Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School
at 10am Thursday 9 November 2023

XX = Council relevance

Present (Ex officio):
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (*Chair*)

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Wladislaw Rivkin, Trinity Business School
Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry
Professor Ivana Dusparic, School of Computer Science and Statistics
Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science
Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education
Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Jennifer Edmond, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor Stefan Sint, School of Mathematics
Professor Catherine Darker, School of Medicine
Professor Micha Ruhl, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Professor Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics
Professor Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology
Professor Etain Tannam, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies
Professor Tara Mitchell, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy
Professor Erna O'Connor, School of Social Work & Social Policy

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)
Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services
Ms Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

In attendance for all items:
Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme
Ms Frances Leogue, IT support Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal items:

Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)
Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)

Not in attendance – Vacant:
Graduate Students' Union President
Graduate Students' Union Vice-President
Graduate student temporary nominated as GSC member (1)
Graduate student temporary nominated as GSC member (2)

Apologies:
Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Professor Rachel Mc Louglin, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
Professor Aileen Douglas, School of English
Professor David Prendergast, School of Law
Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services

Mr Michael John Flynn, Trinity Business School, for item GS/23-24/042

In attendance for individual items:
Prof. Louise Gorman, Trinity Business School, for item GS/23-24/042
Prof. Sven Anderson and Prof. Ruth Barton, School of Creative Arts, for item GS/23-24/043
Prof. Davide Romelli, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, for item GS/23-24/044
Prof. Mary Hughes (Lead, Work Package #6: Staff experience), for item GS/23-24/046
Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L), for item GS/23-24/048
Ms Patricia Murphy, Director and Chuck Rashleigh, SCS Outreach & Outcomes Coordinator (Student Counselling Services), for item GS/23-24/056

XX   Section A for Discussion and Decision

XX   GS/23-24/040 Minutes of GSC of 12 October 2023
The minutes were approved as circulated.

XX   GS/23-24/041 Matters Arising
The Dean advised members that all actions from the October meeting had been completed or attended to. The Dean also noted that all decisions, recommended at the previous meetings in September and October on Agenda A and B were approved by the last Council on 1 November. Matters arising were covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting. In addition, the Dean drew members' attention to the following:

> **Re Decision GS/23-24/026:** The committee endorsed the proposal that PGT courses clearly indicate on their promotional materials all costs associated with courses – The Dean requested that DTLPs pass this requirement to their Schools for implementation.

Re Action GS/23-24/033 (i): Members were asked to alert any PG student who might be in a financial difficulty to contact the Postgraduate Advisory Service. - The Dean asked DTLPs to disseminate the information on the available PG Assistance Fund in their Schools.

Re Decision GS/23-24/029: The committee endorsed for Council approval the proposed progression transfer between the traditional and the framework pathways on the Masters courses which run both pathways in parallel. – In response to a member's query, the Dean confirmed that progression from a stand-alone postgraduate diploma to a parallel framework offer of a Masters Top up should henceforth be possible to implement seamlessly at the Academic Registry end. The Dean asked for ongoing feedback from Schools to monitor the effectiveness of the new arrangement.

