



Special Board Meeting 22 September 2022

This meeting was conducted as an in-person meeting with the majority of Board members present in the Trinity Board Room and one member joining remotely using the Zoom application.

Present: Provost (Dr L Doyle), Registrar (Professor N Cox), Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies (Professor D Shepherd), Bursar/Director of Strategic Innovation (Professor E Denny), Professor S Alyn Stacey, Professor I Arnedillo Sánchez, Professor L Brennan, Professor S Browne, Mr K Byrne, Ms Z Cummins, Mr D Grouse, Professor D Jones, Professor R A Kenny, Ms G Fullam, Professor C Leahy, Ms R Mathews-McKay, Professor R McManus, Professor A Nolan*, Professor L Roe, Ms C Staunton.

Apologies: Mr Paul Farrell, Professor K Ahmad, Professor N Campbell, Professor F Sheerin, Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer (Professor O Sheils), Professor J Walsh.

In attendance: Assistant Secretary to the College (Ms V Butler).

(ex officio) Secretary to the College (Mr J Coman), Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer (Mr P Reynolds).

(by invitation) Chief Operating Officer (Ms O Cunningham), Vice-President for Global Engagement (Professor E Stokes)

**Joined the meeting remotely through Zoom.*

SECTION A

The Provost welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed her thanks to the Board members for being available at short notice.

The Assistant Secretary tabled a document for Board members.

BD/22-23/024 Apologies

The Secretary to the College advised the Board that the President of the Graduate Students' Union had resigned as President and as his membership of the Board is in an *ex officio* capacity this now sees his membership of the Board ending also.

BD/22-23/025 Statements of Interest

The Secretary to the College advised the Board that there was a statement of potential conflict of interest in respect of the agenda item for Professor Alyn Stacey. Having discussed the matter with Professor Alyn Stacey the Secretary to the College suggested, and it was agreed, that Professor Alyn Stacey would be invited to give her comments at the start of the item and then would leave the meeting for the discussion and decision on this item.

BD/22-23/026 New Members' Declaration

At the invitation of the Provost the new Board member made the declaration for new members as set down in the Consolidated Statutes 2010.

BD/21-22/027 Urgent Item of Business

The Senior Dean/Chair of the Capitation Committee, Professor Eoin O'Sullivan; the Dean of Students, Professor Catherine McCabe; and the Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor Martine Smith joined the meeting for this item.

The Provost welcomed the visitors to the meeting and noted the importance of confidentiality in respect of this item and invited the Senior Dean, as Chair of the Capitation Committee, to introduce the item.

The Senior Dean, with reference to his memorandum dated 21 September 2022 which had been tabled, advised the Board that the Capitation Committee, at its meeting of the 20 September 2022, agreed by consensus to suspend funding to the Graduate Students' Union (GSU), and to re-allocate this funding to the Students' Union for the purposes of supporting the postgraduate community. The decision flowed from the fact that the GSU had still not filed accounts with the Capitation Committee for the financial year ending August 2021, despite numerous requests from the Capitation Committee to do so.

The Senior Dean concluded by outlining the specific requests before the Board as set down in his memorandum.

In response to queries from Board members, the Senior Dean clarified that under the terms of reference of the Capitation Committee it is a requirement that audited financial statements be submitted annually to the Capitation Committee. He also advised that accounts had been received prior to 2021.

The Provost noted the independence of the Graduate Students' Union, however, given that the Capitation Committee had raised concerns it was important for this matter to be brought to the attention of the Board.

Professor Alyn Stacey, who was Chair of the Graduate Students' Union Board, clarified for Board members that the Board of the GSU is only an advisory Board. She noted that in her view some of the recent actions of the GSU were questionable. Professor Alyn Stacey noted that Fellows make a declaration to uphold the name of the College and it was in that spirit and in good faith that she had participated in the brokering of an amicable agreement between College and the GSU at the request of the College Visitors in May 2022; she expressed her disappointment that this agreement had not been honoured by the GSU. Consequently, she was obliged to support the Senior Dean's memorandum and requests within. She concluded by advising the Board that she would be willing to stay on as Chair of the GSU Board and work to get the issues resolved. She recommended that, going forward, the GSU could receive guidance from the Financial Services Division team.

