

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Thursday 20 March, 2008
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Prof. Carol O'Sullivan, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Joe McDonagh, School of Business
Prof. Biswajit Basu, School of Engineering
Dr Gail McElroy, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Prof. Cormac Ó Cuilleaináin, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Dr Richard Timoney, School of Mathematics
Dr Kenneth Irvine, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Dr John Clancy, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Prof. Nicholas Grene, School of English
Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, School of Social Work & Social Policy
Prof. John Kelly, School of Chemistry
Prof. Stefano Sanvito, School of Physics
Dr Thomas Connor (Acting), School of Medicine
Dr Philip Matthews, School of Education
Dr Fintan Sheerin, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Mr Alessio Frenda, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (*Ex officio*)
Mr John Lawlor, MIS Manager (*Ex officio*)
Mr Gabriel Magee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
Dr Jacqueline Potter, C.A.P.S.L.
Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Prof. Seamus Martin, Vice Deanery of Genetics & Microbiology
Dr Anne O'Connell, School of Dental Science
Mr Brendan Tangney, School of Computer Science & Statistics
Dr Iain Atack, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Hazel Dodge, School of Histories & Humanities
Prof. John Saeed, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Dr Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Dr Matthew Causey, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Neville Cox, School of Law

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

206.0 Minutes of 13 December 2007

The minutes of the meeting of 24 January, 2008 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

206.1 Matters Arising

a) *Re 205.5:* A query was raised with respect to one of the recommendations of the Working Party on the PhD structure in TCD to limit the taught component of doctoral research programmes to a total of 30 ECTS over the first two years. A concern was formulated that this might create an obstacle for programmes funded under some schemes, where some significant taught components may be allowed. The Dean explained that the issue was under debate in recent discussions of the 4th Level Network members, where an alternative proposal was discussed, in which 90 ECTS would be awarded for the taught component within a 4-year programme, but 30 ECTS within a 3-year programme. However, several Network members found that 90 ECTS taught was excessive in most cases; a further problem arises in the situation where a student leaves with a Masters degree after 2 years (should this happen and the 90 ECTS had been front-loaded, this would make the research Masters *de facto* a taught course – it is unclear whether this would be acceptable to the HEA for RGAM purposes); Furthermore, the introduction of a 90 ECTS requirement reduces the flexibility of students to finish earlier than 4 years, or where PhD students find themselves doing coursework in years 3 and 4, when they should be concentrating on their research. The Dean explained that the 30 ECTS limit over the first two years comes from the agreement between the HEA and the IUA Registrars' group that a minimum of 90 ECTS accounting for 75% research credits must be undertaken for a 2-years Masters to be classified as research and be allocated the appropriate HEA research weighting. The Dean emphasised that this

issue is core to the success of collaborative inter-institutional efforts in GREPS, and all interested parties appear to work constructively to achieve clarity and agreement.

206.2 Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (D.Couns.Psych.: 3 yr f-t)

The Dean welcomed the proposed course director, Dr Ladislav Timulak, from the School of Psychology, and invited him to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Timulak explained that an earlier proposal for D.Couns.Psych. had been presented to the Committee (198.2) last year but the Committee recommended that an amended version be resubmitted in due course. Dr Timulak noted that the requested changes had now been incorporated into the revised proposal, and that new version was designed in accordance with the NQAI criteria for professional doctorates with an augmented research-based component. The School currently offers a similar doctoral programme in the Clinical Psychology (D.Clin.Psych.). The Doctoral Programme in Counselling Psychology, intended to commence in October 2009, will serve as a replacement for the existing 2 year M.Sc. in Counselling Psychology (accredited by the Psychological Society of Ireland and run for 17 years). This proposal is therefore requesting a closure of the M.Sc. in Counselling Psychology (code 205) for new entrants as of October 2009 (the M.Sc. will only continue to the completion of the cohort starting in 2008/09).

The Doctoral Programme in Counselling Psychology will, in comparison to the M.Sc., provide a more research-focused qualification in Counselling Psychology, and will allow the staff to further develop their research portfolio through supervising and co-supervising doctoral level research. Dr Timulak underlined that it is difficult to attract students to undertake PhDs in the area of Counselling Psychology because of the inability of research scholarships to compete with the salaries offered to M.Sc. graduates. The new programme has therefore a dual intention of providing for both academic and professional development to doctoral level. The majority of the additional work arising from the introduction of the doctorate will relate to research supervision and will not substantially increase the staff teaching load. Dr Timulak explained that the Doctorate in Counselling Psychology is already a requirement for practice in this specialty of psychology in the United States and in the United Kingdom. A similar movement is expected to happen in Ireland as postgraduate accreditation guidelines are now being revised. Trinity College has been the forerunner in the training of Counselling Psychologists in Ireland and will continue to be so with the additional offering of the doctoral degree.

The Dean thanked Dr Timulak for his presentation. In a short discussion which followed a few issues were raised and the following clarifications were obtained:

- a) with respect to the proposed dissertation, Dr Timulak explained that its length is in line with a current practice in professional doctorates which is bench-marked slightly below the word count for a PhD thesis;
- b) with respect to the dissertation examination process, Dr Timulak explained that two examiners other than the supervisor will normally be involved in addition to the external examiner for the programme;
- c) with respect to the section on “unsuitability for training”, Dr Timulak explained that that regulation is normally required to be put in by the accrediting professional body. In College, there is a working party which has been trying to establish clear “fitness to practice” criteria for students in various professional programmes which require them to work with patients;
- d) with respect to the financial costings, Dr Timulak explained that that the revised ones had been signed off by the School accountant, and that the School had already secured additional 0.5 a post to teach on the course.

The Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor’s report.

