GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the online meeting held via Zoom
at 10am on Thursday 3 December 2020

XX = Council relevance

Present (Ex officio):
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies   (*Chair*)
Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Rachel Mary Mc Loughlin, School of Biochemistry and Immunology
Professor Sinéad Roden, Trinity Business School
Professor Owen Conlan, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Sarah-Jane Scaife, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science
Professor Keith Johnston, School of Education
Professor Biswajit Basu School of Engineering
Professor Bernice Murphy, School of English
Professor Matthew Campbell, School of Genetics and Microbiology
Professor Ashley Clements, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor James Hadley, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Manuela Kulaxizi, School of Mathematics
Professor Kumlesh Dev, School of Medicine
Professor Cian O'Callaghan, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Fiona Timmins, School of Nursing and Midwifery
Professor Cristin Ryan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Hongzhou Zhang, School of Physics
Professor Ladislav Timulak, School of Psychology
Professor Gillian Wylie, School of Religion
Professor Thomas Chadefaux, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Paula Mayock, School of Social Work and Social Policy
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Ms Giséle Scanlon, Graduate Students' Union President
Ms Bhiswetta Bhattacharjee, Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

In attendance for all items:
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, Head of Trinity Teaching and Learning, (TT&L)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services Representative
Ms Fedelma McNamara, Director of Internationalisation, TCD Global

Ms Ewa Sadowska (Academic Affairs, TT&L): Secretary to the Committee

Apologies

Dean of Research: Vacant

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor John Boland, School of Chemistry
Professor Deirdre Ahern, School of Law

Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education, TT&L
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office

In attendance for individual items:
Prof. Constantine Boussalis (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy)
for item GS/20-21/028
Patricia Murphy (Acting Director of Counselling), Dr Niamh Farrelly (College Psychiatrist & Assistant Director of College Health Service) and Dr David Mc Grath (Director of College Health Service)   for item GS/20-21/029
Ms Roisin Smith (Quality Officer, TT&L)   for items GS/20-21/029-033

GS/20-21/026 Minutes of 5 November 2020
The minutes were approved as circulated.

GS/20-21/027 Matters Arising

The Dean advised members that all *Actions* from the previous meeting had been attended to. *Actions* with more specific update provided by the Dean are referred to below.

Re: GS/20-21/003 A new course proposal: Postgraduate Certificate in Climate Entrepreneurship: The Dean advised that the proposal had been approved by the November Council.

Re: GS/20-21/005 CHARM- EU approval process: The Dean advised that the memo of clarification was accepted by the November Council.

Re: Action GS/20-21/010: The Dean advised that a presentation on the current financial and budgetary model was scheduled with a Finance representative as an add-on event after the GSC on 28 January for those interested in participating.

Re: GS/20-21/017 A new course proposal: MSc in Smart and Sustainable Cities: The Dean advised that the proposal had been approved by the November Council.

Re: GS/20-21/018 A new course proposal: Pg Cert in Healthcare Innovation (Tangent): The Dean stated that the proposal had been approved by the November Council. She also advised of Council's recommendation that a

balance needs to be struck between repurposing existing modules and setting up new ones on new PGT course proposals. During the process of proposal review, particular attention should be paid to consideration of the extent to which modules may be repurposed and the implications of such repurposing.

Re: GS/20-21/019 A new course proposal: Pg Cert in Advanced Ageing and Frailty Studies: The Dean advised that the proposal had been sent out for an external review.

Re: GS/20-21/020 A new course proposal: (CHARM- EU) – Master in Global Challenges for Sustainability: The Dean advised that the proposal had been positively reviewed by an external panel of experts and would be submitted to the January Council.

Re: GS/20-21/021 PG Open Day 2021: The Dean advised that the PG Open Day will take place on the 6th March, and reiterated that Schools should inform the Director of Marketing of the format of their participation.

Re: GS/20-21/023 COVID-19 and update from COLSAG: The Dean advised that feedback was still outstanding from some Schools to the circulated excel sheet collecting data on assessment and modules with "in person" contacts.

Action GS/20-21/023: DTLPs to email outstanding feedback to genadgso@tcd.ie on how Schools are ensuring F2F personal contact between staff and PG students.

Re *Actions GS/20-21/025 (1) and (2)***:** These actions were noted as outstanding.

