



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 9am on Thursday 24th November 2016
Boardroom, Provost's House

XX = Council relevance

- Present:**
- Professor Neville Cox, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)
 - Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
 - Professor Richard Porter, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
 - Professor James Quinn, School of Business
 - Professor Dónall Mac Dónaill, School of Chemistry
 - Professor Lucy Hederman, School of Computer Science and Statistics
 - Professor Ruth Barton, School of Creative Arts
 - Professor Michael O'Sullivan, School of Dental Science
 - Professor John Walsh, School of Education
 - Professor David O'Shaughnessy, School of English
 - Professor Christine Morris, School of Histories & Humanities
 - Professor Giuliana Adamo, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
 - Professor Caoimhín MacMaoláin, School of Law
 - Professor Lorna Carson, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
 - Professor Andreea Nicoara, School of Mathematics
 - Professor Stephen Smith, School of Medicine
 - Professor Patrick Wyse Jackson, School of Natural Sciences
 - Professor Elizabeth Fahey McCarthy, School of Nursing and Midwifery
 - Professor John Gilmer, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
 - Professor Jean Quigley, School of Psychology
 - Professor Benjamin Wold, Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology
 - Professor William Phelan, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
 - Professor Virpi Timonen, School of Social Work and Social Policy
 - Mr Shane Collins, Graduate Students' Union President (*Ex officio*)
 - Ms Elisa Crespo Miguelez, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President (*Ex officio*)
 - Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, CAPSL Representative (*Ex officio*)
 - Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience (in attendance *Ex officio*)

Apologies:

- Professor John J Boland, Dean of Research (*Ex officio*)
- Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
 - Professor Richard Reilly, School of Engineering



Professor Seamus Joseph Martin, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Louise Bradley, School of Physics
Ms Helen O'Hara, Information System Services Representative
(in attendance *Ex officio*)

In attendance:

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Trinity Teaching and Learning), Temporary Secretary (*Ex officio*)
Ms Helen Thornbury (Office of Dean of Graduate Studies) (*Ex officio*)
Prof. Sarah Barry (School of Medicine) for item GS/16-17/74
Prof. Na Fu (School of Business) for item GS/16-17/75
Peter Hynes (Head of Business Support and Planning) and Gillian Fitzpatrick
(Activity Lead, Academic Registry) for item GS/16-17/77

GS/16-17/72 Minutes of 20th October 2016

The minutes were approved by the committee as circulated.

GS/16-17/73 Matters Arising

Re: GS/15-16/50 A new validated Master in Education Studies course in Inquiry-Based Learning from Marino Institute of Education (MIE): The Dean advised that Council had approved this proposal at the last meeting in October.

Re: GS/15-16/58 QQI Statutory guidelines from the QA of research degree programmes: The Dean drew attention of the members to the revised draft *Guidelines* recently circulated. He explained that the QQI expects feedback from Trinity on the document by 5th December, and asked the DTLPs for their comments to be emailed to him by early next week so that he could put together a 'graduate studies' response in advance of the Quality Committee meeting on 1st December.

Re: GS/15-16/65 A new MSc course proposal in Entrepreneurship: The Dean advised that the course had received an extremely positive external review and had been submitted to Council for its meeting at the end of November.

Re: GS/16-17/70 Criteria for EU Fee Status: for discussion: The Dean advised the committee that the item would be held over to the next meeting.

XX GS/16-17/74 A new joint online course proposal from Trinity, RCSI & UCC - Postgraduate Diploma in Population Health and Health Services Research

The Dean of Graduate Studies welcomed Prof. Sarah Barry, the prospective course lead director, from the School of Medicine. Prof. Barry spoke to the circulated proposal of a new Postgraduate Diploma course in Population Health and Health Services Research (PHHSR) to be jointly taught and awarded by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Trinity, and the University College Cork from September 2017.

