UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 26th March 2015
Boardroom, Provost's House

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

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
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 Melissa Sihra, School of Drama, Film and Music
Professor Damian Murchan, School of Education
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering
Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English
Professor Anne Fitzpatrick, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics
Professor Orla Sheils, School of Medicine
Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics
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 Trevor Peare, Keeper of Readers' Services (in attendance *Ex officio*)
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)

***Apologies*:** Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Frank Barry, School of Business
Professor Kevin Devine, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Alex Schuster, School of Law
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology
Professor Vinny Cahill, Dean of Research   (*Ex officio*)

Mr Adam Hanna, Graduate Students' Union Vice President (*Ex officio*)
The Academic Secretary, Ms Patricia Callaghan, CAPSL
Representative   (*Ex officio*)

Ms Helen Thornbury, Graduate Studies Office   (*Ex officio*)

*In attendance***:** Mr Dimitrios Paraskevas, Trinity Teaching and Learning,
Secretary to the meeting   (*Ex officio)*

Ms Roisin Smith (Quality Officer), for item GS/14-15/28

GS/14-15/25   Minutes of 19th February 2015
The minutes were approved by the Committee as circulated.

GS/14-15/26   Matters Arising
Following the last Committee meeting of 19th February 2015, the Dean provided an update on certain items that had been discussed. Specifically:

•   GS/14-15/21, referring to GSC's original discussion regarding item GS/14-15/18, Research Supervisor Development Programme (GSC meeting of 22nd January 2015). The Dean informed members that a podcast of the first workshop would be available online.

•   GS/14-15/22, the Dean informed members that the P.Grad.Cert. in Clinical Exercise course proposal was under external review.

•   GS/14-15/23, and also related to minute GS/14-15/17 (meeting of February 19th, 2015). The Dean advised the Committee that following the discussion and feedback provided in both GSC and USC in relation to the issue of plagiarism a related Plagiarism working group had been set up. The tasks given to the working group, which had already met once, are:

(i)   To accurately define plagiarism (in the context of a 21st century education environment, including online etc.)

(ii)   To clearly define the College policy in dealing with plagiarism cases

(iii)   To clearly communicate to students (i) and (ii) above

The Dean informed members that the recommendations of the working group will be brought to GSC and USC for consideration.

The Dean informed members that the NAIRTL 'Navigating the Structured Ph.D.' Master Class was highly subscribed and urged interested members who had not done so to register as soon as possible.

The Dean instigated a brief discussion in relation to the National Framework for the provision of doctoral education (initially discussed at GSC on 30th October 2014 (minute GS/14-15/4), with the Committee being updated again under Matters Arising (meeting of 4th December 2014, minute GS/14-15/7)) and the related pamphlet that was prepared and circulated recently (outlining what PhD students in Ireland should expect in terms of excellence in doctoral education including the acquisition of general and transferable skills to enhance their career prospects and employability in the marketplace). The Dean re-iterated that the main driver behind the initiative was to solidify the Irish Universities' position at the forefront of Doctoral education globally, be in touch with employers' needs, and ensure that all Irish institutions offering NFQ Level 10 degrees adhered to the same standards. Furthermore, she confirmed that the Framework covers all Doctorates, including Professional, Industrial, Structured and any other types that may be offered in the future. On a question from the GSU President regarding issues arising from the initiative (such as availability of places in workshops of interest to Ph.D. students and fee implications for part-time Ph.D. students enrolling to taught courses in College), the Dean and GSU agreed to discuss in detail after the Dean had seen the feedback from the GSU.

GS/14-15/27   Protocol for validating new strands within existing postgraduate courses

The Dean explained that a need for a protocol for the validation of new strands within existing postgraduate courses had been identified, in order to ensure consistency, speed up the approval process and to facilitate their set-up in SITS afterwards. For this purpose, members were invited to consider a document that had been prepared by the Dean in collaboration with Trinity Teaching and Learning (TTL), with proposed guidelines for the approval of such new strands. In the discussion ensued it was clarified that proposers would have to provide letters of consent from Heads of external institutions for non-TCD staff (when representing those institutions) only (section 4C) and similarly, that CVs would only need to be provided for external non-academic staff (section 4D). Following a query in relation to section 5L where members stated that it was not always possible for a new strand to have the same level of EU and non-EU fees as the existing parent course (e.g. in Nursing courses strands with a practical element incur higher fees than those with a theoretical element only as hospitals need to be reimbursed), the Committee was advised that such cases would need to be looked at individually for financial implications (any systems set-up issues could be overcome by setting the respective strands as separate courses in SITS). At the end of the discussion, the Committee agreed on the following:

