

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 4th March, 2004
Room 2026, Arts Building.

Present: Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair), Prof. Michael Gibney, Dr Maryann Valiulis, Dr Alan Kramer, Dr Evelyn Mahon, Dr Trevor Hodkinson, Dr Trevor Orr, Dr Frederick Falkiner, Dr John Donegan, Ms Margaret Carroll, Dr Alan Moore, Dr Joseph McDonagh, Dr Christine Morris, Ms Mairead De Roiste,

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska (GSO); Ms Nicky Saunders (GSO)

Apologies: Mr Trevor Peare, Ms Gail Hogan, Prof. David Singleton, Mr Michael Dowling, Ms Susannah Scott,

177.0 Minutes of the meetings of the 22nd January, 2004 and 5th February 2004

Both sets of minutes were approved by the Committee and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

177.1 Matters arising

Re item 176.2: The Dean confirmed the title of the diploma as Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Supervision (Psychology).

Re item 176.7 Postgraduate Admissions 2004 (deferred from the previous meeting). The Dean explained that in response to concerns expressed by the College community about graduate admissions and other functions of the Graduate Studies Office, he had requested the Academic Secretary to undertake an administrative review of the area. As a result of the recommendations of that review the Dean of Graduate Studies, in discussion with the Senior Lecturer, had put together proposals to the Executive Officers to enable the Office to provide an efficient service against the background of ever increasing numbers of postgraduate students and applicants for postgraduate programmes in College. The Dean stated that he was happy to report that the Officers and Council have approved a development plan. In the short term its recommendations are that additional resources be put into the Office as a matter of urgency in order to modernise IT provisions, to recruit an additional member of staff and to up-skill current personnel. A further recommendation is to link the administrative procedures of the Office more firmly with those of the Senior Lecturer's Area and thereby capitalise on the Area's administrative expertise at management level. One effect would be to strengthen the existing reporting line to the Academic Secretary on general administrative issues and also to the Admissions Officer (Assistant Academic Secretary) in terms of admissions. These recommendations form an initial stage of more fundamental long-term changes in the future.

The Committee welcomed the outlined changes. A general view was expressed that the Graduate Studies Committee should re-focus its attention on more strategic postgraduate issues and enhance its profile in College and delegate more of its routine business to the Faculties. The Dean reminded the meeting that the strategic plan had envisaged a significant role for the Faculties in that they would strive to set up Faculty or similar level Graduate

Schools which might become the appropriate agencies for dealing, for example, with enquiries, parts of the admission process, marketing, and the integration within research degrees of taught elements and research training. The Dean suggested that an example of such a school, though concerned purely with taught graduate programmes, is the Graduate School of Engineering Studies and he noted that the Faculty of Health Sciences have a new Research and Postgraduate Training Group. The latter have proposed the establishment of a Faculty of Health Sciences Graduate Applications Section on a pilot scheme for admissions into 2005.

177.2 CHIU project on PhD Good Practice: final responses from 3 Faculties (Science, Arts Letters, BESS).

An additional response from the Faculty of Arts (Humanities) was tabled before the meeting but the item was deferred to the next meeting due to the lack of time.

177.3 Responses to a review of 2 Postgraduate Diplomas and a MSc in Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering

In response to a query, the Dean reminded the Committee that postgraduate courses are in a sense reviewed twice. The first review is managed by the Dean and the Graduate Studies Office and involves the course's own external examiner while the second review is undertaken as part of the quinquennial departmental review process, is organised by the Quality Office and involves external assessors. This system was put in place for practical reasons as, given the shortness of the first review (normally half a day), it is more practical to use the external examiner who is already familiar with the course to get his views into the review process by providing initial but concrete feedback directly to the department. The Dean welcomed Dr Roger West, Head of Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering for a second round of comments, and invited him to speak to the circulated responses to the reviews of three more courses carried out in October 2003. Dr West commented on the reviews of the following courses: Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Engineering, Postgraduate Diploma in Fire Safety Practice and M.Sc. in Civil Engineering. Dr West explained that the three courses were unique in Ireland, extremely popular, well established, highly respected, fully accredited by the Institution of Engineers and had high-calibre students attending them. In responding to a review of the Postgraduate Diploma in Fire Safety Practice, Dr West expressed some disappointment that the recommendations received were not very concrete and sometimes factually incorrect. He explained that the course was one of continuous professional development and not vocational as implied by the reviewers. With regard to the Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Engineering, Dr West expressed his concern that the department would not be in a position to address the review's strongest recommendation to set up an environmental laboratory because of the lack of funds. He emphasised that space was not the issue but the costs which, modest as they might seem, could not be met from the internal departmental budget. The lack of such a laboratory might be an obstacle to accreditation by the Institute of Engineers next year. With regard to the M.Sc. in Civil Engineering, Dr West explained that it was a core course, and a very popular one but because it did not bring the department any profit from its fees, it was run at a deficit and the department had to downscale its intake by 50% this academic year, and drastically cut back on the course options due to inadequate resources. Dr West suggested that under the current financing arrangements the long-term future of the course was in doubt. The Dean thanked Dr West for attending the meeting and congratulated him, on behalf of the Committee, on the positive nature of the reviews.

