

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1st April, 2004
Room 2026, Arts Building.

Present: Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair), Dr Maryann Valiulis, Dr Alan Kramer, Dr Evelyn Mahon, Dr John Donegan, Ms Margaret Carroll, Dr Alan Moore, Dr Christine Morris, Prof. David Singleton, Mr Trevor Peare, Ms Gail Hogan, Mr Michael Dowling, Ms Susannah Scott, Ms Mairead De Roiste,

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska (GSO);

Apologies: Prof. Michael Gibney, Dr Trevor Hodkinson, Dr Joseph McDonagh, Dr Trevor Orr, Dr Frederick Falkiner, Ms Nicky Saunders (GSO)

178.0 Minutes of the meeting of 4th March 2004

The minutes of the meeting of 4th March 2004 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

178.1 Matters arising

Re item 177.5: The Dean confirmed the new Master's course in the Department of Economics had been approved by Council with a change of the title from MSc in Economic Science to MSc in Economics. Ms Hogan, the Information System Services representative notified the meeting that Prof. Matthews was in the process of finalising discussions with her in respect of ISS needs that the new course might require.

Re item 177.7: The Dean confirmed that Council had approved the proposal for higher doctorates. A proposal would be presented to the Committee at the next meeting with regard to setting up a Higher Doctorates Sub-committee of the Graduate Studies Committee to review the applications, chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies. It was agreed that the new Sub-committee's membership would be set at a minimum of 3 but preferably 5-6 members and would have cross-faculty representation to help maintain common levels of assessment. The Higher Doctorates Sub-committee would meet once a year in October to review applications. The deadline for submissions would be 1 September. Deans and Heads of Department of relevant areas would be invited to join the review process to assess the legitimacy of applications for further assessment. A new entry into the University Calendar Part 2 to reflect the reviewed procedure would be required.

178.2 CHIU project on PhD Good Practice: final responses from 3 Faculties (Science, Arts Letters and BESS) and the Graduate Students' Union (deferred from 4 March 2004)

The Dean thanked all the faculties and the representatives for their efforts in the preparation of the submissions. He explained that the CHIU report once published would propose guidelines on the management of PhD programmes. He also noted the possibility that funding councils would refer to the guidelines in determining their allocation of funding. The intended CHIU report would most likely also be of interest to the Irish Universities Quality Board. The Dean

suggested that College's input to the process was an important one, given that in recent years the College has been consistently producing more PhD graduates than any other University in the state. The Dean undertook to bring all the findings together and funnel the collated information into an official College submission for CHIU.

The Dean invited representatives from the three faculties to speak to the faculty responses tabled at the previous meeting but deferred due to lack of time. Dr E. Mahon (BESS) noted her appreciation for the GSU's submission, which she thought, was particularly well written and argued and should be especially welcomed for the CHIU document. Dr C. Morris (Arts Letters) focused in particular on explaining that the apparent differences with regard to admissions procedures in her faculty result from the various sizes of individual departments and reflect particular needs of subject areas and their students thus constituting a strength rather than a weakness of the flexible system. Dr J. Donegan confirmed that the Department of Physics appears to be the only department in the Science Faculty which actually has a requirement for its research postgraduate students to take 2 taught courses before transferring to the PhD register. He explained that other departments were also in favour of introducing a taught component into their research programmes but did not currently have adequate resources to implement such ambitions. He also informed the meeting that the faculty might introduce mandatory training for research postgraduates in intellectual property issues.