- The word 'roles' from section 2C should be removed.
- The word 'recruitment' from section 5J should be removed
- The Dean will investigate the financial and systems implications related to strands having to charge a different fee than other strands in their parent course

- Based on the guidelines document a proposal template will also be prepared by the Dean and TTL, to be made available in due course

GS/14-15/28   New External Examiner Report Template

The Dean invited Ms Roisin Smith to present this item. Ms Smith explained that while a triennial report (end of term of appointment) from External Examiners was sought by College, no template for such a report existed. Furthermore, the adoption of a single external examiner annual report template (incorporating a triennial report) was anticipated to ease the transition to a single online form which will be developed by IS Services (as part of a project to address External Examiner Report tracking and storage). Related to this work of ISS, Ms Smith advised that the web based version of the template will look different and much more appealing to users than the plain Word document being presented in the interim, and that External Examiners will be reimbursed through a single payment, integrated to the reporting process, thus eliminating the need for filling additional forms and for further delays. Prompted by members querying the length of the report template, Ms Smith explained that not addressing the domains could leave College exposed in terms of quality assurance as well as in relation to compliance with HEA and QQI requirements. In the end, members agreed on making the following recommendations:

- As the template makes a number of references to 'examination papers' and many postgraduate courses do not assess students by exams, the words 'if applicable' should be added next to every such reference
- It should be made clearer which fields are mandatory and which are optional – current draft gives the impression that all fields require completion
- Comment boxes should be made bigger
- Provision should be made to accommodate courses with two or more strands and/or core modules assessed separately, which usually have more than one External Examiner

Furthermore, the Committee made the following suggestions:

- In section B (Curriculum Design, Assessment, Standards), the phrase 'Your comments should include' and the guidelines that follow in each case explaining what External Examiners should write in their comments could appear as an introduction at the very beginning of the form instead, or in a separate document to the report or they could even be removed altogether. The justification for this was that most External Examiners would be familiar with these guidelines beforehand and therefore they would not need to consult them when filling in the form. In any case, the committee advised that the word 'should' be replaced by 'could'/may'.
- The template developers could also consider the content and format of similar documents used in universities outside Ireland and the UK

The Committee approved the single external examiner report template for adoption from the 2015/16 academic year, on condition that the recommendations above are implemented.

GS/14-15/29   AOB

The GSU President thanked all members and all Schools for their help in making the Postgraduate Week such a huge success (in terms of events being organised, numbers attending, College-wide participation, and postgraduate students' satisfaction) and informed members that next year's event will be even bigger.

The GSU President informed the Committee that preparations for next year's GSU Sabbatical elections were already under way and asked for the members' assistance in increasing awareness and participation particularly from students who are off-campus and/or not active on social media. Members agreed to work with the GSU in circulating information to students in their respective Schools as required.

Following a request from the Examinations and Timetables Officer (memo dated 24th March 2015 and circulated to all members on the same day) the Committee approved removing from circulation the 'old' (Mathematical) log tables with immediate effect, and providing only the 'new' Formulae and Statistics tables for examinations from the start of the 2015/16 academic year.

Further to a brief discussion that had taken place on 4th December 2014 (minute GS/14-15/7) the Dean updated members on the latest communication she received from the Head of the Academic Registry (AR), Ms Leona Coady in relation to the analysis of the PG application and admission processes that has been taking place. The Committee was informed that on the basis of discussions with stakeholders, it appeared that the most significant issues were in respect of knowledge of the processes, and that a relevant user guide to assist assessors in the Schools to navigate the processes was being drafted. Moreover, members heard that it was the AR's intention to host clinics in which School personnel could seek further guidance. In Ms Coady's communication it was further explained that ensuring that Schools adhered to the processes was paramount and the assistance of the Directors of Teaching and Learning was sought in doing so. The Dean continued by explaining that the AR was proposing to establish a service level agreement, whereby the Schools would commit to a maximum five day turnaround on submitting all recommendations for those applications that are processed on a rolling basis. Similarly, the AR would also commit to issuing decisions to applicants within five days of receiving the recommendation in line with the College policy of providing international applicants with a decision within two weeks of submitting their

application. At that point, some members expressed concern regarding the proposed five day turnaround which they thought would be too short. The Dean advised that a representative of this initiative will be invited to GSC in order to brief members on the proposals that were being drafted, and to hear the Committee's feedback on them.