206.3 M.Sc. in Psychology (Applied Behaviour Analysis: 1 yr f-t)

The Dean welcomed the proposed course director, Dr Rita Honan, from the School of Psychology, and invited her to speak to the circulated proposal. Dr Honan explained that the School already offers a rigorous Postgraduate Diploma course in Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), commenced in September 2007, which admits non-psychology graduates and trains students to a fundamental level as applied behaviour analysts. There is, however, need for more advanced study in the area, which will further broaden career paths specifically for psychology graduates. The field requires well qualified professionals at the Masters postgraduate level. The demand has grown sharply locally, nationally and internationally in recent years because of the needs of schools, health services, and families where there is a child (or children) with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This proposed course intends to contribute to meeting the needs for qualified, ethical, research-based senior behaviour analysts in Ireland, and will contribute towards meeting the need for the supervision of Postgraduate Diploma level behaviour analysts. The new course will substantially develop behaviour analytic competency of the students by providing more advanced knowledge and professional skills in the field enabling graduates to skilfully address complex educational and clinical situations. Students will also secure expertise in behaviour analytic research methodologies. Graduates of the Trinity’s M.Sc. in Psychology (ABA) course should become leaders in this developing field of service provision in Ireland and gain solid research grounding for future academic study in ABA at the Ph.D. level, which is how the course links in with the School’s strategic objectives.

Dr Honan spoke in more detail about the entry requirements and clarified some queries. She explained, in particular, that supervisors would normally be pre-approved by the course director and/or the course committee. It was agreed that this clarification should be put into the Council submission. The Committee approved the proposal for submission to the University Council subject to consideration of implementing any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

206.4 Review of the College Statutes

The Dean welcomed Dr Eoin O'Dell, Chair of the Statutes Review Working Party, and Daithí Mac Síthigh his Research Assistant. Dr Eoin O'Dell explained that the Working Party had been established by the Board in October 2006 to oversee the modernisation of all the chapters of the Statutes, last subject to some revision in the 1960s, with wide consultation across the entire College community. All the proposals are being drafted with the best interests of the College in view in a straightforward language ensuring sound underpinning legality. A number of meetings have been organized with various committees and individuals in College. Dr O'Dell invited the members of the Committee to return to him any comments on any matter relating to the Statutes. He explained that a new chapter is intended to be included in the Statutes to deal with Principal Committees as the Statutes currently refer only to Board, Council and the Finance Committee. The first draft of a new chapter on Council will be published towards the end of March, and submissions and comments from the members would be appreciated. Dr O'Dell outlined a possible time-scale for completion of the Working Party's brief. The Dean thanked Dr O'Dell for taking the time to address the Committee and invited its members to email their comments either directly to Dr O'Dell.

206.5 Dean of Graduate Studies Annual Report 2006/07 with Admissions Data for 2007/08

The Dean spoke to the tabled document and noted that postgraduate students constitute nearly one third of the student body in College, and College should ensure that all interests of that group are adequately represented in all aspects of its regulatory structure. The Dean took the Committee through all the sections of the draft report commenting on various issues and went through all the appendices. With respect to Appendix 3 providing ARAM-related research student numbers (in FTEs values) and corresponding supervisors' ratios for comparison in 2005/06 and 2006/07, a concern was voiced that the ratios be interpreted taking into account particular academic circumstances within individual Schools. A clarification has been provided to assure the Committee that the student numbers used in this appendix have integrity as a set of data since they were taken from the College official student records data returned annually to the HEA. The Dean invited the members to forward their feedback either directly to her or to the Committee's Secretary within a week so that the final submission be prepared for the University Council on 9 April.

206.6 IUA Key Performance Indicators

The Dean introduced the item by explaining that the Irish Universities Association obtained funding from the Higher Education Authority through the Strategic Innovation Fund (cycle 1) for a project on 'Strategic Planning and Decision Support'. The project's objective is to agree a common set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Universities have been circulated with a proposed set of KPIs, prepared by Mazars, with a request for institutional feedback. Given the importance of the issue of KPIs, it was considered appropriate for the Dean of Graduate Studies to bring this document to the attention of the Graduate Studies Committee for consultation with a view to returning its comments to the Vice Provost who will feed them into the institutional feedback.

The following issues were raised in a brief discussion:

- a) it has been recognised that key performance indicators (KPIs) as attempting to measure performance, and thus enhance quality, should have a positive impact on the College but not if this becomes only an administrative counting exercise leading to an accumulation of numerous but in the end meaningless figures;
- b) relying on figures such as KPIs may lead in some circumstances to a distorted assessment of a particular institution. For example, if the amount of research income per staff member is taken as a measure of quality, this may disadvantage universities with significant research activity in the normally externally under-funded areas of arts and humanities, to the benefit of normally well externally-funded science, engineering and technology oriented institutions;
- c) a genuine concern was voiced that there appears to be too many headings (i.e. focus areas), and subsequently too many groupings of performance indicators which will require a massive administrative and academic effort on the part of College support services and individual academic to feed in the data;
- d) since a significant number of indicators seems to be based on subjective evaluations by the people returning the data, there is an issue of reliability of the indicators as being objective enough to measure some types of performance;
- e) a query was formulated as to the possible usage to be made of the data obtained *via* this exercise, and how frequently it is intended to be performed;
- f) the concern was articulated that it should be ensured that this exercise should be used for bench-marking to assess the performance of Irish Universities against international counterparts rather than internally against one another.

The Dean thanked the members for their comments and invited them to submit further feedback either to her directly or to the Committee's Secretary so that a collated response could be prepared for the Vice Provost.

206.7 Any Other Business

- a) The Committee noted and approved the proposed Calendar Part 2 changes for 2008 as listed in Section B on the agenda.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.55 am.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "C. O'Sullivan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and a distinct 'O'.

Prof. Carol O'Sullivan

Date: 24 April 2008