

**UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN  
TRINITY COLLEGE**

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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**Present:** Professor Aideen Long, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*),

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Gerard McHugh, School of Business

Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry

Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science

Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education

Professor Roger West, School of Engineering

Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English

Professor Kevin Devine, School of Genetics and Microbiology

Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities

Professor Alex Schuster, School of Law

Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech and  
Communication Sciences

Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics

Professor Patrick Wyse-Jackson, School of Natural Sciences

Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery

Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical  
Sciences

Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology

Professor Carlo Aldrovandi, Aspirant School of Religions, Theology and  
Ecumenics

Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy

Professor Stephanie Holt, School of Social Work and Social Policy

Ms Megan Lee, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)

Mr Adam Hanna, Graduate Students' Union Vice President (*Ex officio*)

Mr Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)

**Apologies:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology

Professor Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film and Music

Professor Anne Fitzpatrick, School of Languages, Literatures and  
Cultural Studies

Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine

Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics

Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)

The Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan, CAPSL Representative  
(*Ex officio*)  
Ms Lee Mills, Information System Services Representative (*Ex officio*)

***In attendance:*** Mr Dimitrios Paraskevas, Trinity Teaching and Learning,  
Secretary to the meeting (*Ex officio*)  
Ms Michelle Hogan, Graduate Studies Office (*Ex officio*)

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### **GS/14-15/1 Minutes of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014**

Following a brief explanation of each item for the benefit of the new members the minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated.

### **GS/14-15/2 Matters Arising**

Following the last Committee meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, the Dean provided an update on certain items that had been discussed. Specifically:

- GS/13-14/43, the Dean advised that apart from the financial framework that is still being developed, everything else regarding the TCD/UCD Framework for Collaborative Research Programmes is in place and has received Council approval. The Dean invited members to consider joint programmes with UCD when proposing new courses, particularly where sharing resources with UCD produces a better educational experience for the student. She also asked members to encourage colleagues to consider this option.
- GS/13-14/44, the Professional Special Purpose Certificate in Academic Practice has been approved by Council and it is ready for rollout in 2015.
- GS/13-14/45, the M.Phil. Chinese Studies has been approved by Council.
- GS/13-14/46, the Certificate in Education (21<sup>st</sup> Century STEM/CS [Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths] Teaching and Learning) was approved by Council and formally launched.
- GS/13-14/47, the Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Practice course proposal is still work in progress. The Dean will keep the Committee updated on related developments.

### **GS/14-15/3 College Policy on the Return of Coursework**

The Dean provided background information regarding this matter and explained that a memorandum prepared by the Senior Lecturer and the Students' Union Education Officer and presented to Council in June 2014, recommended that feedback on assessed work should be returned to the student within 20 working days. This document had been approved by USC and when being approved by Council, it was proposed that the policy should also apply to PG students. In the discussion that followed, the Committee members expressed concerns about this decision. They argued that, in general, 20 days is not sufficient time for the return of postgraduate coursework due to the varying nature of these courses. Furthermore, the rule about returning feedback to students before their next assignment was also deemed impractical at PG level in specific individual cases. In the end, all Committee members and the President and Vice-President of GSU agreed on the following:

- An agreed period for the return of coursework is good practice and it should be introduced for postgraduate courses.
- The respective timeline for return of feedback in postgraduate courses should be 4-6 weeks (20-30 working days).
- Timelines for return of coursework/feedback should be clearly visible in course handbooks and students should be made aware of them so that they can plan their workload accordingly.

The Dean agreed to bring these comments to Council.

#### **GS/14-15/4 IUA – Deans of Graduate Studies Group**

The Dean explained briefly the purpose of this group and informed the Committee that TCD is chair of the IUA for the 2014 calendar year. The Group is working with the HEA and QQI on establishing a National Framework for the provision of doctoral education, with the process nearing completion. As part of the task, a pamphlet type document is currently being drafted. This will outline what PhD students in Ireland should expect in terms of educational support and acquisition of general and transferable skills to enhance their career prospects and employability in the marketplace. On a related question from the Committee, the Dean explained that College is already compliant with practically all requirements expected to arise from this process, as the Framework is very much in tandem with the TCD philosophy. Moreover, the Dean explained that this Framework will solidify Irish Universities' position at the forefront of Doctoral education globally. The Committee enquired about the possibility of reviewing a draft version of this document and the Dean agreed to circulate it as soon as it becomes available to external stakeholders for review. The Dean also re-assured the Committee that College's independence will not be compromised as a result of this process, as it was the Deans' Group that wrote the principles underlying the Framework (with the HEA expected to endorse them). Prompted by another question, the Dean informed the Committee that because of its broad principles the Framework will cover all Doctorates, including Taught, Industrial and any other types that may be offered in the future.