The Dean informed members that following the launch of the College Strategic Plan (2014-19) and in order to execute its actions relating to education, the Trinity Education Project had been established (chaired by the Provost with the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer as sponsor). The Dean further explained that the Project's aims were to enable the College to re-position itself in the changing landscape of higher education, to develop further Trinity's reputation as a university of global consequence, to further embed a distinctive education within the university, to develop the curriculum in a way that combines disciplinary expertise and deep technical knowledge with 21st century skills, and to reform the structures to support these objectives. The Dean then proceeded to read the main points from the Vice-Provost/Chief Academic Officer's document, considered by Council at its meeting of 11th February 2015, where it was explained that the Project will involve:
• promoting a research-inspired curriculum (including undergraduate research);
• examining degree structures, assessment and progression (incorporating the two major reform projects associated with TR071 and TSM);
• developing technology-enhanced learning, online education, and the virtual learning environment;
• providing opportunities for global exchange, through internships, study abroad and research lab placements;
• finding new ways to promote innovation, entrepreneurship and civic engagement;
• providing opportunities for student engagement with industry, business, cultural, inter-cultural and social institutions through internships, placements and service-learning (for credit and not for credit, as appropriate);
• further enhancing opportunities for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities;
• developing Trinity's buildings and associated infrastructure, including library collections, to facilitate multidisciplinary, collaborative and other forms of teaching and learning;
• promoting access and participation, including new admissions routes;
• marketing the Trinity Education, nationally and globally.

The Committee discussed the matter of increased number of requests for distant supervision from students based in Singapore and from potential Ph.D. students living outside Ireland and not being able to relocate. Likely issues identified with such a practice were related to ensuring the quality of work being produced, the ability of these Ph.D. students to adhere to certain requirements set by College (e.g. taking a minimum of 10 ECTS worth of postgraduate taught modules), and the increased fees the College Library would incur for accessing online subscription

content from additional locations worldwide. The GSU President also stressed the importance of having face-to-face meetings between students and their supervisors in addition to feedback provided by email. The discussion concluded with members agreeing to assess the capacity of College's online tools (e.g. Blackboard) in facilitating such a process (this would be initiated at the next meeting of GSC, when the Associate Dean for Online Education, who has expertise in this area, is expected to attend) and to begin a discussion in terms of drafting a College policy for distant supervision of postgraduate students.

The Dean briefed the Committee on the latest developments in relation to the Academic Registry Enhancement Programme, explaining that there was progress in terms of modularisation and that in due course there will be provision to set up 'stand-alone' modules in SITS that can be marketed on an individual basis. Also, she informed members that the production of transcripts within SITS was being developed, with templates becoming available to GSC for consideration soon. The Dean concluded by informing members that Mr Pat Millar (the Programme Director) will be invited to provide more details at the next Committee meeting in April.

The Committee discussed the need for a stocktaking exercise in terms of the postgraduate taught courses College offers, as some may no longer be necessary/viable or may be requiring an overhaul, etc. Members agreed that once the relevant data from the Dean's report became available they could begin considering specific actions for this process.

Section B for noting and approval
1.   (i) The Committee noted and approved the proposed School of Linguistic, Speech and Communication Sciences Calendar Part III changes for 2015/16 (noting that the M.Sc. in Clinical Speech and Language Studies will also have a P.Grad.Dip. exit option from 2015/16).
        (ii) The Committee noted and approved the proposed School of Computer Science and Statistics Calendar Part III changes for 2015/16.
        (iii) The Committee noted and approved the proposed School of Engineering Calendar Part III changes for 2015/16 (noting that the M.Phil. in Music and Media Technologies will also be offered as a two-year part-time course (in addition to the one-year full-time option)).

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long   Date: 31st March 2015