The Dean invited Michael Dowling, the President of the GSU, to speak to the submission by the Graduate Student Union. Mr M. Dowling explained that although their survey had shown that there was no strong desire amongst PhD students to change towards an American-style PhD model, there were many aspects of that model which students would like to see incorporated in order to improve the quality of Irish PhDs. The students were especially recommending improvements in funding, supervision, facilities and representation and in particular the introduction of optional formal training in lecturing skills. With regard to funding, Mr Dowling noted that the lack of sufficient funding was the biggest structural problem for PhD students, and that the GSU submission was suggesting certain improvements to the funding structure at national and College levels. He also outlined the need to introduce a new form of training for research students in lecturing skills by establishing an optional Diploma in Lecturing which would be incorporated in the PhD structure. He then expressed concern that the current PhD structure appears not to put any firm requirements on supervision standards and suggested strengthening the process of monitoring and aiding the PhD students' progress. Mr Dowling also emphasised that universities need strong postgraduate input into their decision-making process in areas concerning postgraduate students, which ensures that the university is constantly receiving adequate feedback. Trinity College is unique in Ireland in having an independently capitated students' union for postgraduates. He passed on a recommendation on behalf of Trinity's postgraduate students that other universities follow the Trinity example of establishing a Graduate Students Union. The Dean thanked Mr Dowling for the thoroughness of his presentation and confirmed that the GSU's submission would be an extremely valuable contribution towards the Trinity submission for the CHIU report. With regard to the proposed Diploma in Lecturing, he noted that the CAPSL was already providing some training on demand in this area but that the GSU suggestion appears to go further and would require a more formalised training. With regard to PhD supervision, he noted that incoming academic staff may attend induction programmes organised by the Staff Office. However, he acknowledged that that was voluntary and limited to new staff only. He welcomed the students' recommendation that training should be broader, more formalised and focused on supervisory role.

The Dean also reminded the meeting that if they wished to attend they could still ensure their participation in the Experts' Meeting on Good Practice in the Organisation of PhD Programmes to be held in the Westin hotel in Dublin on 28-29 April. Those wishing to attend were advised to contact the Graduate Studies Office Administrator.

178.3 Higher Diploma in Psychology (full-time, 2 years, first entry in October 2005)

The Dean shared with the meeting his concern that while this particular proposal was extremely worthwhile, it posed the Committee two particular types of concern. He confirmed that seen within the national framework of qualifications, the proposed Diploma was a Higher and not a Postgraduate one, and that to date Trinity College, unlike other Irish universities, had only one academic area with this qualification, namely that of the Higher Diplomas in Education. He confirmed that he had already conducted preliminary discussions with the Senior Lecturer on College policy towards this type of qualification. The Senior Lecturer will bring the issue as a policy matter to the Academic Affairs Committee shortly. Once the policy issues had been discussed, the matter would be passed to Council for discussion and decision.

The second issue concerned the level of course content, which is at an undergraduate rather postgraduate level. In this regard, evaluating the course represents a new development for the Committee. The Dean noted that the established practice in other universities for higher diplomas seemed to be that such diplomas are processed and administered through postgraduate structures. The Committee briefly discussed the role of higher diplomas and noted that they might provide one element of lifelong learning in facilitating graduates in shifting into new areas. Mr T. Peare clarified that from the Library's perspective the proposed Higher Diploma in Psychology was being treated as an undergraduate course as the Library had established that its students would require the same set of handbooks to cover their curriculum needs rather than varied library resources to respond to their individual research needs, a fact which constitutes a reliable identifier as to whether a taught course is delivered at a postgraduate or undergraduate level.

After the initial discussion, the Dean invited Dr J. Quigley, the Course Coordinator, to speak to the circulated documents. Dr Quigley explained a perceived need for the proposed course, its market and a profile of its applicants. She then responded to some questions. She explained that there was an independent market for this type of a conversion course irrespective of any possible extension of undergraduate places in Psychology. The course would require a significant practical component to be carried out in a laboratory environment, and that this facility was very limited during daytime as it was in use by undergraduates. Access to a laboratory space would hence be only available in the evening. The course however would be mostly delivered during the day and in small groups. She clarified that the curriculum level would be on par with that of Sophister options, research based and advanced. There were no other taught Master's courses available in the Department of Psychology, and that there was an expectation that graduates of this diploma would enter profession training at the same level as graduates of the undergraduate programme in Psychology.

The Committee considered the possibility of holding up the proposal until College develops an overall policy on the role of higher diplomas. It was however deemed inappropriate to delay the development of this worthwhile course during a possibly extended policy debate. It was therefore decided to treat this new course proposal as a stand-alone issue and approve it without setting a precedent to other proposals for higher diplomas and conversion courses in the future.

