino on other similarly structured programmes have not advanced complaints about the workload to date. The Dean thanked Dr Delaney for his participation in the meeting.

**Decision GS/22-23/107:** The committee recommended for Council approval the new validated MES proposal in Christian School Leadership (Online) from the Marino Institute of Education pending its revision in response to the recommendations of the external review.

**XX GS/22-23/108 New MEd course proposal (extension): Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training (Top up PgDip & Top up MEd), Prof. Joanne Banks, School of Education, to present**

The Dean welcomed Prof. Joanne Banks, from the School of Education, and invited her to introduce

her proposal consisting of a part-time framework-based Masters course including (i) new Postgraduate Diploma (Top up) in Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training and (ii) new Masters (Top up) in Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training and (iii) retaining the existing Postgraduate Certification in Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training (PCED-DIFE-1P). The Dean reminded members that the PgCert, developed with and funded by the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDCETB), has been delivered since September 2021. The proposed Masters due to commence in September 2023 aims to further upskill educators involved in Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training. The Dean pointed out that the willingness of the CDCETB to extend the funding of the programme and seek its expansion speaks to the value of the foundation postgraduate certificate course.

When the floor opened to comments, members were positive about the proposed offering, but a concern was raised about possibly excessive workload befalling the Course Director who would be coordinating four out of the total seven modules on the new course. Dr Banks clarified that an additional teaching position is being recruited to assist in the delivery of the Masters course which will alleviate her workload. The incremental introduction of the added in years of the PgDip Top up and Masters Top up one at a time per year will also allow more time to the School to plan for the future. The Dean thanked Dr Banks for her participation in the meeting and concluded by advising members that the proposal was endorsed by an external reviewer and the version before the committee addressed all the reviewer's recommendations.

**Decision GS/22-23/108:** The committee recommended for Council approval the new composite framework-based MEd course proposal in Diversity and Inclusion in Further Education and Training, from the School of Education without any changes.

**XX GS/22-23/109 Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project – Prof. Rachel Hoare, Academic Project Director, to update**

The Dean welcomed Prof. Rachel Hoare, Academic Project Director with Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project commenced in October 2020. Prof. Hoare reminded members that the mandate of Trinity Inclusive Curriculum (Trinity-INC) Project is to embed principles of diversity, equality and inclusion across all curricula. Speaking to her slide presentation, Prof. Hoare referred first to four interconnected pillars of project initiatives (Academic, Student, Institutional and Infrastructure). Subsequently, she noted that many curriculum exclusions currently occur unwittingly, and listed feedback and referred to insights from recent Trinity-INC postgraduate consultations relevant to DTLPs. She then outlined three commitments that can be implemented immediately: (1) inclusive language which demonstrates Trinity values and openness to diversity; (2) enhancement of Blackboard organisation and clarity resulting in fewer questions; and (3) enhancement of accessibility leading to a reduction of the need for individual accommodations. Longer-term commitments will require embedding inclusivity in modules and courses and engagement with students to hear issues –and best practices – in real time. Prof. Hoare concluded by suggesting that a new Inclusivity Section be incorporated into PGT course proposals. She also invited members to consult the Trinity-INC website for more detailed information.

The Dean thanked Prof. Hoare for her presentation and clarified that the PG Renewal project is underpinned by the Trinity-INC ethos to ensure that inclusivity is part of the forthcoming root and branch review of the PGT course proposal development and approval process in College. Members expressed their support for Trinity-INC as an important initiative. A suggestion was made that inclusion should be folded into Teaching Excellence Awards to explicitly connect excellence with inclusion as a criterion. Some members undertook to share the slides with colleagues in their Schools to locally spread the Trinity-INC message. Other members expressed their appreciation for the usefulness of the Trinity-INC Professional Learning Module in Inclusive Practices for Teaching and Learning grounded in the principles of Universal Design for Learning and presenting inclusive practice as adaptive, iterative, and contextual. The Dean thanked Prof. Hoare for attending the meeting and for her presentation sharing and enhancing the message of inclusivity in the PG space.

**XX GS/22-23/110 External Examiner Review comprising memo and policy review record sheet, External Examiner Policy (Taught) and External Examiner Policy (Research), Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer, to attend**

The Dean welcomed Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer, to the meeting. She referred members to the circulated memorandum on the External Examiner Review approved by Council in October 2022. A working group was subsequently established, which included Profs Sarah McCormack and Ioannis Polyzois from the GSC, and Ms Roisin Smith from the Quality Office. The remit of the working group was to review the current External Examiner Policy originating in 2018 with a view to enhancing the recruitment and retention of external examiners. The Terms of Reference also included folding into the review the experience of virtual Courts of Examiners during Covid-19 and the change in the Revenue requirements. The Dean reminded members that the pool of potential external examiners is limited, as the practice is largely confined to Ireland and Britain. She highlighted the key changes for consideration such as the creation of separate documents (Taught External Examiner Policy (TEEP) and Research External Examiner Policy (REEP)), a change in the eligibility criteria for nomination and in the requirements for in-person attendance and the time that must lapse before re-appointment. The Dean took the committee through each policy separately highlighting the proposed changes as they were listed on pages 2 to 4 in the circulated Dean's cover memorandum.

