

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE**

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 a.m. on Thursday 22nd October, 2009
Boardroom, Provost's House

Present: Professor Carol O'Sullivan, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Dr Derek Nolan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Dr Martin Fellenz, School of Business
Dr Siobhan Clarke, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Dr Claire Healy, School of Dental Science
Dr Ruth Barton, School of Drama, Film & Music
Dr Carmel O'Sullivan, School of Education
Dr Sam Slote, School of English
Dr Hazel Dodge, School of Histories & Humanities
Dr Caitriona Leahy, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Dr Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics
Dr Thomas Connor, School of Medicine
Dr Fintan Sheerin, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Dr Andrew Harkin, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Jonathan Coleman, School of Physics
Dr Kevin Tierney, School of Psychology
Dr Gillian Wylie, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics
Dr Jim Levine, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Dr Eoin O'Sullivan, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Mr Michael McGrath, Acting Manager of MIS (*Ex officio*)
Mr Ronan Hodson, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
Ms Alexandra Murphy, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)

Apologies: Dr David Lloyd, Dean of Research
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Brian Broderick, School of Engineering
Dr Paula Murphy, School of Natural Sciences
Dr Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
Dr Jeffrey Kallen, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences

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

The Dean welcomed new members of the Graduate Studies Committee: Dr Derek Nolan (School of Biochemistry and Immunology); Dr Martin Fellenz (School of Business); Dr Siobhan Clarke (School of Computer Science and Statistics); Dr Claire Healy (School of Dental Science); Dr Ruth Barton (School of Drama, Film & Music); Dr Sam Slote (School of English); Dr Caitriona Leahy (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies); Professor Jonathan Coleman (School of Physics); Dr Jim Levine (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy); Dr Stephen Connon (School of Chemistry).

GS/09-10/001 Minutes of 11th June 2009

The minutes of the meeting of 11th June 2009 were approved by the Committee as circulated.

GS/09-10/002 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

GS/09-10/003 Overview of Graduate Studies Committee

For the benefit of new members of the Graduate Studies Committee the Dean provided an overview of what matters are dealt with during the meetings, such as reviewing and approving new course proposals, and developing policy and regulations, in particular for the Calendar Part 2 which is the responsibility of the Dean and the Graduate Studies Committee.

The Dean noted that the focus of the Graduate Studies Committee is on academic, rather than financial, matters.

For this coming year the main issues faced are:

- The TCD-UCD Innovation Academy. The Dean explained that the recent PRTL I review appeared to go well. The main function of the Innovation Academy is to provide innovation and entrepreneurship education and training for PhD students. The Innovation Academy's base in TCD will be in Foster Place and a very attractive programme will be on offer for PhD students.
- Taught programmes and modularisation. A stated goal in the Graduate Education chapter of the College Strategic Plan 2009 - 2014 concerns increased modularisation and flexibility of postgraduate taught courses. A working group has been established that is considering the main implications of this strategy, which will report with draft recommendations to the Graduate Studies Committee and Council in early 2010.
- Structured PhD programmes. Many schools have been establishing such programmes which are underpinned by initiatives such as those funded by SIF (e.g., the DRHEA graduate alliance) or PRTL I. Exploring how supports for such initiatives can be expanded will be a priority – e.g., the Innovation Academy will play an important role, as will initiatives such as the English Language programme for non-English speaking postgraduate students that was piloted with pre- and in-session training.

GS/09-10/004 M.Sc. in Healthcare Infection Management

The Dean welcomed Dr Stephen Smith from the School of Medicine, and invited him to speak to the circulated document.

Dr Smith explained that there is currently no taught postgraduate Masters course in Ireland that addresses the educational and training needs of the wide range of professionals in Healthcare Infection Management and so this course has been developed over the past 24 months by himself and Professor Thomas Rogers.

Dr Smith noted that this course will be a two year part time M.Sc.

The target student population is specialist registrars in microbiology and infectious diseases, infection control nurses and clinical antibiotic pharmacists.

The course will be spread over four terms with four teaching modules of 15 ECTS each and a project of 30 ECTS. Students will normally be based in their workplaces whilst completing the project.

A question was raised regarding whether, as this course is aimed at professional development, it should be brought to organisations such as An Bord Altranais. Dr Smith agreed that while this had not yet been done it was something that should be considered.

The committee approved the course for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

GS/09-10/005 M.Phil. in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

The Dean welcomed Dr Andrew Pierce from the Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics, and invited him to speak to the circulated document.

Dr Pierce explained that this course has been proposed as a major revision of and will replace the existing M.Phil. in Ecumenics. While the existing course has been successful in having a good record of retention and in students moving on to doctoral work, the numbers, while not low, have been erratic. It is believed that by changing the name and structure it will be clearer as to what the course involves and should attract greater numbers.

Rather than developing multiple courses, it was decided that the taught modules for this course will be organized into four distinct programme tracks: Christian Ecumenical Theologies; World Christianity and Intercultural Theology; Comparative Theology and Interreligious Studies; Religions and Ethics in a Pluralist World.

The Dean clarified that while this is not strictly a new course, as it involves a major change in structure it was required to be brought to the Graduate Studies Committee for approval. She commented that it was an excellent example of how existing courses could be restructured, enhanced and rebranded to appeal to a larger and more diverse set of students in an efficient and streamlined manner.

The committee approved the course for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

GS/09-10/006 M.Phil. in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation

The Dean welcomed Dr David Tombs from the Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and Ecumenics, and invited him to speak to the circulated document.

