

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st October, 2004
Room 2026, Arts Building.

Present: Chair: Dean of Graduate Studies (Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast), Dr Christine Morris, Dr Alan Kramer, Dr Lilian Alweiss, Ms Margaret Carroll, Prof. Terence Brown, Dr Evelyn Mahon, Dr John Donegan, Mr Trevor Peare, Ms Adele Notley, Dr Brian Lucey, Prof. Vincent Cahill, GSU President, GSU Vice-President

In attendance: Ms Ewa Sadowska,

Apologies: Dean of Research (Prof. Ian Robertson), Dr Alan Moore, Dr Trevor Hodkinson, Dr Frederick Falkiner, GSU 3rd Representative

181.0 Minutes of the meeting of 3rd June, 2004

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd June 2004 were approved by the Committee as circulated and signed by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

181.1 Matters arising

The Dean welcomed new members of the Committee and invited all to introduce themselves.

Re. 180.3: The Dean sought the Committee's feedback as to whether the issue of grading taught masters should be re-opened, especially given that some taught masters are treated as a prerequisite to the entry on the research register. After a short discussion the Committee agreed that on the whole its members supported the current practice of un-graded taught masters. A view was expressed that detailed transcripts should be issued by default for all graduands of postgraduate taught courses by the Student Records Office, and not by course coordinators or directors. The Dean advised that the Diploma Supplement would introduce additional clarity to this issue with its break-down of the student's academic assessment for the duration of the postgraduate course.

Re. 180.4: The Dean advised that it would be appropriate to discuss further the issue of incentivisation in the context of the proposed academic resource allocation model which was a separate item on the agenda.

Re. 180.9: The Dean noted that the NAFA visit had been a great PR success for College, and that a significant number of academic staff and American students participated in it.

Re. 179.5 (190.1): The Dean advised that the Higher Doctorates Sub-Committee of the Graduate Studies Committee had met and established that for all four applications submitted there was a *prima facie* case to proceed with further academic assessment. The Dean confirmed that deposition in the Library of corpus of work of the successful applicants would be mandatory, although it had been neglected in the past. The Dean advised that past awardees of the Higher Doctorate degree would be written to in order to invite them to deposit their corpus of work in the Library. The Keeper agreed with the Dean on this matter.

181.2 Taught masters dissertations

The Dean invited Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of the Readers' Services to speak to the circulated memo. Mr Peare explained that it was mandatory to deposit all research theses in the Library while taught masters dissertations were not routinely deposited in the Library. Given the fact that taught masters dissertations were deposited only on an *ad hoc* basis, that they were not normally of the same high academic merit as the research theses, that they were hardly in demand by students in the Library, and that the Library would be running out of storage space towards the end of the academic year, the Keeper proposed on behalf of the Library that only dissertations of outstanding academic quality in any academic year be deposited there on the recommendation of the Dean of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Library. Course Coordinators might choose not to avail of this facility and have all dissertations stored only locally. After discussion, the Committee supported the Keeper's proposal. The Committee noted that departments should

ensure that dissertations be locally available, and local resources permitting, an effective and innovative way of ensuring this could be via a departmental web page. It was noted that some departments might not have adequate space or local library facilities to store dissertations in a hard copy. However, it was also noted that normally dissertations were of special interest to students within a department and should therefore be easily available locally. It was emphasized that dissertations would still need to be bound as required by the regulations. It was agreed that the Dean would contact course coordinators/directors by email about this issue.

181.3 Review of taught postgraduate courses

The Dean noted that there were two ways of reviewing postgraduate courses. Normally, a postgraduate course would be reviewed by its external examiner at the end of the examiner's term and the examiner's report would come before the Graduate Studies Committee for comments and the Head of Department concerned would share his/her view with the Committee about the conduct of the review process. Such a review would then feed back into the department's review. The second option was available at a request of the Faculty Dean approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean explained that that was the case with the current three reviews of M.Phil. in Medieval Language, Literature and Culture, Postgraduate Diploma in Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technology and Postgraduate Diploma in Nuclear Medicine. After a short discussion the Committee approved Dean's proposal that it would be proper as a matter of policy to appoint as a reviewer a candidate who never acted as an external examiner for the course, to be reviewed at the request of the Faculty Dean.

181.4 Graduate Studies Resources Sub-committee

There was a general feeling that the current procedure for approval of postgraduate course proposals was cumbersome and might need to be reviewed. After discussion, the Committee was inclined to support the idea of "two-stop shop". Given the fact that course proposals result mainly from an academic initiative, there should be a forum (i.e. the first "stop") for vetting proposals strictly from academic-merit perspective. All proposals approved at that forum would then proceed to the second "stop", i.e., the forum where they would be assessed by the representatives from the ISS, Library, and Treasurer's Office. Once approved at that second forum, the proposals would be put before Council by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of the Readers' Services noted the Library's concern that there did not seem to exist a sound method of measuring a possible impact which a proposed new course might have on the Library's resources, and that the Library would be working towards identifying such numerical model.

181.4 PhD Good Practice

The Dean noted that the issue had been debated in some detail during the last academic year, and given its topicality he proposed to retain it on the agenda for further in-depth discussion this year, especially with regard to the quality of supervision and the transfer procedure to the PhD register. It was noted that students were not satisfied with the current situation and would welcome a much tighter and better-structured transfer process and a more robust standard of supervision. In addition, a lot of unnecessary administrative work of the Graduate Studies Office, the Fees Office and the Student Records Office could be saved, if the transfer process for students, especially on the year two on the research register, could be completed by departments and requested from the Dean of Graduate Studies by 12 July. This would also save numerous students a lot of stressful uncertainty and confusion about the following year's fees, and whether they would continue on the research award scheme on year 3. The Committee agreed that there should be a new and revised common standard of PhD Good Practice across the University, which would also underpin and validate the new resource allocation model. The Committee had undertaken that they would be working towards establishing one by the end of this academic year.

181.5 Academic Resource Allocation Model

The Dean spoke to a document entitled "Key Principles and Issues associated with an Academic-based Resource Allocation Model (ARAM)", tabled with permission from the College Secretary. The Committee requested that they be given an opportunity to come back to this issue at the next meeting to properly discuss the document in the context of the last year's issue of incentivisation and the new proposed model of academic resource allocation. The Committee members, however, were keen to share their initial comments that the proposal to include only PhD students for their first four years should be removed, as high quality research might often take more than 4 years, especially in the area of humanities and arts. The Committee's view was that that proposal might in particular have the potential to make a dramatically

negative impact on the standards of PhD research in certain areas of College. With regard to the four “price groups” for different categories of students, it was felt that in the area of humanities, arts and BESS small group teaching, library work and business consultancy attachments were also expensive and should be taken on a par with laboratory work in Science and Health Sciences. A general feeling was that the cost of a PhD lab researcher in biological sciences might not be very different from one in clinical sciences. The GSU President argued with the support of the Committee that central services need to be maintained centrally and protected in terms of fair access for all postgraduate students irrespective of their school base. A strong view was expressed that it should not be allowed to happen that one school could decide or only afford to “buy” less library resources than another, to the disadvantage of the postgraduate students in that school. The Dean undertook to bring those initial comments to the attention of the Bursar for the consideration of the Task Force Resource Allocation.

181.6 AOB

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 18 November 2004.



Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast

Date: 16 December 2004