The following comments were made during the presentation and discussion:

- 1) Currently, given that there is only one policy for external examiners when a Research External Examiner (REE) finishes their term they may not be employed on a taught programme for many years while being a REE should not preclude one from being a TEE except for a brief period of time and likewise being a TEE should not preclude one from being a REE;
- 2) Recruitment of emeritus staff and recent graduates from Trinity as EE should be facilitated;
- 3) While it is already required of a REE to come from a third level institution and to have a PhD these requirements might not be critical for a TEE, where experience in teaching and education administration can be invaluable to a taught programme;
- 4) The primary responsibility of any candidate for the role of EE is to give an external objective perspective and therefore an EE candidate should not have any existing or recent relationships with Trinity calling their impartiality into question or representing a potential conflict of interest.

- 5) Currently, Schools are asked to approach the potential EE candidate to gauge whether they are willing and able to accept the role of EE if offered. However, the Dean may subsequently decide not to support the proposed nomination on the grounds of a potential conflict of interest or insufficient expertise. This is very problematic and awkward both for the candidate who has already been approached and for the Dean to reject the primed candidate. Schools will therefore be advised to check with the Dean first before contacting the candidate with an informal inquiry.
- 6) The requirement for physical attendance will be replaced by a recommendation that ideally there should be at least one in-person presence especially at the commencement of the TEE's term. This ties in with Trinity sustainability agenda. In response to a query the Dean clarified that Schools will be allowed to set their own local in-person attendance requirements giving cognizance to the fact that in-person attendance is no longer mandatory.
- 7) The three-year term has raised concern as too short in the School of Psychology for their doctoral programmes where a pool of potential EEs is limited. The Dean clarified that requesting a fourth year is allowed and proposed other changes might possibly broaden out the EE pool in the future.
- 8) With respect to REE, where it is proposed to reduce a return to the role from 5 to 3 years a concern has been raised that this might be too short a time span allowing for a possible conflict of interest to creep in. A four-year was suggested instead. Schools with small pools were in favour of a reduction from the existing five years preferably to three but could accept the four years. A member proposed a differentiation between the EE's work for the School permitting a return after three years and the work for the same supervisor requiring four or five years to return.

Members supported the proposed changes on both Policies. In conclusion, the Dean noted that changes had been suggested at the last Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) with respect to the proposed TEEP. The TEEP considered by the GSC incorporated those changes, but the Policy would need to return to the next USC for approval of same before it goes on to Council. The REEP can proceed to the May Council.

**Decision GS/22-23/110:** The committee recommended the Taught External Examiner Policy and Research External Examiner Policy for Council approval.

**XX GS/22-23/111 English Language Policy – Prof. Lorna Carson, Founding Director of the Centre for English Language Teaching to present**

The Dean invited Prof. Lorna Carson, Head of School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences to talk members through the proposed Policy. Prof. Carson explained that QQI requires Higher Education providers to develop an English language policy as part of the authorisation process for the International Education Mark (IEM) i.e., a new quality mark and part of a suite of legislative measures designed to assure international learners that they are offered quality education. Trinity's Linked Providers, Marino Institute of Education (MIE) and Royal Irish Academy of Music (RIAM), are required to develop their own English Language Policy (ELP) to seek the IEM. The draft policy reflects the particular relationship that exists between Trinity and Marino Institute of Education around the International Foundation Programme (IFP), delivered by MIE on behalf of

Trinity for which Trinity manages the marketing, recruitment and admissions process on the IFP.

Extensive consultations have taken place in preparation of the ELP and the following has transpired:

1. Irregularities in Trinity's current UG versus PG English language requirements (e.g., IELTS individual band scores below 6.0 permitted for PG courses, whilst UG courses require no individual band scores under 6.0; TOEFL iBT score of 88 required for PG courses, whilst a score of 90 required for UG courses)
2. Some inconsistencies in test scores across English language proficiency test types, especially for courses with higher specified requirements (e.g., an overall IELTS score of 7.0 and equivalent Duolingo scores are specified for UG Dental Science and Clinical Speech & Language Studies; no equivalent requirements listed for TOEFL iBT, Pearson or Cambridge).