XX   **GS/20-21/028 A new course proposal (HCI Pillar I): Pg Dip in Applied Social Data Science**

Members had an opportunity to review the new course documentation in advance of the meeting. The Dean welcomed Prof. Constantine Boussalis (prospective Course Director) from the School of Social Sciences & Philosophy (SSS&P) and provided a brief overview of the proposal by means of a short power-point presentation. She noted that the proposed course was at level 9 on the NFQ with a credit volume of 60 ECTS leading to a major award of postgraduate diploma to be delivered F2F full-time over one year and funded under Human Capital Initiative Pillar 1 with a first entry in September 2021. The proposed course complements some existing PGT offerings. Its structure comprises four modules of 10 credits and another four of 5 credits, totalling 60 ECTS, which are all new and compulsory. The learning outcomes and progression rules are clearly set out. The course aims to introduce students to the application of state-of-the-art analytic approaches from the fields of statistics and machine learning to the study of social scientific questions.

When invited to speak, Prof. Boussalis thanked the Dean for her presentation. He also thanked the School of Computer Science and Statistics for sharing one of its modules with his course, and Trinity Business School and the School of Social Work & Social Policy for constructive discussions ensuring sufficient differentiation of the new course's structure to prevent overlapping with their existing courses.

In an ensuing short discussion, when asked about an admissions issue of identifying disciplines related to social science, computer science or statistics as a target for recruitment, Prof. Boussalis clarified that applicants from any discipline which deals with big data in applied settings from applied social sciences to applied humanities will be welcome, so long as applicants are interested in social science questions and can master the analytical tools from computer science and statistics. Prof. Boussalis undertook to re-word that sentence in the admissions section to clarify this. In response to a query on curriculum content related to data collection and gender, Prof. Boussalis clarified that a critical perspective will be taken with respect to how data are collected and analysed in terms of gender to ensure visibility so that bias can be removed, and transparency achieved. Prof. Boussalis also agreed to liaise with the Course Director of the MPhil in Digital Humanities and Culture, at the suggestion of the DTLP of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, to discuss possible synergies going forward.

The Dean noted that the proposal was well received. There were no additional issues raised and the committee endorsed the proposal.

> **Action GS/20-21/028**: The prospective Course Director to liaise with the Course Director of the MPhil in Digital Humanities and Culture to discuss possible synergies going forward.
>
> **Decision GS/20-21/028:** The committee recommended the proposal to Council subject to a favourable external review.

XX   **GS/20-21/029 Student wellbeing**
The Dean welcomed Ms Patricia Murphy (Acting Director of Counselling), Dr Niamh Farrelly (College Psychiatrist and Assistant Director of College Health Service) and Dr David Mc Grath (Director of College Health Service) to talk on student wellbeing during the pandemic. The medical team had previously given a power-point presentation on the topic to the Trinity Living with Covid Committee and to a number of other committees.

Ms Murphy noted that College had looked at student mental health practices internationally and established that Trinity has excellent comprehensive campus-wide facilities with lots of outreach, tele- and in-person sessions, making Trinity's mental health service one of the best amongst all Irish universities. Dr Mc Grath clarified that since the beginning of the pandemic, both the number of students presenting with mental health issues and the complexity of cases had dramatically increased which is reflected in the statistics provided within the slides. PG students and international students are relatively over-represented in these groups. Staff in the College Health Service needed therefore much more time for sessions with individual students. Dr Farrelly clarified the role of College psychiatrist who receives referrals for the most complex cases. She underlined that other services and facilities in College should be brought in to assist students in maintaining their mental health balance. As a result of prolonged pandemic, previously identified mental health difficulties are manifesting in a more severe form, and underlying vulnerabilities are being unmasked. Students find it difficult to manage to cope with life due to the lack of connectiveness with other people by not being on campus and

their disrupted daily routine as they do not attend classes and labs on campus. Dr Farrelly underlined the role College has to play in enhancing student mental health promotion especially during the pandemic. It was therefore pertinent for College to put in place adequate provisions to support students during the forthcoming Christmas period. Members shared their experience and reflections on the topic:

(i)   Library staff have been engaging more with students over the counter which students find very positive;

(ii)   Additional resources designated to support pastoral care for PG students should be made available in College;

(iii)   The GSU President thanked the Director of Student Services for facilitating to set up the Spaces initiative in a currently dormant building, thereby allowing student activity to take place there in a safe socially distant environment.

(iv)   Increased student engagement can be achieved by small steps; for example, students reacted very positively to the recent presence of the ice-cream van on campus.

(v)   College staff need to be mindful of cultural differences especially pertaining to international students which make them unwilling to reach out to seek help when they experience mental health difficulties.

(vi)   Students from the School of Nursing and Midwifery work as frontline workers during the pandemic and College needs to be proactive to address their mental health needs such as depression which can manifest as poor or non-attendance.