She explained that the proposed joint course was a product of an academic and administrative team from the three institutions with the special involvement of the Trinity Teaching and Learning in setting up the novel inter-institutional administrative arrangements. These are laid down in the Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 of the course proposal, and will enable the participating institutions to carry out the student-cycle



administration without inter-institutional registration as students will only be registered in one of the three partners, called the “home institution”, to which they have been accepted. The jointness of the new course lies therefore not in the joint registration of its students but in the joint design and development of the course curriculum and the joint delivery of all its modules leading to a joint award of postgraduate diploma. At every drafting stage academic staff and also technical experts from each of the three partner institutions reviewed and agreed to the emerging design. The administrative support to the Lead Course Director will be supplied in the Lead Course Director’s “home institution” with an aggregate sharing of this workload by Trinity, RCSI and UCC over the full nine-year cycle of the course delivery. The “Lead Course Director’s” role will be rotating across the three institutions on a three-year basis.

Prof. Barry clarified that the proposed postgraduate diploma targets health system professionals and researchers working across the sector, who wish to develop and/or build on the existing expertise in population health and health services research. The development and initial delivery of the new joint course would be conducted under the auspices of the HRB-funded current SPHeRE (Structured Population Health and Health-services Research Education) programme which had been very successful. The joint postgraduate diploma is designed on the basis of six established modules delivered over nine academic cycles through the HRB Scholars Programme (2007-2012) and the subsequent SPHeRE Programme (2013-2015); both the structured PhD programmes delivered by the three partner institutions (the final intake to the SPHeRE programme would be in 2017). While this delivery record shows the success of the modules, they were significantly re-orientated for delivery in an online postgraduate diploma format. Prof. Barry referred to the strong market case for the proposed PHHSR course by highlighting its unique selling points, identifying its position among other courses available in the health area, and referring to the results of a market survey carried out in Michaelmas Term 2015. Prof. Barry also emphasised that strong strategic partnerships with other third level institutions are a high priority in all three proposing institutions, and the new inter-institutional *Collaborative Framework Agreement* (CFA) between Trinity, RCSI and UCC, under which the new Postgraduate Diploma in PHHSR would be jointly delivered, formalises this working arrangement.

Prof. Barry drew the committee’s attention to the approval process of this new postgraduate diploma which had been a robust mixture of established procedures (i.e. it was approved in Trinity by the School of Medicine Executive in April and the Faculty Dean in May), and also innovative steps. Firstly, the proposal has been developed and reviewed with the help a registrar-level inter-institutional “Working Group” who agreed on the principles of the CFA as an essential foundation platform. Secondly, a rigorous and transparent Joint Review Panel equivalent to the existing approval processes in each of the three collaborating partner institutions had been set up for this new course proposal. The panel consisted of external and internal reviewers from the three partner institutions who reviewed the proposal over the summer and completed a site visit on the 23rd of September in Dublin. Two external assessors were the key members of the panel, namely Prof. Michael Donnelly, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences in the Queens University



Belfast and Prof. Mark Gabbay, Professor of General Practice and Head of Department of Health Services Research in the University of Liverpool. The panel also included four representatives from the RCSI, Trinity and UCC. The reviewers had commented on the high quality of the course proposal documentation produced. The concluding recommendations of the Joint Review Panel were since fully implemented and the team's response to the Joint Review Panel report was subsequently approved earlier on in November 2016. No further approval steps are required in UCC as its Academic Board had delegated approval to the Joint Review Panel. Final approval steps are currently being taken in the RCSI. The Chair of the Joint Review Panel had notified the NUI about this new inter-institutional programme on behalf of the RCSI and UCC. Prof. Barry clarified the remaining steps to the completion of the approval process in the RCSI which consist of submission to Academic Council on 14th of December, then to the NUI Senate on 19th January 2017 (along with the UCC), and finally to the Medical Health Sciences Board on 26th January 2017. Once the proposal becomes approved in the three partner institutions the course marketing will begin in February 2017, applications will close on June 30th 2017 and the course will commence in September 2017.