XX **GS/23-24/042 Course proposal: Postgraduate Certificate in Leading and Implementing Sustainable Finance - Prof. Louise Gorman and Mr Michael John Flynn on Zoom (TBS) to present**
The Dean invited Prof. Louise Gorman, a prospective course director, from the Trinity Business School to the meeting. Mr Michael Flynn was noted as absent. The Dean spoke to the power-point presentation on the course proposal. She noted that the 1 year part time postgraduate certificate with a relatively modest intake (min 5 EU and 5 non-EU students) comprising 5 modules totalling 30 ECTS is due to commence in September 2024. The proposed course addresses the growing need to finance business growth in a sustainable manner and adds to the suite of sustainability-focused offerings in the School. Such is the pace of regulatory development in the area of sustainable finance and corporate reporting that leaders in financial services and business must ensure they are sufficiently skilled and informed to act as guardians of financial, as well environmental and social, capital. The new course seeks therefore to attract professionals from industry as opposed to pre-experience learners. These are distinctly different cohorts, the latter being more inclined toward Masters programmes while the former tends to prefer bite-sized add-on qualifications due to time and other associated constraints that professionals encounter. The course is structured with core four 5 ECTS modules, and one 10 ECTS module. Consideration has been given to how to ensure rigorous assessment, reflecting the challenges of AI and the external reviewer, Prof. Gounopoulos from the University of Bath has commented favourably on the diversity and type of assessments proposed.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made, and issues raised:
(i)   Targeting recruitment at professionals from industry as opposed to pre-experience learners may require more reliance of the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy in case the applicants do not meet the 2.1 standard entry requirement. Prof. Gorman clarified that targeted experienced professionals are expected to comply with the minimum entry requirements of 2.1.
(ii)   In response to a query, Prof. Gorman clarified that the proposed Postgraduate Certificate format is better suited to the targeted learner profile and complements the School's evolving suite of executive education programmes, including the existing "sister" Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Development for Business. In time, the School hopes that the University agrees a flexible professional learner-focused 'stacking' architecture whereby professional learners can undertake two postgraduate certificates totalling 60 ECTS and add a research leadership Module of 30 ECTS that would in fact lead to the award of a Masters degree. If this architecture is agreed, the proposed programme would be a component of the new architecture. Moreover, the existing MSc in Finance has sustainability embedded within the majority of its modules such that any pre-experience learners in this area are already accommodated for.
(iii)   With respect to one fee for both EU and NEU students, Prof. Gorman clarified that based on the check undertaken across competitor programmes and from experience of the delivery of a

complimentary course - the Postgraduate Certificate in Sustainable Development for Business in the School, a fee of €8,500 has been determined as well within the norm charged. This is the fee structure similar to other postgraduate courses in the Trinity Business School postgraduate portfolio and that charged by competitor institutions. Students will be asked to attend a day and a half four times on campus during the academic year with the remaining delivery online.

(iv)   In terms of her own workload, Prof. Gorman explained that she will primarily focus of managing the course while only leading on one module and contributing to the delivery of another one. Representatives from industry partners will be involved in the delivery of the course with the exception of marking student assessments which will be carried out entirely by the academic staff from the School.

The Dean mentioned that the course proposal has already been favourably reviewed by an external reviewer. Members endorsed the proposal without any revisions.

> **Decision GS/23-24/042:** The committee endorsed the new course proposal for Council approval.

XX   GS/23-24/043 HCI 3 Course proposal: MPhil in Digital Arts and Intermedia Practices - Prof. Sven Anderson and Prof. Ruth Barton (School of Creative Arts) to present

The Dean invited Prof. Sven Anderson, a prospective course director, and Prof. Ruth Barton from the School of Creative Arts, to the meeting. She spoke to a power-point presentation on the course proposal. The launch of the course is supported through the Human Capital Initiative (HCI) Pillar 3 which aims to deliver an investment targeted towards increasing capacity in higher education in skills-focused programmes designed to meet priority skills needs. The Masters course in Digital Arts and Intermedia Practices is a new stand-alone programme to commence in September 2024. It builds on the international reputation of the School to explore intermedia and transmedia practices that critically engage with digital technology and infrastructure and their impact on society. It is aimed at creative practitioners interested in both theory- and practice-led research in creative technologies, including applications of augmented and virtual reality systems, AI and machine learning, mobile technologies, game design and public media interventions. It incorporates strong engagement with industry- and arts-based partners. It is offered as a blended programme, with up to 33% of the module options accessible remotely, but there is also a significant proportion of in-person engagement.