Prof. Carson noted that the inconsistencies should be addressed via the PG Renewal programme. The Dean clarified that work on these issues would take place the following year. In a discussion, the following comments were made:

- (i) Re page 9 point 7 - the list of High School/Secondary Examinations leading to an exemption from the requirement for a separate standardised English language proficiency test – this is relevant for UG applicants rather than PG ones. In the past there were instances when PG applicants educated via English in their UG programmes, especially in less developed countries, were still asked for standardised English language proficiency test. It was suggested that there should be a point 8 covering this eventuality. Prof. Carson commented that frequently even though universities say their degrees were via English in actuality only a selection of modules may be delivered in English. A challenge is that the term English Medium Instruction does not imply a standard approach to the use of English by 3<sup>rd</sup> level providers across the world .
- (i) Re page 3 point 7.1.2 – a reference to a first language can be problematic and difficult to determine for bilingual or multilingual applicants and how the current competency in English could be verified. Prof. Carson noted that the Policy might not be in a position to address all such individual instances of applicants trying to get around the admissions criteria as policy making is written in relation to the general rather than to the specific.
- (ii) Re page 6 point 7.3.7 - provision of dedicated language support for registered international learners through English for Academic Purposes (EAP) modules delivered by the Centre for English Language Learning and Teaching (CELLT): Students in some Schools were not in a position to access these modules. Prof. Carson clarified that her Schools receives some funding to run EAP modules annually for College, which allows it to run eight modules per term. However, EAP modules are notoriously oversubscribed. It is hoped that as a result of PG Renewal the CELLT would offer new formats like drop in writing clinics. There is no limit on the availability of English language instructors funding permitting. Members were also in favour of the introduction of prompt remedial supports for students struggling with English on PG courses.
- (iii) Page 4 point 7.2.4 – English requirements for UG and PG admissions – a member who had completed an international secondary school in Brussels, but their English proficiency was not recognised for entry to Trinity suggested that European international schools be added in to the international schools based in Ireland and the UK. Prof. Carson suggested that the issue should be considered for the Admissions Policy

- rather than for the ELP and undertook to forward it to the Admissions Officer.
- (iv) Technical differences between tests were raised. Prof. Carson clarified that only some tests have sub-components listed and part of the admissions strategy in Trinity going forward would be to try and harmonise all different tests which are constantly changing and constantly bench-marking against each other.
  - (v) Page 3 point 7.2.1 - Trinity's minimum standard level of English language proficiency – to provide a detail on the sub-score. These were provided in the Appendix to the Policy.

The Dean thanked Prof. Carson and the Quality Officer for their participation in the meeting. Members recommend the Policy for Council.

**Decision GS/22-23/111:** The committee recommended the English Language Policy for Council consideration.

**XX GS/22-23/112 PGR update, Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director**

Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director gave a brief overview of recent PG Renewal developments listed on the circulated monthly slide. March was another busy month for the Work Packages. The new Trinity Research Doctorate Awards were launched. It was noted that criteria for the Award ring-fenced for the University of Sanctuary were under consideration with an interim recruitment process put in place for 2023/24 but a further discussion required of the design and evaluation process for 2024/25.

School managers and DTLPs will be contacted in June about teaching and learning supports PGR students will be providing in their Schools from September in relation to the direct payment requirement via casual payroll. Should there be urgency in any particular School they should contact the PG Renewal Programme Director for priority scheduling. After some discussion it was clarified that changes to the existing payment would only affect those PGR students whose current reimbursement for teaching and learning supports has so far been incorporated into their stipend or a top up; those students already being paid via the casual pay by payroll will not be affected .

The development of a Business Case for Horizon 2 is in progress and a proposal is expected to be presented at the May meeting. There will be a programme workshop on 30 May. Recruitment for a Business Process Analyst has been completed, and there is one role remaining to be filled. In terms of financial proposals, the process change required for implementation for 2023/24 is in progress in consultation with the AR. The following items have been approved at the last sitting of Council: Models for assessment of research component of PGT programmes; Roles & responsibilities for research student's development of multi-dimensional skillset; Academic appeals. The following proposals are already on the agenda for the current sitting of GSC: A Framework for Cyclical Review of PGT programmes; new two-phased approach for proposal of new postgraduate programmes; terms of reference of Thesis Committees, plus revised templates for Annual Review and confirmation of interview report; Student Lifecycle (Annual Progression) process. The following items are under review and are expected to be presented at the May GSC: Vision statement, Triple I: analysis in progress; Viva Voce guidelines; Learning supports provided by PGR students; Benchmarking best practice for conflict management in supervisor relationship; opportunities to integrate adjunct staff into the community; alignment with Academic Integrity initiative. The Dean



thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for the update.