In conclusion Prof. Barry expressed thanks to her collaborators from the RCSI and UCC, and in particular to Patricia Callaghan and Ewa Sadowska in Trinity Teaching and Learning who delivered technical expertise, high-level commitment and thorough guidance during the whole process.

In a discussion which followed a number of queries were raised and clarifications offered. Prof. Barry explained that the expectation was that the course should recruit at least 30 students to start with but that that number would increase. A general commend was made on the basis of Trinity's own online course in Applied Social Studies which had grown from the initial 20 students to the current 70 over three years, that College should have in place efficient supports for online programmes showing rapid expansion as they are labour-intensive and call for different working practices with most synchronous tutorials needing to be offered in the evenings. Prof. Barry emphasised that the PHRS course would continue to use platforming delivery of tuition under SPHeRE arrangements in which the RCSI provides access to Moodle for hosting online learning resources (synchronous and asynchronous), moderation tools, design rationale, monitoring and evaluation, and assessment management. SPHeRE currently runs to 2021; with strong potential for further funding for three more intakes (2018 - 2020) which will extend the programme to 2024 (a further eight years). The RCSI is committed to continue hosting the VLE and offering the support of the SPHeRE learning technologist (50% WTE) for the duration of SPHeRE (five or eight years if funding renewed). This arrangement is copper-fastened with the CFA and with the intention that within a reasonable start-up period, fees from the joint postgraduate diploma would cover these costs. Prof. Barry also explained that students will register only with their own "home" institution, and an even distribution of applicants amongst the three institutions would be ensured by the sharing of the "expression of interest" phase of the application process and subsequent guiding of applicants amongst the partner institutions if necessary. A concern was raised about what appears to be an overtly economics-driven module design in Health Systems, Policy and Management. Prof. Barry clarified that in fact



the curriculum taught on the module also encompasses organisational learning and health policy background in political, social and psychological dimensions. A particular query was raised to do with the joint postgraduate diploma taken by some students as preparation for the PhD career. Prof. Barry clarified that the course was not intended for such a purpose and that the external reviewers explicitly asked for this to be flagged upfront. The intention is that the postgraduate diploma will facilitate access to the population health and health services research training and education to early and mid-career clinicians, allied health professionals, population health and health services researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders who for a range of reasons are not able or do not wish to undertake a PhD.

The committee approved the new course without any changes to be submitted to the University Council's next meeting.

XX GS/16-17/75 A new course proposal: MSc in Human Resource Management

The Dean welcomed Prof. Na FU, the prospective course director, from the School of Business. Prof. Na FU spoke to the circulated document and explained that the proposed MSc in Human Resource Management is one of a portfolio of programmes being put forward by the Trinity Business School in furtherance of the School's Strategic Plan, which had been agreed by the College Board. Additionally, it underpins Trinity's strategy to substantively expand its focus and activities in the human resources, competency development and talent management areas. The strategic management of human resources is now recognised as a key component for enabling an organisation to achieve high performance and sustainable growth. Human resource management itself is a core discipline area in any Business School and a programme of this nature is a central part of any School programme portfolio. The new course aims to enable Trinity to answer this increasing market demand for the human resource expertise, take full advantage of Trinity's unique location and reputation while achieving economies of scope and scale. The MSc in Human Resource Management is a key part of the School's development and growth strategy. It also aligns with the Trinity's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy. Prof. Na FU also noted that this new course was in the process of being accredited by three international human resource bodies, and that such accreditation, intended to be obtained in the spring of 2017, would be a unique selling point to enhance the course's professional attractiveness to potential applicants.

In a short discussion which followed a number of issues were raised and clarifications offered. With respect to a query on over-reliance on group assessment Prof. Na FU explained that group projects were justified by the nature of the discipline and that the module coordinators would be aware to closely monitor the individual input of students into group projects. Composition of groups would vary across modules to ensure that every student contributes fairly to collective assignments. Given the expected popularity of this new Masters course Prof. Na FU noted that there might be a need in the future to set up a stand-alone postgraduate diploma in human resource management to cater for the demand, and that the issue of stand-alone postgraduate diplomas accompanying their respective Masters courses was being examined across the board in the School. Finally, Prof. Na FU also clarified that psychology was an important component of the course curriculum and was brought in via the modules covering organisational behaviour and leadership skills.



