



DRAFT

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016  
Boardroom, Provost's House

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**XX = Council relevance**

**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 Damian Murchan, School of Education  
Professor Roger West, School of Engineering  
Professor Laura Cleaver, School of Histories & Humanities  
Professor Giuliana Adamo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies  
Professor Christer Gobl, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences  
Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences  
Professor John Stalker, School of Mathematics  
Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine  
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics  
Professor David Hevey, School of Psychology  
Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy  
Professor Benjamin Wold, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology  
Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy  
Ms Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative (in attendance *Ex officio*)  
Ms Katie Crowther, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)  
Dr Gianna Hegarty, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)

**Apologies:** Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)  
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:  
Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science  
Professor Ruth Barton, School of Drama, Film and Music  
Professor Amir Khan, School of Biochemistry and Immunology  
Professor Frank Barry, School of Business  
Professor Paul Delaney, School of English  
Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology  
Professor Caoimhín MacMaoláin, School of Law



Professor Joan Lalor, School of Nursing and Midwifery  
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative  
(*Ex officio*)

***In attendance:***

Ms Helen Thornbury, Office of Dean of Graduate Studies	( <i>Ex officio</i> )
Prof Kevin O'Kelly, Dean of Students	for item GS/15-16/32
Ms Eilis Dunne, Mr Jim Nugent, Academic Registry	for item GS/15-16/33
Prof Catherine McCabe (School of Nursing and Midwifery)	for item GS/15-16/35
Mr Ian Matthews, Chief Financial Officer	for item GS/15-16/36

**GS/15-16/31 Minutes of 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

The minutes were approved by the committee as circulated.

**GS/15-16/32 Report of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) with emphasis on postgraduate courses**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed the Dean of Students, Prof Kevin O'Kelly to speak to the circulated report on the results of the 2014-15 Irish Survey of Student Engagement. Prof O'Kelly began by drawing attention to the increase in the survey response rate from the PGT cohort from under 12% in 2013-14 to just under 21% in 2014-15. He explained that the survey is circulated annually to first year UG students, final year UG students and taught course PG students only. He summarised the demographic breakdown of the PG responses by gender (70% female/ 30% male) and it was noted that this does not reflect the 50/50 Female/Male gender breakdown of the full PG cohort. Prof O'Kelly detailed the mechanism used to disseminate the survey across the cohorts and noted that a drop in engagement level with the survey in the current year, to 15%.

With respect to the results of the survey Prof O'Kelly explained that the final year UG cohort reported positively in the engagement indices and in the area of perceived career readiness and pointed out that these indices reported less positive results for the PGT cohort. Committee members sought to draw attention to the differences with the two cohorts and it was noted that the timing of the survey data collection, which falls relatively early in the PGT academic year, may influence the responses in these areas. Prof O'Kelly clarified that there was no flexibility on the timing of the survey which was required by the HEA. He further detailed areas of particular interest including the low rate of staff-student interactions at PG level and encouraged the committee members to drill down into specific questions which informed the general indices as they would provide more context for each Faculty. Prof O'Kelly clarified that reports would be produced with the survey responses at Faculty level and that there would be a further breakdown of results by school for the UG cohorts but that this was not practical for the PG cohort given the low response level. In the discussion that followed Prof O'Kelly's summary queries were raised with respect to the standard deviations used in the statistical analysis, in the appropriateness of the questions being asked of the PG cohort; and if the open comments would be made available to committee members via the Faculty / School level reports. Prof O'Kelly confirmed that there were no statistical differences in many of the responses, that the survey length had been reduced but that the questions are dictated by the HEA,



and he noted that the open comments sections of the survey responses were available from staff in the Quality Office.