**XX GS/22-23/113 Changes related to the Appeals section of the Calendar III for 2023/24, Dean of Graduate Studies to present**

The Dean referred members to the circulated document regarding changes to the Appeals Section of the Calendar as agreed at the March meeting of GSC. Key changes are the sequencing of information, bringing thesis committee decisions into the framework of appeals, and the status of student attendance at Appeals hearings. The Dean received feedback from eleven Schools on the proposed changes. The majority of the Schools indicated that the student attendance should be optional. However, some Schools would prefer that they could require the student to be present. To address that issue in particular the Dean proposed one change additional to the ones circulated for the meeting relating to paragraph 69 in the clean version. The change modifies the sentence from “The student is entitled to attend a School Appeals Committee and to have representation appropriate to the formality of the appeal hearing (...).” to “The student is entitled to attend a School Appeals Committee *and the Committee may require a student’s attendance. The student is entitled to have representation appropriate to the formality of the appeal hearing – i.e., a supervisor, other appropriate academic staff member (who is not a relative), a member of the Postgraduate Advisory Service or a relevant Students’ Union representative.*” The additional provision may apply on a case by case basis or may be part of the practice in a particular School – the overall aim however is not to require the student to be present. Otherwise, the proposed Calendar changes involve re-sequencing of the current information making it clear what constitutes an appeal, the grounds for an appeal, the required evidence, and the steps of the appeals process.

The Dean called out another substantive change allowing for appeals against decisions of the Thesis Committee as there are decisions taken by that committee which impact on the student’s ability to progress. For example, at the annual review at the end of year 1 on the PhD register, the committee may recommend that the student’s progress is unsatisfactory, and the student should transfer to the Masters. There needs to be a mechanism for an appeal of such decisions.

The Dean offered the floor for questions, but none were raised. The Dean thanked the Postgraduate Student Support Officer for his assistance with the Calendar changes which the committee recommended for Council approval.

**Decision GS/22-23/113:** The committee recommended for Council consideration the changes related to the Appeals Section of Calendar III in 2023/24.

**XX GS/22-23/114 PGR: Proposal for framework for cyclical review of PGT programmes (WP#1), Prof. Ashley Clements (WP#1 Lead, PGT) to present, Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator, to attend**

This item was taken after GS/22-23/116. The Dean invited Prof. Ashley Clements to speak to the circulated proposal for a cyclical review of PGT programmes conceptualised around the existing processes of reviewing PGT programmes to provide clarity on what kinds of changes can be managed locally and what changes need to come to GSC for approval. The Dean explained that the ask of the committee is to give approval for further work to develop a framework over the next

twelve months for such a review, via wide-ranging consultations with individual Schools rather than to implement the cyclical review the following year.

Prof. Clements explained that his WP was required to capture how PGT programmes are reviewed currently in Trinity annually and over a longer term, and to look for examples of best practice in comparator universities. SUMS Consulting conducted a review of current practices and ran a series of interviews internally in College with Trinity staff, including representatives from each Faculty, Quality Office, Academic Affairs, Academic Secretary, VPCAO, and externally through a benchmarking exercise with six institutions across the UK and Ireland. SUMS produced a PGT Review Process Report to support WP1 in its decision-making resulting in a number of proposals. The first proposal aims to develop a new Trinity framework for cyclical reviews of postgraduate programmes that:

- i. Operates a 5-year cycle of reviews for existing programmes at institutional level (currently there is no such oversight);
- ii. Provides a mechanism for formal recognition of existing annual review practices at a local level and achieving consistency of best practice across Schools (This was the suggestion which appears to have led to most concerns from members at the meeting. Members acknowledged that even currently academics are generating a lot of data and information which could and should be used towards this objective ensuring economy of effort);
- iii. Implements a new process to monitor and review new programmes in the three years after approval until they reach a 'steady state' and are folded into the 5-year cycle;
- iv. Establishes clear reporting structures both locally and centrally for all programme reviews;
- v. Identifies internal and external stakeholders, to contribute to reviews of programmes as appropriate.
- vi. Identifies roles and responsibilities within the proposed framework for Trinity.

The second proposal aims to develop new guidelines supporting thresholds for changes to programmes that:

- i. Identify what constitutes a major or minor change to a programme and how to manage change over time;
- ii. Identify the scope of major and minor changes;
- iii. Outline which changes may be managed locally or are referred to governance structures elsewhere (e.g., at Faculty level, or centrally).

The third proposal is to conduct a baseline audit of PGT programmes, to develop a clear view of programmes that are active or dormant, and when they were approved. The final proposal is to review the potential for implementing a Curriculum Management system, beginning with analysis and specification of requirements. Prof. Clements suggested that perhaps a template form might be sufficient to capture the essence of the whole initiative of cyclical reviews.

The Dean thanked Prof. Clements for his very informative presentation and opened the floor for further discussion. As at that point a significant number of members had left the meeting which overran the discussion was brief:

- 1) The main concern expressed was about additional workload to be added to Schools.
- 2) Members requested that the framework builds in financial provisions for costs for additional staff resources to be recruited in order to support the new initiative at the School level as current

administrative structures will not be in a position to take on the new workload to be created.