The committee approved the new course without any changes.

XX GS/16-17/76 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report 2014/15

This item was in reference to a deferred GS/16-17/66. The Dean went through the Sections commenting on issues of particular interest.

Re Section 5 Processing and Admissions: Postgraduate Student and Course Numbers the Dean drew the members' attention to the fact that in 2014/15 there was an increase of 138 students (3.2%) who registered for the year on the postgraduate register in comparison to the previous year. This increase resulted from part-time student numbers going up to 1,622 with 37% of all postgraduate students registering for part-time study. In terms of students' nationality 51 (1%) came from the non EU countries in Europe in 2014/15 compared to 49 (1%) in 2013/14. The breakdown of students by gender showed no changes to the previous years' trend in that there were more female than male students registered apart from on postgraduate diplomas. In terms of courses offered the number of postgraduate taught courses running annually had decreased from 195 in 2013/2014 to 179 in 2014/2015. The number of taught programmes had decreased by 8% over all that year. There was a significant number of courses which ran with fewer than ten students.

Re Section 6 Taught Postgraduate Courses – Overview of Student Numbers the Dean noted that the overview of student numbers on taught postgraduate courses (M.Phil./M.Sc./PG Dip/PG Cert.) showed that in 2015/16 a significant number of courses in all three Faculties continued to operate with fewer than ten students. There were 60 courses across the three Faculties with fewer than ten students, constituting 48% of the total number offered and consisting of 18 courses in Health Sciences (42%), 11 courses in Engineering, Mathematics and Science (40%), and the highest number of such courses comprising 41% of 74 courses on offer in the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

Re Section 7 Maintenance of Academic Quality the Dean noted a high number of outstanding reports for 2014/16 (33) which external examiners still did not return as of March 2016. With respect to research degrees the Dean noted that as in previous years the vast majority of student passed with minor corrections to their theses.

Re Section 9 Postgraduate Admissions Data for 2015/16 the Dean noted that the number of applications decreased but the number of registered students increased. The Dean flagged that the situation was reversed in 2016/17 and would be discussed at a future GSC meeting.

Re Section 10 Funding sources the Dean noted that nearly 80% of PhD students in the area of arts and humanities remain self-funded but less so in the other faculties.

In a discussion which followed a number of comments were raised. A member wished to have had more years of comparative data for various categories of registered students (in reference to page 14). A query was raised about ten students taken as a viability indicator for a postgraduate course (in reference to page 21). It was clarified that fees from ten students would normally made the course financially



viable, and a group of ten students would make the course academically viable in terms of an internal group dynamics of the participants present in the class. In relation to funding (pages 26-27) it was noted that the level of funding offered by Trinity was respectable. It was commented that more work should be done to source comparative statistics from other HEIs in Ireland and in particular in the UK, and the School of Business indicated willingness to assist in providing some data already gathered for various market analysis exercises carried out by that School. It was noted that more funding opportunities should be identified e.g. targeted scholarships, fee reductions offers for early applications, and scholarship paid by third institutions for applicants to taught Masters which might all increase the uptake on these courses especially if the funding opportunities were to be centrally advertised on the each School's website. The Graduate Students' Union President noted that the government-based postgraduate maintenance grant was still available to students on taught courses and should be advertised by the Schools. He agreed to email directly to the DTLPs the wording for such communication. Finally, some concern was expressed about the lengthening of the research examination process. It was clarified that the new research functionality in SITS to be launched shortly should assist in reducing it.

The Dean thanked the members for their useful comments, and asked them to review in particular the sections related to the courses in their disciplines and email further comments directly to his Office.

