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 7 December 2023

XX = Council relevance

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

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:
Professor Rachel McLoughlin, School of Biochemistry & Immunology
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 Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education
Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering
Professor Aileen Douglas, School of English
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology
Professor Jennifer Edmond, School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies
Professor David Prendergast, School of Law
Professor Kathleen McTiernan, School of Linguistic, Speech & Communication Sciences
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
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent

Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)
Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office
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)

Postgraduate representatives – attendance for all items:
Mr Rory O'Sullivan
Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo

Not in attendance – Vacant:
Graduate Students' Union President
Graduate Students' Union Vice-President

Apologies:
Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)
Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience

In attendance for individual items:
Mr Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager (PG Renewal), for item GS/23-24/064
Prof. Ashley Clements (Co-Lead, Work Package #1: PG Taught), for item GS/23-24/067
Prof. Richard Porter (Dean of Students), and Ms Roisin Smith (Quality Officer) for item GS/23-24/068

The Dean of Graduate Studies introduced Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo and Mr Rory O'Sullivan, two new postgraduate representatives, to the committee, and thanked Prof. Frédérique Vallieres, School of Psychology DTLP, and Prof. Aileen Douglas, School of English DTLP, for their contributions to the meetings as their terms are finishing in December.

XX   Section A

XX   GS/23-24/057 Minutes of GSC of 9 November 2023
The minutes were approved with an amendment to GS/23-24/046 requiring an inclusion of a 5th recommendation listed in the memorandum from Prof. Mary Hughes which was called out at the November meeting.

A query was also raised in relation to GS/23-24/049 (v). The Dean clarified that the candidate can only be appointed to the role of external examiner if they were not in that role in College for the preceding three years or in the same School for the preceding five years. That information will be sourced directly from the candidate at the School level by requiring them to self-declare the relationship with the School on a designated template to be provided to Schools by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The aim is to ensure impartiality that there is no perception that the School has built up a relationship between academics and external examiners.

XX   GS/23-24/058 Matters Arising

The Dean advised members that all actions from the November meeting had been completed or attended to. The Dean also noted that all decisions, recommended at the previous meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by the last Council on 29 November. Matters arising were covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting. In particular the Dean drew members' attention to GS/23-24/049 (i) Thesis in 3 inaugural competition which was won by a Trinity student.

XX   GS/23-24/059 Revisions to the Research Supervision (RS) Award requirements - Prof. Jennifer Edmond to update

The Dean invited Prof. Edmond to speak to the proposed main changes to the revised Research Supervision Award template. Prof. Edmond called out a new Question 10 on how the supervisor supports the mental health of their students and Question 11 advising that two individuals recommended by the nominee will be contacted for further feedback for each application. She clarified that the question asking about students' careers over and beyond the PhD period was removed as members of the working group were concerned the data would be difficult to gather. Dr Edmond also clarified that once the draft is approved by the committee, it will be considered by the Data Protection Officer and student consultation is planned. The Dean noted that the final form needs to be approved by Council in mid-January in order for the RS Award to be rolled out, and hence the consultation process will have to be completed by that deadline and the GSC will be asked to endorse the final form by email.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:
(i)   The colleague assessment section: Question 1 on the impression of the nominated colleague as a supervisor was deemed too subjective. Question 2 appears to be subsumed in Question 3. Three criteria a research supervisor should seek to fulfil – listed at the top of the cover page – should be repeated in the nominating colleague section to be commented on.
(ii)   The student input into the form: It appears that there is less space for students to provide their input in comparison to the space allowed for the feedback in the academic colleague assessment section. Ranking on the 1 to 5 scale in the student section should be replaced by open-ended questions. A number of questions are too guided determining the focus of the student feedback which should be broader and decided by the student. The word count should be provided for open-ended questions.
(iii)   The Dean clarified that the student feedback is as important as that provided by an academic colleague and the student section can be expanded as required for more text in Word. An additional rubric can be added to the student section on providing further information if deemed important by the student. The experience from having run the award in previous two years has indicated that the level of detail students provide in open-ended questions varies considerably and extensive comments come against limited answers making evaluation of applications difficult for the committee.
(iv)   Question 10 in the colleague assessment form should include "wellbeing" under the student "mental health" heading asking the supervisor how they support the student. A parallel question in the student section should also be included for the student to comment on to reconcile the supervisor's perspective with the student's experience.
(v)   The Dean clarified that the supervisor cannot self-nominate but is nominated as a result of a call put out to students and is then asked whether they would like to make an application. Supervisors only choose one student from those who support their application to provide feedback on their application form.
(vi)   Prof. Edmond noted that while revising the form the working group did not consider the issue whether questions should be mandatory or optional. She explained that the ranking scale as an explicitly quantitative measure enables the committee to compare candidates from disparate disciplines more effectively than it would be possible on narrative feedback.