- 3) It was also noted that the five year review term might be a dis-incentive for new course directors to take on a course at a particular time. Directors are appointed on a term of three years and the five year review will land on the terms of some directors while not on others.
- 4) The TBS DTLP noted that the proposed review will add a significant workload for academics suggesting that the more reporting they have to do, the less time they have to carry out research and teaching. The DTLP suggested that the proposed review could be combined with the current end of term report by external examiner on PGT courses.
- 5) Annually, Schools complete Quality Reports for the Quality Office collecting a lot of information on PGT courses which could be used for the cyclical review.
- 6) The Dean suggested that as part of the framework it will be identified which of the Schools' current data collecting practices could be used for and which of the current reports might be also helpful to be re-purposed for the cyclical review.
- 7) The TBS DTLP supported the proposal to develop the framework.

Those members present in the room gave a green light to the Dean to develop the framework. Given the small numbers the Dean undertook to seek further feedback from other members by email before proceeding.

**Action GS/22-23/114:** Given the small numbers the Dean undertook to seek further feedback from other members by email before proceeding.

**Decision GS/22-23/114:** The committee gave a green light to the Dean to develop the framework provided that further feedback be sourced by email indicated majority in favour of proceeding.

**XX GS/22-23/115 PGR: Proposal for two-phased approach to PGT programme development, presented by Prof. Ashley Clements (WP#1 Lead, PGT) and Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs, TT&L)**

This item was taken prior to GS/22-23/114. The Dean invited Prof. Ashley Clements, WP#1 Lead to speak to a new two stage process for PGT programme proposal development. Prof. Clements clarified that the proposal was conceptually developed by Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary (Academic Affairs, TT&L). Speaking to a slide presentation, Prof. Clements described the intended workings of the two-stage approval process aimed to streamline PGT programme proposal development and approval, simplify and stagger the process, reduce the size of the proposal and improve its clarity.

Stage 1 comprises of the development of a proof of concept (business case) proposal using a designated template. This proposal would go through School and Faculty for consideration and approval, in a dialogue with Academic Affairs, before progressing to stage 2.

Stage 2 involves the development of a curriculum plan proposal using the designated template and involvement of multiple service areas such as Academic Practice and Careers Office. The developed curriculum gets combined with the business case into one submission for the School Executive final sign off before it proceeds to the Dean of Graduate Studies and GSC.

In addition, a new proposal for a three year review of the programme's sustainability is to be conducted requiring

- (i) Preparation of a report on the continued financial viability of the programme
- (ii) Preparation of a report on the curriculum modifications cross-referenced with the original curriculum presented in the Council-approved programme proposal.
- (iii) The above two reports will be combined and submitted to GSC for consideration if the programme is question is functioning as a stable and sustainable offering. GSC may recommend validation/invalidation of the programme.

The proposed process should allow for greater ownership of proposals by Schools and Faculties. It should reduce the number of newly approved programmes requiring significant changes following Council approval. It should streamline activities in the proposal templates making the process more efficient. It is envisaged that the two-stage approach will commence in January 2024. Academic Affairs and Academic Practice will develop LEAN Curriculum Plan templates and resources. If approved, implementation will be progressed through Horizon 2 of the PG Renewal Programme.

The Dean expressed support for the proposal by underlining that it will simplify the PGT development process. Stage 1 is about establishing whether the idea for a new course finds a suitable market demand. Stages 2 fleshes the idea with a curriculum. The Provost favours a maximum 20-page PG course proposal document. The end of year 3 review, a new initiative, is about gathering data on the efficiency of the delivered programme and its continued sustainability into the future, and what changes should be made to it to ensure its competitive position on the market. The process for the proposed review would still need to be developed as this function is not currently part of the brief of Academic Affairs. The Dean acknowledged that the proposed PGT development process has been heavily influenced by the recent practice in the School of Medicine introduced by its DTLP Prof. Catherine Darker.

The Dean opened the floor for comments and the following feedback was shared:

- 1) A Member expressed concern from their School about additional workload to be required by the new process.
- 2) Questions were asked about what the end of year 3 review would entail.
  - (i) The Dean clarified that a template would be provided covering primarily two aspects: continued financial viability in terms of student recruitment and curricular attractiveness of the programme in light of student feedback and the market appeal of its structure (leading to changes between full-time, part-time, in person, and online as a possibility to enhance the course's future marketability). The requirement for tracking of student recruitment was strongly supported by Faculty Deans who currently do not have a mechanism for tracking performance of newly approved PGT programmes.
  - (ii) Members were uneasy for GSC acquiring a remit of "invalidating" PGT courses coming to it for the review. The Dean clarified that the Faculty would have to pre-determine if the course is to be "invalidated" by submitting a course cessation form to the GSC.
  - (iii) Members were uneasy about additional workload for the GSC to review end of year 3 submissions. The Dean underlined that such additional work will be well invested

in promoting good proposals.