GS/16-17/77 SITS Research Module and E-Thesis submission

This item was in reference to GS/15-16/52. The Dean welcomed Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support & Planning, and Gillian Fitzpatrick, Activity Lead, from the Academic Registry. Mr Hynes explained that *Research Functionality* would be delivered in conjunction with the SITS upgrade commencing the week of the 12th December. It would enable the student submission of e-thesis and include additional functionality to manage a research student's lifecycle: progress reports, confirmation reports, intention to submit thesis, soft bound thesis submission, internal and external examiner communications, examination results, approval and submission of e-thesis, submission of hard bound thesis, and Board and Council approval. Ms Fitzpatrick clarified that the data in SITS would be maintained by the *Assess, Progress and Graduation Team* in the Academic Registry, and that the information would enable easy tracking of all events in the lifecycle of a research student in College. Local training would take place after the upgrade in the Schools from early January. The *Assess, Progress and Graduation Team* will be providing information sessions, roadshows and documentation to all Schools, with advice on business processes to include events, timelines and deadlines.

In a discussion which followed Mr Hynes clarified that SIT would not be holding the progress/confirmation reports but will have boxes to click to indicate that such would have been submitted. Those students whose data are not updated in SITS will not be able to progress and register. The functionality will cover students on structured PhD and will enable backtracking of students whose progress reports had already been submitted earlier this academic year. Once finalised, the process of data submission to the Academic Registry will be worked out and disseminated to Schools during the



training period in January. An additional facility to allow research students to register on modules would be launched next academic year. A concern was expressed that some Schools have a number of research students who might not have completed their progress reports for various legitimate reasons such as bad health, and consequently processing these students will add to the backlog of student cases and additional administrative workload for academic staff. The representatives from the Academic Registry undertook to come back to the committee in a year's time for implementation feedback and to review the anticipated effectiveness of the process.

XX GS/16-17/78 Non EU student quota

This item was in reference to GS/16-17/59 and GS/16-17/68. The Dean reminded the committee that the discussion of the issue at the last GSC meeting authorised him to ask Council at its last meeting to put the issue back on the agenda for further discussion to be informed by the clarification of what 'first qualified applicant' meant, and what the so called delaying factors were. The Dean reported that Council had showed a strong resistance of rolling back of the June *First qualified applicant admissions policy for Non EU applicants* memo on the grounds that many other universities were in a position to admit applicants much faster than Trinity, and Trinity was losing potential non-EU applicants. Council had noted that the new admissions procedure was intended to be activated only if a School did not respond within a two-week period to applicants. The Dean explained that the *qualified applicant* meant an applicant complying with the admissions criteria laid down in course handbooks, and therefore the more prescriptive the handbook the clearer the criteria for admission to the course. A related issue of *incomplete applications* was still of concern in that such applications would not reveal full academic credentials of applicants, especially when a provisional offer is made subject to submission of references. Should a provisional offer be withdrawn after receipt of the references, Trinity and the referees are vulnerable to Freedom of Information requests and challenges might follow where a reference contained no negative statements about an applicant but where the course committee concluded that the references were not strong enough to justify admission to the course. The Dean undertook to take this issue to Council. It was also clarified that the online admissions system is currently configured to one primary assessor but the Academic Registry can change the assessor upon a request, preferably, from the School Manager – and that this might be necessary where the primary assessor was, for example, on vacation and hence applications could not be turned around within the prescribed time period.

GS/16-17/79 Supervision guidelines

This item was in reference to GS/16-17/58 and GS/16-17/69, and to the (now defunct) QQI white paper on research programmes. The Dean spoke to his circulated memorandum on supervision guidelines. The Dean emphasised that the draft QQI revised *guidelines* would need to be considered in a broader context of putting together a Trinity policy on research supervision. He hoped to identify what essential components should be contained in such a policy. The general feeling was that the revised draft QQI *guidelines* were still very prescriptive and over-covering the minutiae of daily supervision such as responding to emails and indeed that a Trinity policy on the issue should refrain from prescribing certain practices which might work well in particular supervisor/supervisee situations (such as, for example,



keeping a note of meetings between the two, or ensuring that emails were responded to within a particular time frame) as necessary or desirable for *all* supervision relationships or as necessary *indicia* of good supervision. A specific concern was raised that there was a need for guidance for Schools when supervisors were leaving or discontinuing supervision for various reasons, and the students were left behind in the lurch with no alternative supervisors expert in their discipline or willing to take them on. The Dean asked the members to email their comments directly to him to progress the matter to a draft policy stage.