(vii) A coordinated student support system should be put in place instead of crisis management.

(viii) Additional resources should enhance PG advisory services.

(ix)   Students with mental health issues frequently do not use existing support resources even though they are aware of them. In particular, failing end of year exams triggers a crisis and precipitates self-harm and students may need particular support at that time.

(x)   College has to manage student expectations in relation to opportunities for face-to-face teaching, recognizing that this is not easy in the pandemic when College cannot autonomously decide issues related to F2F delivery when lockdowns cannot be pre-planned.

(xi)   Lockdowns are not under College control and recent experience indicates that the number of infections may increase irrespective of College efforts.

(xii) Students need interactions with other people on an ongoing basis as this contributes to their mental wellbeing

(xiii) Grad chats are a very useful online resource run through the Counselling Service.

(xiv) Online teaching is here to stay after the pandemic is over.

(xv)   Vaccination will hopefully remedy the situation and life will return to normal.

Dr Farrelly advised that there are genetic and environmental issues underpinning mental health issues. Warning signs include disrupted routine formation in student life, potentially exacerbated by use of drugs and alcohol. At-risk groups within the College community include PG, international and minority group students and these groups may need to be proactively managed. Engagement by staff with students

should be personal but can be online if necessary. Consideration should be given to use of SEAtS, a student success platform which tracks real-time class and online attendance, but also analyses engagement and prompts intervention for under-performing and/or potentially disengaged students.

The Dean thanked the three presenters for sharing their expertise and noted that the information shared was important for all members of the College community.

XX   **GS/20-21/030 Academic integrity of approved PGT courses**
The Dean underlined that her memo was a draft for discussion in response to numerous queries she has been receiving about how new modules introduced to existing PGT programmes need to be approved as they no longer come to GSC for consideration. Flexibility in module development is an important feature of curriculum oversight and led to a decision to delegate authority for approval of module changes to Schools where course committees make decisions about innovations within their programmes. However, significant changes can creep into programmes if multiple modules change over time and the programme taken by students may only distantly resemble the original version approved by Council. Balancing the need for oversight of academic quality with the need for economy of effort and flexible administrative processes to enable change is challenging and the Dean was asking for suggestions on how to capture the dynamics of change.

Members shared their comments in a short discussion:
(i)   Information on new modules can be pulled out from SITS and there may not be the need for it to be kept by DTLPs.
(ii)   The role of DTLP is more than a keeper of information but as an overseer of change who can produce a summary of what and why changes have taken place on the courses in their School.
(iii)   Such oversight is difficult to ascertain as DTLPs change every few years and it is difficult to maintain long term the continuity and integrity of the data.
(iv)   Schools keep minutes of course committees which should provide the rationale for changes.
(v)   Normally changes to modules happen for good reason but sometimes they are random stop-gap solutions which stay in place far longer than was originally intended.
(vi)   The AR needs clarity on what changes can be approved at the School level and which need a GSC approval.
(vii)   System restrictions within the AR may constrain programme-level innovation.
(viii) Information in the handbooks must not change during the course of the year and any changes must be in line with the approved learning outcomes.
(ix)   It was suggested that Schools should internally review their PGT course suites every three years using clearly defined criteria and submit a summary report to the Dean for GSC consideration. External Examiners' reports and accreditation requirements play a part in such reviews.
(x)   A review/oversight process should be light-touch and should provide a bigger picture of module changes over time.

(xi)   Additional admin support resources are needed in Schools.

> **Action GS/20-21/030:** Members to email the Dean their feedback so that she could revise the draft for a further discussion at a later meeting.

XX   **GS/20-21/031 PGT course committee *Terms of Reference***
The Dean explained that the item resulted from a request from a School for PGT course governance guide which she could not identify. The circulated ToR are an attempt to articulate generic responsibilities of PGT course committees, based on the current practice for most programmes, to be further nuanced for individual courses.

In a short discussion which followed a number of comments were made:
(i)   Some professionally accredited courses have ToR as they are required by the accreditation body.
(ii)   Those DTLPs who have them will email them to the Dean.
(iii)   Stakeholders should be represented on course committees.
(iv)   In the School of Nursing and Midwifery all PGT courses were brought under the umbrella of one overarching course committee which works well.

The Dean thanked members for their comments.

> **Action GS/20-21/031:** DTLPs to email Dean examples of ToR so that she can revise the draft for a further discussion at a later meeting.