The course differs from but complements the existing MPhil in Music and Media Technology, the MSc in Interactive Digital Media and the MPhil in Digital Humanities and Culture. It is structured as either a full-time MPhil, with students taking 30 ECTS each semester followed by their dissertation, or part-time, with 40 ECTS taken in Year 1 and the remaining 20 ECTS plus the dissertation in Year 2. Each semester offers 2 mandatory modules and a choice from two electives. The research project can be achieved using a range of formats, as per the model approved the previous year by GSC. Good detail is provided on the steps taken to counter the challenges posed by generative AI (Gen-AI) to the integrity of assessments.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made, and issues raised:
(i)   Regarding a potential concern around staffing, specifically that Prof. Anderson is Module Co-Ordinator on four out of a total of nine modules, Prof. Barton explained that should there be a long-term absence for whatever reason, Module 9 (Independent Research Project) is offered by two other staff members, either of whom could step up and take over supervision and oversight of the module. Most of the content of the other three modules will be delivered by visiting industry speakers. Thus, it would only need a

replacement already involved in delivering the programme to deliver a few lectures and organise guest speakers at short notice.

(ii) The primary focus of the new course is to enhance students' creative skills in digital art practices without turning them into IT coding experts, and the recruitment message will be strongly enhanced in all outlets marketing the new course. The creative profile of the course looks therefore unique and market analysis appears to reveal strong demand for it in both national and international domains especially in North America. The programme's interdisciplinary structure links digital art practices with topical issues, considering the impact of the digital (as constituted by technologies, practices, and cultures) on civic life, urban governance, social interaction, freedom of information and states of crisis.

(iii) In response to a query on the level of engagement with industry partners, Prof. Barton clarified that the new course includes active partnerships with contemporary arts institutions including The Douglas Hyde Gallery. It leverages an additional core partnership with The Dock, Accenture's global innovation hub. It also links students with local digital design practices, including the urban media studio Algorithm.

(iv) The new course addresses the School's long-term objectives to establish a Masters in digital arts thereby supporting students whose work spans different media. The programme also responds to current cultural policy, as the Arts Council of Ireland is launching its first Digital Arts Policy at some point in November.

(v) Potential for future collaboration across Schools should be explored especially, in relation to Interactive Digital Media and coding domains which could be offered as electives. However, given a relatively low intake numbers targeted it would not be currently feasible for the School to offer additional electives.

The Dean mentioned that the course proposal is still to be reviewed by an external reviewer. Members endorsed the proposal without any revisions subject to a favourable external report.

> **Decision GS/23-24/043:** The committee endorsed the new course proposal for Council approval subject to a favourable external report.

XX GS/23-24/044 HCI 1 Course proposal: Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Economics and Big Data - Prof. Davide Romelli (School of Social Sciences and Philosophy) to present

The Dean invited Prof. Davide Romelli from the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, a prospective course director, to the meeting. She spoke to a power-point presentation on the course proposal. She noted that it is an HCI-based programme enabled by additional funding released earlier in the 2023 year for a one-year 2024/25 window for specific targeted projects. As an HCI-funded programme, careful consideration has been given to external stakeholder engagement, and career planning in its design. The proposal sets out how the course differs from other cognate programmes offered within the university and externally. With respect to the purpose, the new course bridges the gap between academic learning and real-world demands, equipping graduates with advanced Big Data analytics for applied economics, and thereby responding to the rising need in economics and policy making to ensure that graduates are industry-ready with a robust sought-after skill set for the economics and social challenges in the digital age. The course provides a unique offering for applied economists needed in private, public, and non-profit sectors. It leverages the department's expertise in quantitative research and its international reputation.

The course is composed of thirteen primarily 5 ECTS modules, with two 10 ECTS offerings, all of which are compulsory. Twelve of the modules are taught by staff from the Department of Economics and one by a staff member from the Department of Political Science. Seven of the modules are entirely new while six are partially shared with other cohorts of students. Five modules are the

responsibility of a new Assistant Professor to be appointed using the HCI-secured funding which will also support hiring a full-time teaching fellow to manage the extensive use of weekly continuous assignments.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made, and issues raised:

(i) It has been noticed that in spite of the strong market analysis, there is only commitment in the proposal to offer the course for one year. The sustainability of the programme beyond 2024/25 once the HCI funding has finished will be determined based on ongoing market interest and may result in some adjustments to fees. It is hoped that the course will continue into the future, but it will need to be offered for at least two years i.e., 2024/25 and 2025/26 given the marketing requirements to advertise the course in the academic year prior to the targeted recruitment year.

