

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 7 December, 2006  
Conference Room, 5 College Green

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**Present:** Prof. Patrick Prendergast, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology  
Prof. Paul Coughlan, School of Business  
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics  
Prof. June Nunn, School of Dental Science  
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music  
Dr Andrew Loxley, School of Education  
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English  
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleaináin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Prof. J Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics  
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences  
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics  
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology  
Dr Helen Buckley, School of Social Work & Social Policy  
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)  
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Ruth Palileo, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)

**Apologies:** Prof. Ian Robertson, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)  
Mr Paul Laird, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry  
Prof. Henry Rice, School of Engineering  
Prof. Eunan O'Halpin, School of Histories & Humanities  
Dr Eoin O'Dell, (Acting) School of Law  
Prof. Mark Lawler, School of Medicine  
Mr Damien Brennan, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Prof. Kenneth Benoit, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology

**In attendance:** Ms Ewa Sadowska, Graduate Studies Office, Secretary to the meeting (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office

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The Dean welcomed the new Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School of English, Prof. Nicholas Grene who attended the meeting for the first time this academic year.

### 197.0 Minutes of 19 October 2006

The minutes of the meeting of 9 October 2006 were approved by the Committee as circulated subject to correcting a typo in the final version.

#### 197.1 Matters arising

a) *Re. 196.2:* The Dean noted that the Postgraduate Diploma in Management had been approved at Council. Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services, advised that he had gone out to visit the IMI library in the meantime and found out that the facilities there were limited compared to the College library. Mr Peare had therefore written to Dr. Gerard McHugh, Head of School of Business, to propose that the IMI Library staff become associated staff in TCD so that they could be issued with a Trinity IT password to access TCD Library holdings in order to more efficiently address library needs of TCD students in the IML.

b) *Re. 196.3:* The Dean advised that the Heads' Committee referred the Intercalated Masters proposal back to the Graduate Studies Committee for further consideration. It is likely that the School of Medicine will make an amended proposal later in the year requiring students on the Intercalated Masters course to be registered part-time for year 2, which will overlap with year 4 back on the UG register, in order to submit a clinically-underpinned research dissertation.

c) *Re. 196.4 (b):* The Dean advised that he had brought to Council a memo on the creation of a Master in Science in Research Degree award and the Council subsequently invited the Registrar to progress the issue.

d) *Re. 196.5 (c)*: The Dean advised that the Heads' Committee had considered the issue and recommended that Dean would take it to the College Secretary for further consideration.

### **197.2 M.Phil./P.Grad.Dip. (exit only) in English Language Teaching (ELT) (a new course proposal and the restructuring of current M.Phil. courses in the School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences)**

The Dean welcomed Prof. David Little (Head of School) and Dr Jeffrey Kallen (the proposed course director) and invited them to speak to the circulated course proposal. Prof. Little explained that the School is proposing a comprehensive revision of its M.Phil. programmes in order to rationalize and harmonize course provision by adopting a modular structure, revise modules to align them more closely with the School's strategic research aims, allow students a greater freedom of choice among course modules, and to introduce a new course leading to an M.Phil. in English Language Teaching (ELT). The general aim of this revision is to introduce more flexible taught M.Phil. programmes that will attract larger numbers of students, in particular non-EU students; and to connect the taught courses more directly with the School's research programmes. A further important motivation is to facilitate future cross-over with the School's M.Sc. programmes in Clinical Speech and Language Studies, and to design courses that can be offered in the first year of integrated PhD programmes initially in speech science and then in linguistics and applied linguistics. There are currently 34 course units and though these have been successful and evolved over successive revisions, the Course Committee has identified three main challenges to the strategic aims of expanding student numbers, increasing flexibility and adding an extra degree programme. The four main issues are (i) that too many courses units are offered in each programme; (ii) that the units are too small; and (iii) that they are too rigidly demarcated between the degrees, preventing students from taking modules in other degree programmes. The fourth issue concerns assessment: the course currently follows the historical precedent of allowing students to audit a range of courses and then choose a subset upon which to base their written assignments. This pattern is a barrier to modularisation and the current review seeks to change it by incorporating appropriate assessment into each module and reduce their number so that they can be more effectively shared across the whole M.Phil. portfolio in the School. Dr Kallen subsequently clarified that the new ELT course would aim at mainly non-EU applicants as there had been numerous expressions of interest about such an applied course, should it be offered by the School, received already from overseas enquirers mainly from the USA and Asia. The non-EU cohort of students constitutes currently a substantial component of the postgraduate student population (5 out of the total number of 31).

In a discussion which followed a number of issues were raised including clarification that there would only be one Course Management Committee for all the M.Phil. courses in order to enhance integration between the courses which share in the main a common pool of modules; that no provision would intentionally be made for an experiential learning on the new ELT course as the course will target professionally experienced teachers; that additional costs have been projected in order to support teaching of the English language to non-EU students on an optional pre-course basis. The Committee queried the financial template submitted in the proposal as it is not ARAM-compliant. The Dean explained that he had sought clarification re this template with the Treasurer's Office and was advised that the current template should continue to be used pending its revision at a later date. Prof. Saeed, Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) in the School clarified that promotion of the course is being planned in conjunction with the International Student Affairs Office (the India Desk), and independently by the School, and would start in earnest after the approval of the course by Council. The issue of promotion led to a further general query about clarity as to how the ISA Office actually supports postgraduate courses in terms of promoting them effectively overseas. Dean advised that the ISA Office appears to be quite active in promoting pg taught courses especially at fairs in Asia. Given the importance of successful promotion in a highly competitive global postgraduate education market, it was agreed that Dean would invite Mr John McPartland, Director of the ISA Office, to attend a meeting of the Committee later in the year to shed more light on this issue.