Dr Tombs explained that this course is intended as a strategic extension of the existing provision by replacing the M.Phil. in Reconciliation Studies. The idea is to develop two areas (conflict resolution and reconciliation) which are closely related and inter-disciplinary. Students will be given the option of specialising in one of the two tracks or pursuing broader studies with a dual track across both areas.

This course will be offered almost entirely through the Belfast site; however some teaching will take place in Dublin.

From year three of the programme the School hopes to be able to offer a part-time professional option.

The committee approved the course for submission to the University Council subject to any additional amendments that may be required following the assessor's report.

GS/09-10/007 Trinity Inclusive Curriculum

The Dean welcomed Ms. Michelle Garvey from the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project and invited her to speak to the circulated document.

Ms. Garvey provided an introduction to the Inclusive Curriculum Project and detailed its aims. The objective of this project is to mainstream inclusive principles within the entire College curricula so as to enable students from non-traditional learning backgrounds to participate more fully in the academic life of College.

Ms. Garvey gave an overview of the activities to date, which include: a survey of non-traditional undergraduate students with a focus on socio-economically disadvantaged, disabled and mature students; a hand book audit and reading list audit; and collation of statistics from across different programmes regarding non-traditional students.

Over the next year, it is proposed to create a self-evaluation tool and the first draft of this is being piloted with a number of programmes across college and will eventually be online. In addition, a website, located within CAPSL, will be going live by the end of 2009 and will incorporate resources, guidelines and templates for all staff involved in teaching and assessment.

Ms. Garvey also explained that the email address include@tcd.ie has been made available as part of an inclusive curriculum advisory service and should anyone have any questions or need advice relating to this they should feel free to make contact.

The Dean stressed that this is a very important initiative with a focus on raising awareness of the factors to be taken into account when developing curricula.

GS/09-10/008 Election of School Postgraduate Representatives

The Dean invited the Graduate Students Union President, Mr. Ronan Hodson, to speak to this item.

Mr. Hodson explained that there is a GSU Council of Representatives on which School Representatives sit to provide feedback at a School level. Due to insufficient numbers of representatives, there has not been a Council for the past five years. Although an e-nomination system was set up last year, the take up remained low and 75% of Schools do not have representation. In an attempt to increase this, an email was sent by the GSU to all Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) proposing that each School send an email to all their postgraduate students and arrange a meeting to decide who the School representative will be. A second email would then be sent by the School with notification of the chosen representative. However, there was disagreement over whether this is the correct way to decide this.

A discussion followed in which several alternatives were discussed. While the GSU would like a college-wide procedure in place, several Schools are concerned about the difficulty in getting all students together at one time and holding a single meeting may disenfranchise large groups of students.

The timing of the election was discussed with the GSU maintaining that it is not possible for them to put in the required level of work for this election during orientation and it was agreed that it could possibly be held at another time of year to accommodate this.

The issues surrounding the e-voting system were discussed at length with an agreement that if this system were made clearer with a strict deadline the situation may improve and the GSU arranged to look into this further and to meet with the Dean and other relevant parties to discuss the options again.

GS/09-10/009 PAC Research

The Dean invited Ms. Helen Thornbury to speak to this item.

Ms. Thornbury explained that the Postgraduate Applications Centre online application system has now been in operation for the past couple of years and over 5,500 taught course applications have been processed through the system to date. The next step is for research applications to be incorporated into the system. The development of the system has taken place and it is now ready to go live. Notification will be

sent out when this is due to commence and new training sessions will be set up for potential supervisors to attend. Ms. Thornbury explained how this will work in comparison to the paper application system that is currently in place. The applicant will apply online and submit their supporting documentation to the PAC in Galway where one PDF version of their application is created. When an application is submitted an email is generated and sent to the supervisor the applicant has selected on the application form. The supervisor and Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) will then be required to review the application (in the same way they do at present) and notify the Graduate Studies Office of their decision.

The Graduate Studies Office anticipates that this will be a much more efficient system with advantages such as no loss of paper files and improved reporting capabilities. It was also explained that applications for the Postgraduate Research Studentships and Ussher Awards, and subsequent notification of decisions, would also be processed through PAC which will ensure this is easier to administer.

Several questions were raised and the following clarifications were made:

When a student does not identify a supervisor at the time they submit their application, an email cannot be sent to the supervisor / School notifying them that there is a new applicant. However, an email will be generated and sent to the Graduate Studies Office from PAC and the Graduate Studies Office will forward this on to the relevant school.

A signed form confirming acceptance of an applicant will no longer be required. However, the email notifying the Graduate Studies Office of the decision to accept an applicant must be sent directly from the Director of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) and will be taken as their approval.

If a student wishes to have more than one supervisor, they must select only one on their application form; in the same way that only one supervisor is put onto their record when they register. However, the PDF of the application can be viewed by other potential supervisors within the school.

The only communication the School will have with PAC is the email to notify the supervisor of a new application. Any other communication is made between the School and the Graduate Studies Office.

There will be no closing date for research applications through PAC and they will be accepted on a rolling basis. This led to a further discussion over the closing dates on PAC for taught postgraduate courses and it was proposed that this matter would be discussed at a later date.

GS/09-10/010 Any Other Business

The Dean noted that the College Secretary had made a request for all staff to be aware of the need for graduate students to take account of Data Protection issues when handling research data and it should be emphasised that students (as well as staff) need to provide adequate physical security for their data.

Section B for noting and approval

- a) The Committee noted and approved the proposed changes to the M.Phil. in Peace Studies.
- b) The Committee noted and approved the proposed changes to the M.Phil. in Modern Irish History.
- c) The Committee noted and approved the nomination of the Henry Flood Research Scholarship for Trevor Herbert.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.32 am.

Prof. Carol O'Sullivan

Date: 22nd October 2009