(ii) The DTLP from the School of Computer Science and Statistics confirmed that the statistics focus in the proposal was economics-centered rather than generic and therefore the course will not complete with their current postgraduate programme in Statistics.

(iii) It has been noted that no exit award at the postgraduate certificate level from the stand alone postgraduate diploma is currently available but the issue of instituting such an award is being considered under the PG Renewal project.

The Dean advised that the course proposal has been reviewed by an external reviewer. Members endorsed the proposal without any revisions subject to the proposer addressing the feedback from the external report.

> **Decision GS/23-24/044:** The committee endorsed the new course proposal for Council approval subject to the proposer addressing the feedback from the external report.

After the withdrawal of the course proposers a few general comments from the Dean and the floor were made:

(i) The Dean made a general comment that the course proposals going through this term have paid due attention to risks related to the possible use of generative AI by students in their assessment. She underlined however that more specific approaches will be required to constructively navigate AI-issues related to assessments in each discipline.

(ii) An issue of how "space" is addressed in current course proposals has been raised, and concern articulated that it should be dealt with more thoroughly. The Dean suggested that under the proposed new two-stage course approval process a new rubric might be provided for the Head of School to comment not only if they support the new course proposal but also that even though they support the new course proposal it cannot proceed as there is insufficient space in the School to accommodate new students.

(iii) A query was put forward whether some analysis of the grounds on which postgraduate courses have been withdrawn in recent years should be undertaken so that lessons could be learned as to what "worked" and what "did not work". The Dean noted that by comparison to the number of new courses approved annually only a very small number of requests to cease existing courses are considered. The proposed new cyclical review of existing offerings should enable a constructive reflection on the issue.

XX   GS/23-24/045 PGR Horizon 1: Recommendations from WP#6 – Memorandum on integration of adjunct staff into university community – Prof. Mary Hughes (Lead, Work Package #6: Staff experience) to present

The Agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

XX   GS/23-24/046 PGR Horizon 1: Recommendations from WP#6 – Memorandum on management of conflict resolution in supervisor-research student relationship - Prof. Mary Hughes (Lead, Work Package #6: Staff experience) to present

The Dean invited Prof. Mary Hughes (Lead, Work Package #6: Staff experience) to speak to a presentation related to the circulated memorandum on management of conflict resolution in supervisor-research student relationship. Prof. Hughes listed Trinity internal policies, guidelines and procedures, data from the College-wide PG Renewal Programme's Consultation Survey and focus groups conducted in 2021/22, and the consultation with the members of Work Packages WP#2 (Research) and WP#5 (Student Experience) on interdependencies to leverage learnings and agree a joint approach to the task of compiling the guidelines. The PG Renewal Consultation Survey revealed strong support for written guidelines, tailored mediation supports and standardized supervision agreements. When compared to other IUA HEIs, it was noted that only two universities have implemented guidelines for conflict resolution in supervision, and that a Code of Conduct was available in UCD. Internationally, Conflict Resolution Guidelines are generally widely available, information and hyperlinks can be found on websites, and a Conflict Ombudsman is in place in a university in Germany.

Prof. Hughes called out the proposed recommendations to be progressed in the coming year under Horizon 2:
1. The creation of institutional guidelines (and associated training) for managing conflict in the student-supervisor relationship, which will include a process flowchart in which each stage is adequately supported by appropriate university policies and guidelines.
2. The development of a code of conduct guideline to set the University's expectations for standards of behaviour and professional boundaries in the supervisor and research student relationship.
3. To explore making an independent Mentor available for students and supervisors negotiating conflict in the student-supervisor relationship.
4. The development of mediation supports for resolving such conflicts within the respective School and Faculty (e.g., provision of a conflict Ombudsman for each faculty).
5. The provision of training to both supervisor and student, and consideration of requirements for engagement and participation.