### **GS/15-16/33 A process for dealing with restructured postgraduate student cases in Academic Registry**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Ms Eilis Dunne (Activity Lead – Records and Case Management Team) from the Academic Registry and Mr. Jim Nugent (Consultant – Case Management Improvement project) Clarion Consulting to speak to a brief PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Nugent explained that an analysis of PG and UG student case activity across college had taken place in 2014 under the START programme. The outcome of that analysis was that changes to the existing processing methods were recommended to improve efficiency, speed of response and visibility and reporting of student cases and these recommendations were now being implemented under the Academic Registry Enhancement Plan. Mr Nugent highlighted the benefits of the proposed new process and explained that a new team had been formed in the AR to manage all UG and PG student cases from end to end and that this should result in faster case processing. He further explained that the team members would log the status of each case on a new spreadsheet under pipeline statuses and that each team member would therefore be able to update staff/students on their outstanding cases if queried. Mr Nugent clarified that staff in the Case Management Team would have delegated authority to assess and process routine student cases and that non-routine cases would be escalated to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The AR team were hoping to move to electronic document storage for Case Documentation and communications. Ms Dunne explained that new forms had been devised to capture as much information as possible at the initial point of submission of PG case requests. She further explained that new automations through the SITS system would bring increased efficiency to the process and to the communications issued by her team. The committee welcomed the update information and in the discussion that followed it was noted by the committee that the sample form as circulated would require the academics to seek out information which the AR would have easy access to on SITS. A query arose with respect to incomplete forms being submitted and it was clarified that the more information that the Case Management team were supplied with in the initial submission the more the efficiently the case could be processed. Ms Dunne explained that the pipeline status of each case could be queried by telephone to a dedicated Cases Team line if required. It was clarified that the forms were to be submitted to the Case Management Team by the Supervisor or Course Co-Ordinator or by the DTLPG where this was the current school practise. The committee noted that a college wide communication of the new process and revised forms, in one email package, would be welcomed and requested that the new process undergo an early review. Mr Nugent explained that the project was scheduled to run until June 2016 at which point a review and update would be provided to the committee members.



### **GS/15-16/34 Postgraduate Modularisation Pilot Project**

The Dean of Graduate Studies explained to the committee that a pilot project to permit Schools to run standalone modules for credit was to be implemented. She briefed the committee on the current manual processes which require accepted applicants to stand alone modules to complete application details through Google forms. The Dean informed the committee that the pilot, which she hoped would include 10 such modules, would implement EventBrite as an application system and that the data gathered through this system would be uploaded to SITS to create student records for candidate registration. The Dean confirmed that the current system whereby the module coordinators would assess their applications for the module directly would remain and those applicants who are identified as being suitable to undertake the module would then be advised to complete the application form. She further confirmed that successful candidates would be registered with access to library etc for period of one semester, two semesters or one year depending on length of module. The Dean clarified that these modules will be approved through the GSC and asked that Schools interested in developing modules for the pilot should contact the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies as soon as possible to progress their proposals.

Agenda items B1 and B2, two proposed standalone modules for delivery by the School of Nursing and Midwifery were approved without amendment during this item. Item B3, a Clinical Practicum module proposed by the School of Nursing and Midwifery to be offered as an additional module for specific students registered on the P. Grad Cert Nursing was also approved without amendment.

### **XX GS/15-16/35 A new MSc in Community Health**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Prof. Catherine McCabe from the School of Nursing and Midwifery to talk to the circulated proposal taken as read.

Prof. McCabe explained that the School of Nursing and Midwifery were seeking to develop more interdisciplinary programmes and had invested in the Institute of Population Health based in AMNCH, Tallaght and that the proposed course had been developed in conjunction with the IPH. The course was designed to meet community health needs over the next 10 years and was supported by the Department of Health, HSE, Irish Association of General Practitioners and other external bodies. Prof. McCabe further clarified that the course was designed to put into practise in the community knowledge from research studies in the area of Public Health and that the design of the course was focussed on the promotion of detection of health issues and prevent hospital admissions. In response to a query from the committee Prof. McCabe informed the meeting that students would be timetabled for one full day per week and that this model had proven success in the School of Nursing and Midwifery. The course includes some directed learning and online delivery and it is envisaged that these elements could increase in the future. Prof. McCabe clarified that applications for the course would be welcomed from a wide variety of professions including social workers; occupational therapists; community nurses; pharmacists; dentists and GP's. In the discussion that followed Prof. McCabe's summary it was noted by the committee that the compensation



regulations appeared unduly harsh in that candidates who received 40-49% in any one module would not be permitted to progress to the MSc but would be required to exit with a PG Diploma. Prof. McCabe clarified that this model is currently in operation in other PG courses in her school and as candidates may appeal their grade and do successfully each year this regulation was not deemed to be problematic.

The committee approved the new course without any changes. The Dean of Graduate Studies confirmed that the course would now be sent for external review.