After further more general discussion on admissions issues the Committee was happy to approve the proposal subject to any additional amendments as specified in the forthcoming assessor's report to the version going to Council.

### **197.3 Postgraduate Ussher fellowships – recommendation from the Quality Committee**

The Dean spoke to the circulated memo from the Senior Lecturer seeking support from the GSC for a recommendation from the Quality Committee that the value of the Postgraduate Ussher Fellowships be raised to €16,000 to bring them in line with that of the IRCSET scholarship for the current and new holders of the award in College.

The Committee were supportive of this proposal and after some further more general discussion on various aspects of award-related issues in College, the proposal was approved.

### **197.4 Report of the Working Party on Part-time Research Fees**

The Dean spoke to two circulated documents submitted by the Working Party on Part-time Research Fees and thanked its members for their contribution to the deliberations of the party. He reminded the committee that the WP was set up mainly to address a financial situation in Schools created by the introduction of ARAM. ARAM runs for 4 years for PhD students but part-time students normally continue beyond year 4 on the register and therefore bring their Schools into significant deficit for all subsequent years. This appears to have become a disincentive to Schools to recruit part-time students. The WP recommended that the GSC would consider two options (with the first already viewed by the ARAM Task Force):

- 1) that p-t student spends 6 years on the register supported by ARAM going to the School [p-t work equals 2/3 f-t effort]
- 2) that p-t student spends 8 years on the register supported by ARAM going to the School [p-t work equals 1/2 f-t effort]

In a discussion which followed, even though it was acknowledged that the total ARAM income to the School at the end of year 6 for a p-t student will be slightly less than a total ARAM income at the end of year 4 for a f-t student, the Committee was prepared to support this format in preference to option 2 which would have generated a much greater difference. The Committee was satisfied to acknowledge that option 1 proposes a significant improvement on the current financial situation. In addition, it was noted that the very fact that new entrants will be embarking on a clearly defined 6 year p-t PhD programme should result in a better planned research work both on the part of the student and their supervisor.

The Committee approved option 1 on that basis, and the Dean advised that he would now take the proposal to the Heads' Committee and bring forward a Calendar change for 2007 should the proposal be finally accepted by Board. The following recommendations were also made:

- that a flat p-t fee rather than a *pro-rata* fee be put in place as the latter would be extremely difficult to administer;
- that "cost" be retained at the same level for p-t students as it is for f-t students since p-t students' use of the central services (IT, Library, GSO etc) is similar to that by the f-t student;
- that in order to minimise the student playing the new p-t fee system by swapping between p-t and f-t registers, the student's first registered fee option remains unchanged during a programme for which s/he has registered;
- that a minimum period on the p-t register be established (for example 4 years on the PhD, and 2 years on the Masters in the 2/3 format);

### **197.5 Review of graduate education as part of the School Review procedure**

The Dean briefly outlined the present arrangements for postgraduate course reviews as part of the School review procedures in that they involve a visit of the External Examiner to Dublin (separately from the annual visit for the court of examiners' meeting) to meet staff and students, and the Dean of Graduate Studies, and to go through a self-assessment report prepared by the Course Director. The External writes a report to which the Head responds, and the whole procedure is concluded before the School review proper takes place. The final report and Head's response subsequently feed into the School review.

Speaking about the disadvantages of the current pg review system, the Dean explained that it is excessively time consuming which would be an issue in itself this year when there are 11 postgraduate courses to review in 4 Schools (Mathematics, Chemistry, School of Social Work and Social Policy and Business). He also put forward his view that it is academically unsound to separate the review of UG and PG education in this way, and that PG and research should actually be reviewed together so the School Assessors get a holistic view of the School's activities and strategic approach. He added that the use of the External Examiner as an assessor is not ideal either as the External, normally already serving in the role for a number of years, may not be sufficiently distanced from the course committee to provide critically objective assessment.

The Committee approved Dean's submission to integrate the review of postgraduate courses into the School review along the lines that the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) organize the Course Directors to provide the necessary course documentation. The DTLP is then responsible for compiling a final document inclusive of the overview of the School's research focus and a role of postgraduate education in it and information on the School's PhD education programmes and supervision procedures. This document will then be sent to the Assessors as part of the pre-visit information on the School. During their visit the Assessors will meet with the DTLP, Course Directors, and Postgraduate Students as appropriate and timetabled into the visit with the other activities.

### **197.6 AOB**

- a) The Committee approved the submission from the School of Psychology under Item B1 as circulated with immediate implementation.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.40 am. The next meeting is scheduled for 25 January 2007.

**Prof. Patrick J. Prendergast.**

Date: 7 December 2006