Prof. Hughes concluded that in the interim and until the above resources have been fully explored, Work Package #6 recommends the development and inclusion of the following online resources to be available on the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies website and in the Research Student Handbook:
1) Guidance for resolving difficulties in the supervisor and research student relationship (to include information about the current sources of support for students and staff).
2) A conflict management toolkit (a conflict resolution checklist and a decision tree).

Prof. Hughes asked for members' approval of the recommendations and interim arrangements so they can progress to Council.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made, and issues raised:
(i)   A suggestion was advanced that a thesis committee could also play a pastoral role when a conflict arises rather than introducing another separate function of an Independent Mentor. A counter-suggestion noted that the thesis committee should have a strictly academic focus.
(ii)   A query has arisen as to the role of DTLP in a conflict between the student and the supervisor and a suggestion was made that such a role should be described in the guidelines. A threshold for escalation to the ombudsman should be established and an

HR mandatory or advisory training should be provided for Schools as an underpinning package.

(iii) Concern was expressed that asking an academic to take on a mentoring role in a student-supervisor conflict might impact on that academic's professional relationship with their colleagues in the School, and therefore such a role should be external to the School. Academics may not be professionally qualified to step in to effectively deal with student-supervisor conflict management.

In conclusion, members endorsed the proposed five recommendations and interim arrangements to progress to Council.

> **Decision GS/23-24/046:** The committee endorsed the proposed five recommendations and interim arrangements to progress to Council.

XX **GS/23-24/047 PGR monthly update (November) – Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director to present**

Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director, gave a brief overview of PG Renewal key achievements since the last meeting listed on the circulated monthly slide for November. Some items on the slide were taken as Agenda items under PG Renewal while others were reported on as continuing in progress or finalised. PG Renewal Programme Director stated that Horizon 1 is nearing completion in December and a summary of its achievements is uploaded on the website. A closing report will be submitted to the January GSC. Horizon 2 has already started. A call will be open the following week for applications to the new Trinity Research Doctoral Awards for 2024/25 via a designated website and a communication to that effect will be sent out. Dr Ríonnagh Sheridan (WP#1) would have issued an invitation to DTLPs to discuss eligibility criteria for the supervision of the research component of the PGT Masters courses and a scope of the new cyclical review.

XX **GS/23-24/048 Revision of the Programme Handbook Policy review - Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)**

The Dean invited Dr Elizabeth Donnellan, Education Policy Developer, to speak to the policy review proposal. The Education Policy Developer noted that the Programme Handbook Policy has been updated annually since its original approval in 2018 incorporating feedback from Schools and reflecting changes to College regulations and strategic initiatives. The Policy was last reviewed in 2020.

A new two-stage process was being proposed as the current review. Firstly, members were asked to consider a number of proposed changes such as inclusion of new wording in Appendix 1 to reflect developments in the use of generative AI, removal of links to the Trinity Coronavirus webpages from Appendix 1 and from the School Handbook Template, inclusion of new wording in the Policy and corresponding Programme Handbooks directing students to use accessible fonts when producing their written material, and removal of the reference and links to the Graduate Students' Union from the School Handbook Template. Secondly, in addition to the proposed changes, members were invited to consider whether additional amendments should be required to the Policy and the Handbook Templates, and to consult with colleagues locally with a view to engaging with a "bottom-up" approach to the Policy update. Feedback should be provided via a designated MS Form on how well the Policy is working, what barriers there are to its further implementation and what further enhancements can be suggested. The revised Policy incorporating all the feedback will be brought back to the committee for a final discussion in Hilary Term 2024.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made, and issues and queries raised:

(i)   In terms of the timeline, the Education Policy Developer clarified that the online form will be open until mid-December and the January GSC should receive the final submission of the revised policy.