- 3) Members, from TBS and Tangent, were concerned that a two-stage PGT development process would increase the lead time to put together a proposal and launching the course would be delayed. The TBS DTLP noted that currently it takes a year to have a new PGT course proposal approved and launched for marketing. The two steps look appealing on paper, but it might be prudent to have only one stage by keeping documents succinct and making the financial case clear. Current submissions are too long and should not exceed 15 pages. Putting in place a 2<sup>nd</sup> step is not likely to shorten the length of the proposal. The Tangent representative noted that sometimes it is of essence to turn around a new course proposal promptly especially when it is put together as a result of successful funding which has time constraints for commencement of the new course attached to it. The Dean clarified that the aim to put a two-stage process is not to address the proposal length and it will be important to continue addressing a number of issues in the future course proposal – hence work will be undertaken to reflect how best to modify the current PGT course proposal template to make it more straightforward. The Faculty Deans have also raised concerns about a potential time creep in the two-stage process, but the ambition is to make the new process shorter and more efficient than the current one, which is a one year process from inception to marketing. The new process should be more efficient: when the decision is taken at stage 1 to proceed the course will have a greater chance to succeed in the long term.
- 4) The Dean noted that the committee are being asked to agree to explore the two-stage idea to see how it unfolds.

The Dean thanked members for their views and suggested an initial implementation of the two-stage process for programme approval for one year, with a subsequent review of the effectiveness of the process. The Business School noted their dissent.

**Decision GS/22-23/115:** The two-stage process for PGT programme approval to be approved for one year, with a subsequent review of the effectiveness of the process.

**XX GS/22-23/116 PGR: Assessment of PGR Students: changes to Annual Progress Report, Confirmation Report and Guidelines for Thesis Committees. Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (WP#2 Lead), Ewa Adach (Programme Analyst and Coordinator) to attend**

The Dean invited Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (WP#2 Lead) to speak to the proposed Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees and Supporting Report Templates. Prof. McLoughlin noted that in 2016, the former Dean, Prof. Neville Cox, started the conversation about Thesis Committees as a key feature emerging across the university sector. In 2019, Council approved the Trinity Thesis Committee proposal and mandated that all students who registered from September 2019 should have a thesis committee appointed within six months of their registration. Four years on, the time came to reflect how main functions of a thesis committee have evolved across the Schools, and what that means for how the committee should be constituted and operate going forward.

Work Package #2 analysed the responses from the College-wide PG Renewal Programme's Consultation Survey conducted the previous year. It revealed a wide variability in the implementation of thesis committees pertaining to their composition and functions and highlighted

some possible misconceptions on the structure approved by Council in May 2019. There appears to be confusion over aspects of the role and/or a misunderstanding of its benefits, including (i) the provision of pastoral care, (ii) members of the thesis committee acting as internal examiners, (iii) timeframe for setting up a thesis committee, (iv) inadequate information and documentation available to staff and students and (v) terminology used with reference to thesis committees (also described as 'doctoral committee', 'PhD committee', or 'confirmation panel'). The Work Package has drafted Terms of Reference aimed at clarifying terminology and potentially addressing some misconceptions. In parallel, the current templates supporting the review milestones in the PGR student journey have been reviewed and enhanced. The templates have been developed to i) provide detailed guidance to all stakeholders ii) align with the overall development of the student, iii) close feedback loop to ensure meaningful engagement with the student at the points of review. If the Terms of Reference are approved, it is proposed to develop a set of accompanying Guidelines together with required Calendar changes. A detailed set of Guidelines will be put in place at a later stage to conclude the process. The Guidelines will respect the diversity of local practices developed since 2019 but will also introduce a level of consistency across College.

The Dean opened the floor for discussion for feedback from members:

- 1) The initiative is timely as there is significant diversity of views in Schools about how thesis committees should best operate. PGR students like them and feel supported by them. However, there is additional administrative workload associated with supporting these committees.
- 2) The issue of a supervisor being present or not at the thesis committee meeting appears to be the most contentious. The main concern is that the absent supervisor would not be aware of feedback the student would have received from the committee which may be contrary to the supervisor's views.
  - (i) Prof. McLoughlin noted that a lot of consultations were carried out which highlighted significant differences of opinion, suggesting that the Terms of Reference need to provide for flexibility for Schools to operate their own practices.
  - (ii) The Dean confirmed that a decision on the issue must be made as the current Calendar specifies that the supervisor must be present for the confirmation process. Appeals have been brought against the decision of the confirmation panel on the grounds that the supervisor was not present.
  - (iii) The School of Histories and Humanities DTLP noted that the issue for his School is about the exclusion of the supervisor as a constituent member of the committee which is different to the issue of the supervisor being not present at the meeting. Currently, the supervisor is excluded from the committee and the question has arisen whether they can be permitted to attend or required to attend to observe. In his School, the pool of academics is small to populate the three member committee for each PGR student. The School views the presence of the supervisor as important to share in the academic dialogue about the student's progression. A Supervisor should be a member of the two member committee and not only be allowed to be present as an additional observer.
  - (iv) Prof. McLoughlin clarified that the proposal is that the supervisor would not be a member of the committee. There will be two independent members in addition to the supervisor and the supervisor could attend but that would not be mandatory.