The Committee discussed the reviews and in particular expressed concern on the financial difficulties expressed by the head of department. The Dean confirmed that a review of the

relationship between postgraduate core and self-financing courses had already been initiated across the faculties in order to gather information. This information would form the basis for a paper from the Committee to the Executive Officers, who will later this year be considering recommendations on revising College's resource allocation model. He also undertook to speak again to the Dean of the ESS Faculty and pass on to him Dr West's concerns identified at the meeting.

177.4 Integrated MPhil/PhD programme in Political Science

The Dean welcomed Prof. Michael Laver, the Head of the Department of Political Science. Prof. Laver spoke to the documents circulated prior to the meeting and explained the academic rationale, structure and objectives of the integrated PhD programme. He clarified that the PhD in Political Science, which included a taught component, had been in operation since 1995 but last year the Graduate Studies Committee had requested that the department fully clarified in terms of a set of regulations the academic foundations on which that taught component was based. Prof. Laver emphasised that the recruitment into the integrated programme even though via an MPhil would be entirely with a view to selecting candidates able to proceed to the PhD register in year 2. It was therefore confirmed that applicants to this integrated doctorate would be eligible to apply for College research awards from year 1. The Committee approved the proposal. The Dean confirmed that the proposal would not need to be further discussed at Faculty level and would not need to be presented separately to Council as it is only a clarification with some modifications of the already existing programme.

Dr M. Valiulis and Dr E. Mahon expressed some concern that the award of the MPhil degree to students unable to proceed to the PhD register might downgrade the standing of the MPhil degree itself in College. The Dean explained that the MPhil would function exactly in parallel with the research Master's degree which can either be an exit degree for candidates unsuccessful in getting onto the PhD register but can also be an objective in its own right as originally intended at the point of entry into the research programme.

177.5 MSc in Economic Science

The Dean welcomed Prof. Alan Matthews, the Head of the Department of Economics, and Dr Paul Walsh, the Course Coordinator. Both spoke to the documents circulated prior to the meeting and explained the course proposal in terms of its background, objectives, strategic importance to the department, structure, entry requirements and resources implications. They confirmed that the objective was to secure an intake of 30-35 students on an annual basis after the initial start-up period. The fee was set at a level slightly higher than that at UCD but matching the level of the department's main academic competitors in the UK. The proposal included a link to a month-long summer school in September which would provide intensive refresher courses in mathematics and statistics to ensure that all participants would be on a better footing to undertake the MSc proper. The school would also provide an opportunity for the course committee to assess the academic aptitude of applicants to the MSc. The fee for the summer school would be subsumed into the MSc fee for successful applicants. The MSc would run for 9 months with a view to its participants submitting their dissertations by July. The MSc was primarily intended as a taught introduction into a subsequent doctoral programme whether at Trinity or elsewhere, although the skills taught would also be in demand by both private and public sector employers. The Committee approved the proposal. The Committee received clarification from the Course Coordinator that the level of pass required for a dissertation was 60% and not 40%. It was agreed that a statement would need to be incorporated into the course proposal that the course cannot be passed if the student fails the dissertation. The Dean requested that the course coordinator report back to the Graduate

Studies Committee after the course had been running for 2 years on its level of success and any significant issues which might have emerged in the meantime. It was also confirmed that the examiners' meeting would need to be convened during the statutory term. An entry into the University Calendar Part 2 would need to be provided.

177.6 MPhil in Film Theory and History

The item was deferred until 1 April at the request of Dr Paula Quigley and Dr Kevin Rockett, the course proposers.

177.7 Higher Doctorates

The Dean explained that the issue of higher doctorates had been presented to the Academic Affairs Committee, which approved the Dean's proposal and made the following recommendations:

- a) there will only be one entry into the programme per year i.e. in October; a sub-committee of the Graduate Studies Committee would meet in Michaelmas time in order to assess the applications received;
- b) the level of quality required will be very high and only very eminent applicants would be considered. (It is hoped that this would help avoid the degrees becoming a *de facto* promotional criterion in the context of the new promotional grade of professor);
- c) the fee will be high to fund adequately the administrative support for the scheme and to allow a reasonable fee to the high calibre assessors required.
- d) an issue whether TCD applicants would need to pay the same fee was still unresolved and the Dean would seek the Registrar's advice.

The Dean promised to bring the document before the Committee once the Council had approved it. A new entry into the University Calendar Part 2 would be required.

177.8 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.50 am. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 1st April 2004.

Prof. John Saeed

Signed:

Date: 1 April 2004