(ii)   A member asked a question with reference to the use of Gen-AI as part of the Appendix 1. The Dean noted that some Schools have already developed guidelines for their disciplines while others have not, and therefore the template will have a rubric for School/Discipline-specific information as no College-wide guidelines are available yet. How Gen-AI can be constructively used from the College-wide principles is still to be determined. While transparency is required of students to state if they used Gen-AI in their work, there are no robustly reliable tools available to detect AI-generated content. The Dean concluded that the only reliable prevention against the unwarranted use of Gen-AI by students is a well-designed AI-proof assessment ensuring that the work is from the student, and the University can stand over the student's award.

In conclusion, members endorsed the proposed two-stage Programme Handbook Policy review to be submitted to Council.

Decision GS/23-24/048: The committee endorsed for Council approval the proposed two stage revision process to the Programme Handbook Policy.

Action GS/23-24/048: The DTLPs to consult locally with academic colleagues the proposed changes and provide suggestions for additional revisions to the Policy and the handbook templates via a designated MS Form.

XX   GS/23-24/049 Any Other Business

(i)   Thesis in 3 competition – Dean of Graduate Studies to update
Re **Action GS/23-24/033 (iii):** The Dean noted that Trinity has a reserve allocation of ten places for PGR students to attend the forthcoming first inaugural national Thesis in 3 Competition event in the RIA in Dawson Street. It was agreed that an open invitation to PGR students be sent out by the Dean without approaching any individual students and putting them under pressure and expectation to attend.

Action GS/23-24/049 (i): The Dean to send an open invitation to all PGR students to attend the forthcoming inaugural national event "Thesis in 3 Competition" in the RIA.

(ii)   Trinity Postgraduate Travel Reimbursement Fund - Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary (Graduate Education, TT&L) to update
The Academic Secretary (Graduate Education, TT&L) advised that additional funding has been secured in 2023/24 to continue for another few years to support more PGR students towards covering their travel cost, including attending overseas events, related to conference attendance. The Dean asked DTLPs to encourage PGR students to apply for the funding. She also noted that Schools are required to make a small contribution as a precondition to the student application being considered. Members noted that the requirement might be an obstacle as Disciplines have very tight budgets. The Dean clarified that the contribution could come from a research account and its level could be reviewed.

Action GS/23-24/049 (ii): DTLPs to encourage PGR students to apply for Trinity PG Travel Reimbursement Fund.

(iii)   VLE Working Group update
The Dean noted that the current license agreement with Blackboard is up for renewal this year,

and a review of the VLE requirements will be undertaken. A Working Group has been established to identify the Academic, User and Technical requirements of any future VLE for Trinity. DTLPs were asked to identify one key School contact to engage in discussions with the Working Group, chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies in conjunction with the Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies, on the academic requirements specific to their School. Without that designated colleague the DTLP becomes the default contact in the School to whom the requirement surveys will be forwarded.

Action GS/23-24/049 (iii): DTLPs identify one key School contact to engage in discussions on the academic requirements specific to their School; names to be submitted to genadgso@tcd.ie by Friday 17 November.

(iv)   Timing of Confirmation Process.

The Dean noted that the Calendar part III stipulates that the Confirmation Process is normally completed by 18 months in Year 2 for FT PGR students (30 months for PT students). This would align with the end of February for September registrants. The current timing of confirmation process is a historical legacy set up when there was no formal end-of-year 1 evaluation. Some Schools have an established practice of scheduling confirmation events slightly later in the year. The relevance of the specific timing has acquired special importance with an introduction of a formalized progression process underpinned by processes in the AR and reflected in the PowerBI reports accessible to all supervisors. Before the new deadline can be confirmed, DTLPs' input was sought as it will be difficult to change later any dates set now. WP#2 will shortly circulate an email to DTLPs, seeking their 'vote' on the options.