Also in relation to this Group's work, the Dean informed the Committee that IUA's International Officer, Sinead Lucey, is working on new schemes for PhD funding agreements, expected to be launched shortly. These include those funded by the Brazilian (PhD and taught masters) and Vietnamese governments. The Vietnamese Government is expected to fund a total of 10,000 scholarships of which approximately 200 per annum are expected to be awarded to Vietnamese students pursuing a PhD qualification in Ireland. Similarly, the Russian government is also expected to fund a significant number of PhDs in Ireland (information in relation to this was circulated generally). TCD is the only Irish university considered under this Global Education Scheme (Russia). Related to the activities with Brazil and Vietnam, a new website has been set-up ([www.phdireland.ie](http://www.phdireland.ie)), funded by all seven universities to maximise intake of PhD candidates.

#### **GS/14-15/5 AOB**

Directors of Teaching and Learning expressed concerns in relation to clarity surrounding how income generated by new and existing postgraduate courses is allocated to Schools. DTLs noted that Schools should be incentivised to raise more

funds in innovative ways (e.g. via online courses) and facilitated in doing so. The Dean explained that finances are not within the scope of the Committee but acknowledged their importance within the context of developing and administering new courses.

The flexibility in how Schools can utilise College awards for funding PG students was also discussed. The Dean advised that current administrative resources do not allow for splitting fees and stipend portions of awards between different students.

Directors of Teaching and Learning reported that they/the Schools continue to experience significant issues arising from the implementation of SITS which result in a negative student experience in a number of cases. The Dean explained that SITS is still being developed but acknowledged the importance of having these issues documented and communicated in order to prevent them from re-occurring. Directors of Teaching and Learning agreed to provide logs of evidence.

The Dean informed members of the Committee that a decision had been made to eliminate paper circulation of documents, in line with the practice introduced by similar bodies in College. Directors of Teaching and Learning questioned this decision and asked for clarification on how the Committee's business would be managed 'paper-free'. The Dean agreed to liaise with the Academic Secretary about this.

The Dean encouraged members to attend a workshop for Postgraduate Directors of Teaching and Learning the week following this Committee meeting.

### **Section B for noting and approval**

1. The Committee noted and approved the proposed Calendar Part III changes.
2. The Committee noted and approved the two new modules shared between M.Phil. English Language Teaching and M.Phil. Applied Linguistics.
3. Professor Cuypers explained the rationale behind the proposed course title change from M.Phil. Irish Art History to M.Phil. Art History. The Committee noted and approved the change.
4. The Dean provided an update on a recorded minute of the GSC on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 under Section B. She notified the Committee that students taking modules for credit on the MPhil in Theatre and Performance in the School of Drama Film and Music under an agreement for collaborative provision with the University of Warwick and the University of Arts, Belgrade, would in fact be registered as visiting students. This represents an amendment to the minutes of GSC of 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Section B Item 1. The Committee noted and approved this change.
5. Regarding the Innovation Academy Executive Breakout module the Committee questioned the fact that there was no financial information in this stand-alone module proposal. Credit allocation also raised concerns, as neither the contact hours nor the overall student workload seemed appropriate for 10 ECTS. Finally, the Committee identified an issue with the module's group assessment in which it was not clear how individual student marks would be derived. The Dean agreed to forward feedback to the Innovation Academy, explaining that the Academy may eventually opt to offer this as a non-credit bearing module. The latter would mean that Committee approval would not be required (as the module will not be offered to registered TCD students).

This proposal raised a discussion on the issue that Schools could not proceed with offering already approved modules as 'stand-alone' modules. The reason cited was that prospective students would expect access to the Library and other College facilities, which currently is not possible. The Keeper as well as the Dean explained that this was due to SITS not permitting students being enrolled on modules without being registered to a course on the system, and thus not creating the necessary electronic records. The Dean informed the Committee that pressure for SITS to be configured accordingly was mounting and delays in this process were due to lack of funding. The Dean agreed to liaise with Schools already having such modules approved as 'stand-alone' but encountering problems re registration, in an effort to resolve this issue.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 10.30am.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014