- (v) The School of Engineering DTLP advised that in her School the supervisor is always present at the thesis committee meetings in addition to the two members of the committee. Any pastoral issues are dealt with outside the meeting which focuses on academic matters. Students are encouraged to contact the School DTLP in relation to any concern about breakdown in the supervision relationship.
- (vi) The Natural Sciences School DTLP advised that the supervisor is normally not present at the confirmation meeting in his School. The thesis committee can act as a safety net when the student-supervisor relationship breaks down and the student can speak candidly at the Confirmation meeting in the absence of the supervisor. The current provision that the student can exclude the supervisor is potentially awkward, as students may be concerned that their supervisors are aware they have asked for them not to be present. It is important to ensure that the student is protected in any change in the regulation.
- (vii) In the Department of Genetics, the supervisor is not present at the thesis committee meetings when students can raise issues. It can also happen that the student hopes they can progress, but the supervisor raises concerns about the student's progress in advance of the meeting, and the thesis committee can communicate the decision to the student in the absence of the supervisor. Should a decision be taken at the College level that the supervisor must be present at the confirmation interview, then there should also be an opportunity when the thesis committee can have time without the supervisor to communicate with the student.
- (viii) Confirmation review can be seen as too late a stage to flag issues with a supervision breakdown and perhaps should not be so institutionalised. The Dean shared the view and indicated that any supervisory issues should be flagged at the annual meeting at the latest.
- (ix) The School of Mathematics DTLP advised that research in his School is very specialised, and it is difficult to identify two members of the thesis committee with sufficient expertise in the student's research niche. The committee naturally relies on the supervisor to state that sufficient progress has been made for the student to be confirmed on the register. The supervisor's presence is essential for the committee as otherwise they would have to rely on external expertise.
- (x) The Dean noted that research is very specific in many disciplines, and the supervisor and the PGR student would be the ones most rooted in the student's particular project. The role of the thesis committee is broader than the specific evaluation of the student's academic progress which can come from the supervisor. Both perspectives should coincide in making a decision about a student's progress. The Dean's personal experience has been that the supervisor is always present at the confirmation meeting, but she noted that for many Schools this has not been the practice. It may therefore be stipulated that this is an expectation which does not make it mandatory. The Dean also referred to the need to protect the student who should not be required to make a decision to exclude the supervisor from the meeting. The Dean concluded that she captured a palpable tension articulated by members between the supervisor vis-à-vis the thesis committee which would need to be resolved: a desire to have the supervisor present without making it mandatory versus the supervisor being one of the committee members.

- (xi) Any proposed regulations should be put together to model not on the basis of pathology but on the basis of people functioning together.
- 3) Meetings of thesis committee in different years should have their distinct goals especially in year 1. The 1 June deadline for the submission of the form might be problematic if the process is to be completed by the end of June. The form should be modified to have a comment space for each member of the committee to provide their feedback.
- 4) Pastoral support should be managed outside the thesis committee which does not have a pastoral role. There are different practices across Schools to do with pastoral care provision and the Dean would be reluctant to put a new regulation around it.
- 5) It was clarified that the chair is one of the members of the thesis committee and not an additional person.
- 6) It may so happen that members of the thesis committee might be junior than the supervisor and might find it easier to share their view with the student if the supervisor is not present at the meeting.
- 7) Prof. McLoughlin's view was that the supervisor should be allowed to be present at the meetings.

The Dean expressed commitment to respecting the diversity of practice grown in disciplines since 2019. The forthcoming guidelines should enable the thesis committee to continue in a manner that is as inclusive as possible and to accommodate as many variations as are needed to reflect the resources and needs of disciplines within the overarching uniformity of function maintained across all Schools. The Dean concluded the discussion by indicating that the proposed wording would need to be further considered. A revised wording will be circulated, and should the feedback be that the revision still needs to be reconsidered the document will be resubmitted to the GSC in May and otherwise it will proceed to the next Council.

**Action GS/22-23/116:** To circulate a revised version to members.

**Decision GS/22-23/116:** A revised wording to be circulated, and should the feedback be that the revision still needs to be reconsidered the document to be resubmitted to the GSC in May and otherwise to proceed to the next Council.

**XX GS/22-23/117 PGR: Process redesign of annual progression of PGR students, Mr Mark Sheridan, Senior PGR Project Manager to present**

The Item was taken after GS/22-23/114. The Dean referred members to the circulated memorandum from Mr Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager, PG Renewal Programme, which proposes a redesign of annual progression process for PGR students. Mr Sheridan spoke to a slide presentation regarding the simplification and clarification of the annual progression process for PGR students. He noted that currently the Annual Progression process is not universally understood and uniformly applied across Schools, and therefore some PGR students are not invited to register as they have not been progressed causing stress to students, additional administrative burden and stress in Schools and in the Academic Registry, and no clear and consistent visibility anywhere as to how PGR students are performing. Mr Sheridan explained that progress has been made on developing a concept to enhance visibility for Schools on the status of PGR students, and to provide enhanced reporting that would enable Schools to communicate the outcome of annual reviews and



confirmation interviews to the Academic Registry. The Dean complemented Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director of the Academic Registry and Mr Mark Sheridan for their extraordinary work over the past few weeks transforming the annual progression process of PGR students between Schools and the Academic Registry.