In a short discussion which ensued, some preference was articulated for a deadline falling within termtime, a deadline being aligned to the PGR assessment period, recognition that March entrants will have their own deadline, understanding that a clear decision for the PGR student to progress to year 3 on the PhD register must be available before the deadline with sufficient margin of time for initially unsuccessful students to come back for a repeat assessment with corrections enabling progression, that the current February deadline as being too early should be replaced perhaps by a one in April or June rather than in the summer. A resulting Calendar change might therefore be required. The Dean concluded the discussion by inviting Schools to notify her of their preferred deadlines for that information to be subsequently checked for feasibility with the AR to change students' records in a timely manner to enable students to make the registration deadline and preventing them from being recorded as "withdrawn" thereby blocking their stipend.

Action GS/23-24/049 (iv): Ewa Adach from WP#2 to email Schools seeking their preferred new deadline, separately for September and March entrants, for concluding PhD confirmation process.

(v)   PGR external examiners

The Dean referred to a recent instance where on the Council list of students to be awarded a PhD, two students had their theses examined by the same external examiner, thereby breaching the current regulations which do not allow the same external examiner to examine the thesis in the same School within a three-year window and within five years for the same supervisor. She acknowledged that it is difficult for Schools to keep accurate track of external examiners. Historically such data was held centrally in the AR. The Dean preferred that the information on nominations be held locally in Schools allowing its prompt retrieval. A member suggested that a School's invitation

to a candidate to be nominated as a new external examiner (prior to formal nomination), could include an additional form seeking disclosure from the candidate when, if ever, was the last time they carried out PhD examination duties in the School.

> **Action GS/23-24/049 (v):** Graduate Studies to propose template questions for potential external examiners to confirm whether and/or when they previously examined a research dissertation or thesis within the same School.

XX   Section B for Noting and Decision

XX   GS/23-24/050 Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy - further minor revisions – Memorandum from the Dean of Graduate Studies

The committee noted two minor revisions to the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy (originally endorsed by the GSC on the 14th September 2023 (GS/23-24/003)) arising from its subsequent consideration by the Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC) on the 19th September 2023 namely,

(i)   The definition of a standalone module (as per the curriculum glossary) has been included in section 7.3 (page 6) of the Policy.

(ii)   The layout of Appendix 1 has been changed to a more clearly outline of the approval process for changes to individual curricular elements.

These further two revisions were endorsed by USC on the 17th October 2023.

> **Decision GS/23-24/050 :** The committee recommended for Council approval the two minor revisions endorsed by USC on the 17th October 2023 to the Programme and Curriculum Design and Approval Policy.

XX   GS/23-24/051 Amendments to Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning modules (10/5 ECTS) for PhD students – Memorandum from Sorcha Mulcahy, Acting Director (Trinity Careers Service)

Members noted that two changes are to be implemented from 2023/24 to the 10 ECTS module on *Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning* (CPR 2601 CW) and a complementary shorter 5 ECTS module (CRP 2600 CE) for PhD students endorsed by GSC in May 2020. The modules are delivered by the Trinity Careers Service starting in January each year from the 2021/22 academic year and will run for a third time in the 2023/24 academic year. The committee endorsed the changes sought so that

(i)   Both modules can be made available to 1st year PhD students. To date, they have only been available to PhD students in their 2nd year or higher.

(ii)   One of the assessments (common to both modules) can be changed such that rather than 10% of the overall mark being awarded for the production of a group poster, the 10% will be awarded for presentation of the poster by the group at a showcase and networking event organised by the Careers Service.

> **Decision GS/23-24/051:** The committee recommended for Council approval the two changes sought by the Careers Service to their two *Careers, Employability and Work-based Learning modules* (CPR 2601 CW and CRP 2600 CE) from January 2024.