178.4 MPhil in Film Theory and History (full-time, 1 year, first entry in October 2006)

The item was deferred from the previous meeting. The Dean invited Dr Paula Quigley, the Course Director, to speak to the circulated documents. Dr Quigley explained that the new MPhil would aim to develop research culture in film studies and to address a need for such postgraduate training, which had been identified not only in Ireland but also internationally, primarily in the United States. There is an MA programme in Film Studies in UCD but, given the absence of an undergraduate degree programme in Film Studies in Ireland, this course operates largely at a general and introductory level. There is also an MA programme in Film and Television Studies in DCU but it emphasizes the economic and industrial context of film and television production. The proposed MPhil would therefore be unique in Ireland in offering an advanced postgraduate course in Film Theory and History leading to a research level. Dr Quigley explained that with regard to the self-financing aspect, the course should be viable even if it fails to attract the anticipated 3 non-EU fee-paying students. She also clarified that it was intended to introduce academic issues relating to gender studies. The Committee approved the course.

178.5 MSc in Exercise Physiology - confirmation of the course title

The Dean spoke to the memo submitted by Prof. C. Bell and explained that there seems to be confusion about the official title of this taught course, established in 1996. The title of the College Calendar entry and fee listing has always been "Exercise Physiology". However, the wording used on transcripts produced by the Student Records Office indicated that they qualified in Exercise Science, which Prof Bell's memo suggested is not as highly regarded as Exercise Physiology. The Committee approved formally that the course title is MSc in Exercise Physiology.

178.6 NAFA visit to the College

The Dean notified the meeting of the upcoming visit by a delegation from NAFA, the US National Association of Fellowship Advisors. These are officers at US universities who advise students on programmes abroad. He explained that they would be coming to Ireland for the first time and would visit Trinity for half a day on June 9th. The Dean suggested that the visit might have been triggered by the greater exposure the Mitchell scholarships have given to Irish universities. The delegation would be keen to, first, have an overview of higher education in Ireland. They would then like to meet with administrators, deans, and programme directors involved in postgraduate studies at Trinity. While some of their members have undergraduate study abroad responsibilities, as a group, they are concerned almost exclusively with advising on postgraduate studies. They would also be keen to meet with American students in College, particularly the Mitchell Scholars. The Dean advised that the delegation would be trying to identify Trinity's 'flagship' graduate programmes and those that would appeal/have appealed to US students. He noted that the Faculty Deans had already been circulated this information and were looking for academics volunteering to participate in the occasion. He therefore invited all present to get in touch with their deans if they wish to secure their involvement in the event.

178.7 Any Other Business

- (a) The Dean explained that in the context of the current review of the operations of the Graduate Studies Office as overseen by the Academic Secretary, Ms V. Jenkins had made a request to attend a meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee. The Dean requested and received permission from the Committee for the Academic Secretary to attend the next Graduate Studies Committee meeting on 6 May 2004.

- (b) The Dean reminded the Committee that as part of the review of the research awards system carried out last year and the introduction of postgraduate studentships this academic year, a recommendation was made that faculty allocations would be reviewed annually and their quotas would be adjusted on the basis of the numbers of registered research students per faculty in the previous academic year. The total number of postgraduate studentships available to new entrants annually stays at 100. The Committee approved revised faculty quotas for allocation for 2004/05 as per the Dean's memo tabled at the meeting. The Dean also referred to a letter he had received recently from Prof. Dermot Kelleher, Vice-Dean of the School of Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Health Sciences which expressed concern that many postgraduates in the Faculty were excluded from the College awards because the stipend given by the Health Research Board was over €12,700, or because they were in employment while pursuing their PhD. It was confirmed that while the Committee shared these concerns it was not in a position to relax the restrictions on the upper limit of earnings. It was decided that the Dean of Graduate Studies would liaise with Prof. Kelleher and the Dean of the Faculty in order to discuss the situation in more detail and look for alternative solutions.
- (c) The Erasmus Mundus programme: the Committee expressed its appreciation for the initiative and expressed the view that the University should support the programme and facilitate its operations in administrative terms.

The Committee approved all items listed *For Notification*:

A. University Calendar part 2 - Calendar changes for 2004:

- a) P.Grad.Dip in Specialist Nursing - an introduction of two new strands of *Haematology Nursing* and *Care of the Person with Severe and Enduring Mental Illness*
- b) P.Grad.Dip in Gerontological Nursing
- c) MSc in Molecular Medicine - an introduction of a new optional integrated Nanoscience stream

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.55 am. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, 6th May 2004.

Prof. John Saeed

Signed:

Date: 6 May 2004