GS/20-21/032 International partnership with Northeastern University
The Dean advised members that she had held a meeting facilitated by the VP for Global Relations the week before with the Dean of Graduate Studies and the Director of International Relations from Northeastern University, Boston. The Provost in Northeastern is a Trinity Alumnus. In his previous role in Columbia University, he led the development of the Trinity Columbia partnerships, including the successful UG programme. Discussions with Northeastern are still at an early stage to explore a number of partnerships for PhD collaboration. These include semester placements, research visits, all the way up to dual or joint PhD programmes. Northeastern have identified existing synergies and areas of shared interest particularly with ADAPT, the world-leading SFI Research Centre for Digital Media. The Dean stated she would be keen to establish whether other areas or Schools may have existing relationships with Northeastern or may be interested in developing them. The Dean plans to meet with Northeastern again later in December, when each side will set out what they have identified as areas of mutual interest for cooperation.

> **Action GS/20-21/032:** DTLPs to consult their Schools on possible links with Northeastern and email their findings to the Dean by the end the following week.

GS/20-21/033 COVID-19 and update from Continuation of Learning and Student Activities Group (COLSAG)
The Dean advised that COLSAG meetings take place on a weekly basis. Currently the group are following two main lines of activity. The first one is a working group on recording and captioning of lectures which she chairs. The group's brief is to develop a College policy. The group is currently focusing on putting in place guidelines for the

coming semester in terms of providing pragmatic instructions as to, for example, what delivery formats can be recorded, how long recordings should be held for, whose responsibility it is to clear out the recorded lectures. The second line of COLSAG's activity is to capture semester 1 assessment and identify aspirational and realistic teaching plans for semester 2 on levels 2 and 5. Members noted that some content of lectures, i.e. clinical, may not be recorded.

> **Action GS/20-21/033:** DTLPs to email their feedback to the Dean.

GS/20-21/034 PG renewal update
The Dean noted that the project is currently dormant but will be re-engaged with during the Hilary Term. Ideas are forming and further updates will be coming up at forthcoming meetings.

XX   ### GS/20-21/035 AOB
There were none.

XX   ### Section B for noting and approval

GS/20-21/036 New course entry/exit/progression routes: Pg Cert and Pg Dip & Calendar III changes for 2021/22 (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies) to be added to existing
   (i)   **MPhil in Identities and Cultures of Europe**
   (ii)   **MPhil in Literary Translation**
   (iii)   **MPhil in Comparative Literature**
The committee noted that the School was seeking permission to diversify the structure of the three existing MPhils by introducing to each two new additional direct entry routes via two new courses (postgraduate certificate 1 year part time 30 ECTS and postgraduate diploma 1 year full time 60 ECTS) and two new exit routes from the postgraduate certificate and the postgraduate diploma respectively. Two new progression routes were also proposed namely from Postgraduate Certificate (year 1) part-time to Postgraduate Diploma Top up (year 2) part-time to MPhil Top up (year 3) part-time or from Postgraduate Diploma (year 1) full-time to MPhil Top up (year 2) part-time, and two new attainment awards i.e. Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma. The new structure will not have an exit award of postgraduate certificate from the full time postgraduate diploma or the existing Masters.

Concern was raised whether the AR can accommodate the proposed new additional entry and exit routes systems-wise. Some members with a similar composite course structure shared their challenges and those of the AR in implementing a similar set up. The Dean underlined that there were a number of PGT courses already in place with similar set ups. She will be holding a meeting with the AR later on in December to investigate the issues around implementation of this programme structure. The Director of Student Services expressed interest in participating in the meeting.

> **Decision GS/20-21/036**: The committee agreed to recommend the proposal to Council from 2021/22 noting the implementation concerns identified to be brought to the AR's attention for resolution.

The GSU President praised the AR's effort in recent weeks to assist PGR students in their late registration.

GS/20-21/037 English Language requirements (Duolingo English Test) for 2021
The committee noted a memorandum from Susan A. Power, Admissions Officer (Academic Registry) dated 18/11/20 seeking endorsement by the GSC to extend the current temporary acceptance of the online Duolingo English Test for a further year for 2021 entry for the duration of the pandemic.

A concern was raised by the DTLP from the School of Education that the 110 English language score set for Duolingo appears to be pitched too low as is evident from the under-performing Chinese students recruited to the score. The Dean clarified that the score will be reviewed.

> **Decision GS/20-21/037**: The committee agreed to recommend the proposal to Council from 2021/22 subject to the review of the current score upwards.

XX   Section C for noting
There were no agenda items for Section C to note.

There being no other business, the meeting ended at 11.50pm.

Prof. Martine Smith   Date: 3 December 2020