XX   GS/23-24/052 GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials - Draft Minutes of 23 October 2023 and Memorandum from Lizzie Whitcher, Secretary to GSC sub-committee on Micro- credentials

The draft minutes of the GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials dated the 23rd October 2023 were circulated to members noting the approved two 5 ECTS Level 9 micro-credential proposals to commence in Semester 1, 2024/25 (i.e., "Climate Leadership Development in the School of Natural Sciences and "Practical Frameworks for Innovation" in Tangent), and the grounds on which four others were rejected.

> **Decision GS/23-24/052:** The committee recommended for Council approval the draft minutes of GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials on the 23rd October 2023.

XX   Section C for Noting

XX   GS/23-24/053 PGR: Completion of Delivery Closing Reports from Work Package #5 (Student Experience)
   a) **PGR Skills for Success**
   b) **Language Support: Welcome Guide**
   c) **Plagiarism: Information in Handbooks**

Ms Breda Walls, the Director of Student Services, briefly spoke to the three reports detailing the PG Renewal Completion of Delivery Closing Reports from Work Package #5 (Student Experience) covering "PGR Skills for Success course", **"**Language Support: Welcome Guide" and "Plagiarism: Information in Handbooks" which were circulated for noting to members. The Welcome Guide is a new resource for staff and students.

GS/23-24/054 LERU October 2023 meeting - Dean of Graduate Studies to update
The Dean noted that the last LERU meeting in October focused on enhancing PhD recruitment in terms of not only increasing numbers but also reflecting on how best to identify potential in applicants. This is a new way of looking at the recruitment process which currently emphasises the applicant's achievements to date rather than their potential for growth in the future. The Dean might offer a supervision slot on the topic. DTLPs were invited to contact the Dean as a group with any issues that might benefit from being brought to a LERU meeting for discussion.

> **Action GS/23-24/054:** DTLPs to contact the Dean as a group with any issues that might benefit from being brought to a LERU meeting for discussion.

GS/23-24/055 Academic Integrity review - Dean of Graduate Studies to update
The Dean noted that the Academic Integrity Steering Group met the day before and focused on the overall success of the recent AI Awareness Week which had very well attended large scale events and under-attended small workshops some of which had to be cancelled. The group also reflected on the effectiveness of the new process for capturing academic breaches and how accurately students with infringements are being tracked in terms of their past records as the "penalty" decisions are calibrated by past transgressions. There is currently no straightforward mechanism in place to ensure accuracy of past record, potential solutions are being identified. Some proposal for a final or interim solution should come before the committee in March.

GS/23-24/056 Student Mental Health is all of our business: who is most at-risk and what can staff do to help? – Presentation by Trish Murphy, Director of Student Counselling Services, & Chuck Rashleigh, SCS Outreach & Outcomes Coordinator (Student Counselling Services)
The invited Student Counselling Staff spoke to the presentation "Who is most at-risk and what can I do to help?" originally delivered to staff on 12 October 2023 as part of Mental Health Week which clashed with the Graduate Studies Committee meeting in October. In the context of ever more

Revised after the GSC on 7 December 2023.

diversified student body resulting in increasing numbers of students seeking support from the Services, the presentation focused on how also academic staff could be trained up to adequately respond to behavioural manifestations associated with student mental health difficulties. The presentation covered issues such as which students are most at-risk in Trinity and how staff can best be made alert to signs of students in distress. The DTLPs were asked to engage with the SCS on student mental health needs, and disseminate in their Schools the staff training "Identifying & Responding to Distressed & At-risk students" available on Blackboard

> **Action: GS/23-24/056:** The committee members were asked to engage with the SCS on student mental health needs and disseminate in their Schools the staff two-module training "Identifying & Responding to Distressed & At-risk students" (Authors: Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland, Higher Education Authority) available on Blackboard https://tcd.blackboard.com/ultra/courses/_82143_1/cl/outline

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.40pm.

Prof. Martine Smith   Date: 9 November 2023

Revised after the GSC on 7 December 2023.