### **GS/15-16/36 Non-pay budgets for postgraduate courses**

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed the Chief Financial Officer, Mr Ian Matthews to speak to the committee re the concerns raised in the discussion document “Non-pay budgets for Postgraduate Courses” which had been drafted by Prof West, School of Engineering in collaboration with committee members. Mr Matthews spoke to PowerPoint presentation “Financial Overview” detailing the College financial position from 2011 to 2015, and the financial forecasts for the period 2016 to 2021. He clarified for the committee where there were significant changes to the financial data year on year and included information on the effect of changes in commercial interest rates on the College finances and information on depreciation and how the model used to date affected the overall financial position. Mr Matthews drew attention to the difference in the Exchequer/Non-Exchequer Income Ratio between 2011 and 2015 and clarified how research income is allocated to the School/Project PI. Mr Matthews confirmed that the Financial Overview presentation had been presented to Heads of Schools and would be made available to the wider college community if required. He detailed the importance of increasing non-exchequer income to the College through PGT fee income and other sources. Mr Matthews then clarified for the committee that all income to College was included in the ABC resource allocation model with the exception of research income and income which was committed to specific projects approved by Provost and Board such as GRS incentives; Trinity Business School strategy, Online Education project and other strategic initiatives. All other income was deemed uncommitted and was allocated in the ABC process. He pointed out that the majority of this allocation was committed at Faculty level in recurrent pay costs and that the Faculty Deans were empowered to allocate the remainder to the projects/requirements in their respective faculties. Mr Matthews suggested that non-pay budgets for PG courses could perhaps be reinstated in some measure in Faculties / Schools where payroll costs were reduced but clarified that any changes to financial allocations at School or PG course level would be at the discretion of the respective Faculty Deans. Mr Matthews also reminded the committee of the New and Incremental Business funding model and noted that take up of this had been lower than expected.

A discussion ensued in which the following points were raised:

1. Committee members presented examples of PG courses which were currently running with student cohorts of up to 20 students but market research indicated that there was sufficient applicant interest to increase this to up to 100 students. The unusual financial position which these courses found themselves in whereby their School faced larger losses as the cohort increased (despite the increase in fee income to the College) had resulted in any plans for expansion being viewed negatively by their Schools. It was





- agreed that this was occurring across all Faculties.
2. A number of members reported that PG courses in their Schools which had successfully run with viable student cohorts in the past were now in danger of not running where their essential non-pay expenditure was viewed as a liability to the School. This was of particular concern in the Sciences where project costs were not available to Course Co-ordinators. A number of members indicated that they were aware of PG courses within their Schools which will not intake in the future and it was noted that whilst this may benefit the School it will negatively impact on the overall College financial position.
  3. Committee members expressed dissatisfaction at the timing of the School ABC meetings as it was felt that Course Directors were not given critical financial information in time to make informed decisions regarding the running of their individual courses. Members reported receiving information on their Schools finances in November when students had already been accepted to their courses. Mr Matthews clarified that the ABC allocations were finalised in May annually and the committee welcomed this information.
  4. Concern was raised by committee members at the long term damage that further closure/reduction in intake numbers of PGT courses may have on the College in terms of outputting high quality graduates ready for employment or further research and the international reputational damage that may accrue where PGT courses attempt to continue without sufficient resources. Mr Matthews reiterated that where Faculty pay costs could be reduced there may be resources available to assist PGT courses expenditure.
  5. Members requested access to the method/and or formula used in determining funding allocations to the School under the New and Incremental Business policy and clarity as to the percentage of the funding that was expected to be allocated at Course level. The committee noted that the perception was that the allocation model was complex and that it was not clear that any financial benefits to date had passed to PGT course level.

The meeting was then adjourned due to time pressure. The CFO thanked the committee and indicated that he was happy to return for continued discussion with the committee members if deemed appropriate.

**GS/15-16/37      AOB**

There was none.

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**Section B for noting and approval**

The committee members noted and approved the following modules proposed by the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

B.1 A stand-alone specialist module in *Vascular Health and diseases* for external applicants only.

B.2 A stand-alone specialist *foundation module for Anaesthesia/Recovery Room Nursing for Nurses/Midwives* for external applicants only.



**Trinity College Dublin**

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

B.3 A *Clinical practicum* module to be offered as an 'add on' module for students registered on a generic P. Grad. Cert from 2016/17.

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**Section C for noting**

The committee noted the below:

C1. Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 3 February 2016.

There being no other business, the meeting ended.

Prof. Aideen Long

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016