**XX GS/22-23/118 Academic Integrity Working Group 2022/23, Dean of Graduate Studies to update**  
The Dean informed members that Ms Lizzie Witcher has joined the WG and brings with her vast experience in the area. The Dean referred to a memorandum, which was brought to the last Council, to clarify that in the Calendar, where there is a reference to 'work' that a student submits, that the term is all encompassing and includes examinations. This clarification means that the existing Calendar regulations in respect of breaches of academic integrity covers examination material as well as continuous assessment work.

**XX GS/22-23/119 Any Other Business**

**(i) PGT External Examiner process update – Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education, TT&L)**

This item has been deferred due to the lack of time.

**(ii) National Symposium on Research Supervision**

The inaugural national symposium on research supervision is scheduled for 18 May 2023. It is a free event but requires Eventbrite signup.

**XX Section B for noting and approval**

**XX GS/22-23/120 Cessation of MSc in Pharmaceutical Medicine from 2023/24 – request from the School of Medicine and memorandum from Prof. Catherine Darker (School of Medicine, DTLP)**

A circulated memorandum from Prof. Catherine Darker, School of Medicine DTLP requested the cessation of the MSc in Clinical Supervision and noted that there will be a need to return any application fees relating to this course.

**Decision GS/22-23/120:** The committee recommended for Council approval the return of application fees for the MSc/Pg Dip programme in Pharmaceutical Medicine and the cessation of MSc in Pharmaceutical Medicine from 2023/24.

**XX GS/22-23/121 Cessation of Postgraduate Diploma in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy from 2023/24 request from the School of Medicine**

A circulated memorandum from the School of Medicine requested the cessation of the PG Dip in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy from 2023/24 due to the low uptake over the last few years and the insufficient financial sustainability of the programme.

**Decision GS/22-23/121:** The committee recommended for Council approval the cessation of the PG Dip in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy from 2023/24.

**XX GS/22-23/122 Suspension of MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy for 2023/24, request from the School of Medicine**

A circulated memorandum from the School of Medicine requested the suspension of the MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy for 2023/24 due to the low uptake over the last few years and the insufficient financial sustainability of the programme.

**Decision GS/22-23/122:** The committee recommended for Council approval the suspension of the MSc in Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy for 2023/24.

**XX GS/22-23/123 Review of MSc in Cancer Survivorship – School of Medicine**

A circulated memorandum from Prof. Brian O’Connell, Faculty Dean of Health Sciences, supported changes to the course proposal for the MSc in Cancer Survivorship. These changes include three title changes and the introduction of a new module. As a result, there is one change of the Programme Learning Outcomes, which impacts the PG Cert.

**Decision GS/22-23/123:** The committee recommended for Council approval a revision of the MSc in Cancer Survivorship from 2023/24.

**XX GS/22-23/124 Cessation of Micro-credential in Disability Health and Child Protection in 2023/24 Semester 1 – Memo from Prof. Stephanie Holt (Head of School of Social Work and Social Policy)**

A circulated memorandum from Prof. Stephanie Holt, Head of School of Social Work and Social Policy, requested the suspension of the Micro-credential in Disability Health & Child Protection in Semester 1 in 2023/24 due to the lecturer being on sabbatical during the specified semester.

**Decision GS/22-23/124:** The committee recommended for Council approval the suspension of the Micro-credential in Disability Health & Child Protection in 2023/24 for Semester 1.

**XX GS/22-23/125 GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials – Minutes of 20 April 2023**

The minutes of GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials on the 20 April 2023 were circulated to members.

**Decision GS/22-23/125:** The committee recommended for Council approval the minutes of GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials on the 20 April 2023.

**XX Section C for noting**

**XX GS/22-23/126 Information for Schools/non-Schools on Programme/stand-alone module proposal development – Memo from Ms Linda Darbey Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs, TT&L**

A memorandum from Ms Linda Darbey, Assistant Academic Secretary: Academic Affairs, detailing information for Schools/non-Schools on programme/stand-alone module proposal development was circulated to members.

**XX GS/22-23/127 PGR Marketing Report**

A report from Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing, Trinity Global, detailing the PG Renewal marketing course content on School webpages was circulated to members.

**XX GS/22-23/128 PGR: Financial Sponsors Report**

A report from Ms Laura Coughlan, Head of Student Finance, detailing PG Renewal review and enhance protocol and process for approval of sponsors, was circulated to members.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.35pm.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 27 April 2023