Professor Alyn Stacey left the meeting at this point.

The Provost welcomed suggestions from Board members in respect of the best way for graduate students to have a voice in the University.

In response to a query from a Board member noting the services provided by the GSU to graduate students, it was clarified that elections of class reps and other services could be facilitated by the

Students' Union should Board mandate the Students' Union to do so given that the constitution of the Students' Union sets down that the Students' Union represents all students. The Board also acknowledged the importance of ensuring postgraduate students are represented in all relevant committees and forums.

Responding to a query from a Board member in respect of the structures in the GSU, the Provost noted the resignation of the President of the GSU and advised that there are annual sabbatical officers elected with the practice that handovers are provided by the outgoing team.

A Board member noted the role of the Capitation Committee and the graduate students themselves in deciding the best way forward. They noted that the Students' Union will arrange for direct consultation with the postgraduate community to discuss the future of postgraduate representation in Trinity including holding townhall meetings for postgraduate students in the coming week and actively addressing postgraduate representation across the University.

Responding to a query from a Board member in relation to funding for the Students' Union to support this additional activity, the Senior Dean advised that the Capitation Committee at its most recent meeting had agreed by consensus to suspend funding to the GSU, and to re-allocate this funding to the Students' Union for the purposes of supporting the postgraduate community.

The Provost advised the Board that she had met with the capitated bodies that morning and had also discussed the matter with the Senior Dean, Dean of Graduate Students and the Dean of Students and there was agreement with and support for the proposal. She also acknowledged the autonomy of the GSU but noted the need for robust and good governance.

Responding to queries from Board members in respect of the current sabbatical team in the GSU, the Provost noted that students themselves were supportive of the proposal as the GSU had not been effectively performing its functions in respect of financial reporting and promoting the voice of graduate students in recent times.

The Secretary to the College in response to a query from a Board member advised that he had discussed the matter with the Internal Auditor.

Several Board members endorsed the proposal and the responsibility of the Board in this regard was acknowledged. The Registrar clarified that this was an historic issue arising from the operations of the GSU in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Provost advised the Board that a Terms of Reference for the independent review of the finances of the GSU would be compiled and that timely action will be taken to initiate the review with a view to having it completed as quickly as possible with updates on its progress to be provided to the Board.

Responding to a query from a Board member, the Senior Dean clarified that generally should other capitated bodies experience delays in submitting the audited financial accounts there is always continued communication and the Capitation Committee is kept informed. He noted that the lack of communication from the GSU at this time was part of the reason for bringing forward this proposal.

The Dean of Students confirmed that the Capitation Committee, which had a majority of student members, was a sub-committee of the Student Life Committee, which would continue to report to the Council in the normal way.

It was noted that the Students' Union represents all students and that it would deliver the necessary services to graduate students at this time.

The Provost concluded the item by noting that she will continue to liaise with the Senior Dean and would keep the Board updated of the progress made in respect of the finances and oversight of the GSU. The importance of ensuring appropriate graduate student representation and of hearing the graduate students' voice was acknowledged. The Provost advised that the outcome of the Board discussion would be communicated to postgraduate students.

The Secretary to the College asked for each Board member to return the document to the Assistant Secretary prior to leaving the Board Room and the Dean of Students advised the Board that the Capitation Committee is a sub-committee of the University Council where this matter would also be noted.

Action/Decision

027.01 The Board noted and approved the memorandum from the Chair of the Capitation Committee dated 21st of September 2022.

027.02 The Board noted the decision of the Capitation Committee at its meeting on 20 September 2022 and this update.

027.03 The Board approved that the University suspend its engagement with, and services offered to, the Graduate Students' Union (GSU), and that an independent review into the financial reporting and oversight of the GSU is conducted.

027.04 The Board agreed that the Students' Union be given a mandate in the immediate term to nominate a postgraduate student to attend relevant committees at the invitation of the relevant committee chair, until these issues are resolved. Consultation will take place with the Students' Union on how best to proceed.