GS/16-17/80 AOB

The Dean noted that there had been significant increase in the development of new postgraduate course proposals this year, particularly from new Ussher Assistant Professors. It was agreed that the last meeting these course proposals can be submitted for consideration to the Graduate Studies Committee would be on the 16 February 2017.

Section B for noting and approval

Re B1. New PhD modules from School of Psychology

The Dean drew the members' attention to the three new modules from the School of Psychology. *The Implementation Research with Vulnerable Groups* and *Conducting Research with Survivors of Extreme Violence* will be coordinated and delivered through the Centre for Global Health which is a joint initiative by the School of Psychology, the School of Nursing and Midwifery and the School of Medicine. The resourcing of these two modules is within the Centre for Global Health which recently secured funding from Marie Skłodowska Curie Action to train 12 doctoral fellows in the area of Global Psychotraumatology. CONTEXT, or the Collaborative Network for Training and Excellence in psychotraumatology is a joint initiative between nine EU-partners including Trinity (Coordinator), Ulster University, the University of Southern Denmark, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Probation Board of Northern Ireland, Spirasi, the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, the Children's Homes of Odense Kommune and the International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies' Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support. Given that the two modules will be made available to both internal psychology-registered PhD students and external CONTEXT-partner registered fellows (including students from Ulster University and the University of Southern Denmark) provision would need to be made in the Academic Registry for their registration.

The third *International Doctorate in Global Health PhD Research Seminar* module will be made available only to internally-registered PhD students across all Schools and disciplines. It will be delivered within the International Doctorate in Global Health (INDIGO) programme based in the Centre for Global Health comprises doctoral students from the Schools of Medicine, Psychology, Nursing and Midwifery, Natural Sciences, and Computer Science and Statistics.

The committee approved the three modules.

Re B2. MTh new and revised modules after the external MTh course review 2016



The Dean noted that the Master in Theological Studies, jointly taught by the Church of Ireland Theological Institute and Trinity, had undergone an External Programme Review in 2015. The review highlighted in very positive terms the effectiveness of the course and made recommendations for its improvement such as the provision of additional Biblical modules, a first year Doctrine module, re-configuring the Hermeneutics modules in the second year (Mode A) with Hermeneutics taught as one module rather than two and thereby allowing the freed up space to be used for an additional module in biblical studies during the year, and restructuring of the course to allow for the teaching of an additional module on Christian Doctrine and further work in Biblical Studies, and allowing Mode B to be completed in four years rather than six. Revd Dr Patrick McGlinchey's cover memo circulated as Encl B2a listed all the changes introduced to the MTh course on foot of the reviewers' recommendations while Enclosures B2d to B2j conveyed detailed module descriptors of all the amended and new modules: Introduction to Anglican Dogmatic Theology in its Historical and Contemporary Context, Critical and Interpretive Issues in the Study of the Gospels, Theology and Ethics, Hermeneutics, Letters and Writings of Early Christianity, Pentateuch and Psalms and Sages and Prophets in the Context of Israelite History. *Calendar* changes for 2017/18 to the MTh entry were also circulated as Enclosures B2b and B2c. The committee approved all the documentation submitted by Revd Dr Patrick McGlinchey, Church of Ireland Theological Institute, noting that it had support from the Confederal School of Religions, Peace Studies and Theology.

Section C for noting

There were no items.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11am.

Prof. Neville Cox

Date: 24 November 2016