The Dean extended thanks to Prof. Edmond and the working group. She concluded that the revised RS Award application will hopefully be only slightly modified as a result of further consultations with the Data Protection Officer and PGR students before it is considered by email by GSC for endorsement to proceed to the January Council.

> **Decision GS/23-24/059:** The committee endorsed that the RS Award application form go through the outstanding stages of the consultation process with a view to being subsequently considered by email by GSC and progress for Council approval in January.

> **Action GS/23-24/059:** The RS Award application form to be revised on foot of the members' feedback and proceed to further consultations with the Data Protection Officer and PGR students.

XX   GS/23-24/060 PGR monthly update (December) – 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 listed on the monthly slide for December representing the final monthly report on Horizon 1 which ends on the 31st December. The slide also contained information on Horizon 2 as both phases have been running in parallel in Semester 1. Some items on the slide were taken as Agenda items under PG Renewal (e.g., Horizon 2 work plan and the "Sanctuary" award) while others were reported on as continuing in progress or finalised.

The PG Renewal Programme Director highlighted some activities in particular referring to the current benchmarking against comparator HEIs for organizational structures for PGR students and indicated that a report will come before the committee early in the new year. The Curriculum work package will roll out on a pilot basis in collaboration with Academic Affairs (TT&L) a two-phased process for approval of new PGT course proposals. Horizon 2 work has commenced on creating a framework to capture multi-dimensional skill sets for PGR students and to develop guidelines on conflict management within the supervision relationship, as well as integration of adjunct staff into the College academic community.

A Horizon 1 final report will be brought to the January Council and in advance of that it is proposed that the final draft will be forwarded to members by email before the Christmas break seeking their endorsement. The final report will have the same structure which underpinned the interim report submitted to the June Council. Subject to Council approval the report reflecting Horizon 1 achievements will be celebrated at a special event on the 17th January with Schools and GSC members.

> **Decision GS/23-24/060:** The committee approved that the final draft of the Horizon 1 final report be endorsed by email to proceed to the January Council for approval.

XX   GS/23-24/061 Horizon 1: Guidelines for teaching and learning activities provided by PGR students – Memorandum and paper from Professor Rachel McLoughlin (Work Package #2 Lead - PG Research) to present

The Dean invited Prof. Rachel McLoughlin, the WP2 Lead, to speak on Zoom to three Horizon 1 outputs on the agenda. Prof. McLoughlin commenced her presentations with the guidelines for teaching and learning activities provided by PGR students. She explained that this is a framework document to underpin the actual set of guidelines to be developed later in the year as Horizon 2 deliverable. Prof. McLoughlin noted that the first framework went before the committee towards the end of the previous academic year, and even though it received a broad welcome, concerns were later raised in relation to a potential under-valuing of the pedagogical development

opportunities afforded through teaching experiences in the language of the proposal. Since then, WP2 has engaged in further consultations with four School DTLPs, resulting in a revised document. The proposed guidelines will provide clarity to Schools on what is "permissible" under the Calendar wording that states that Heads of School can allocate responsibilities to PGR students "as appropriate". They will specify the nature of expectations, the maximum number of hours allowed, the available training and explain how the student's performance in the role is monitored. Subsequently, a set of guidelines will be developed based on the framework. The guidelines will be provided centrally with an accompanying template to be adapted to local needs by Schools to allow them to allocate teaching opportunities to best support their programmes. The guidelines will ensure a consistent baseline across College ensuring transparency and comparability of opportunities for all PGR students in teaching contributions. The ask of the committee is to endorse the framework for Council approval.

In a discussion which ensued the following issues were raised:
(i)   The framework does not "disallow" but discourages allocation of Masters level teaching responsibilities to PGR students. However, a small amount of teaching at Masters level might be beneficial to the PGR student development especially at the advanced stage of the PhD. It was agreed that the language within the proposal should make explicit additional consideration required when considering PGR students for teaching at the Masters level.
(ii)   The annual limit on teaching time by PGR students is mandated by Revenue which permits only 150 hours within the twelve months' cycle of 52 weeks without tax-free stipend implications. Advice on the Revenue requirements is provided in College by the Financial Services Division, Payroll Services and HR. It was noted that an additional complication for non-EU students is the importance of ensuring that their teaching commitments do not compromise their visa status. This information should be included in the guidelines.
(iii)   There is often a lack of clarity about whether Schools offer payment for student preparation time associated with teaching activities. The framework specifies that students are discouraged from allocating excessive hours to tutorial preparation if there is no payment for those hours. The Dean explained that students may not be aware that the rate they are being paid incorporates the preparation time. The framework aims to ensure that there is transparency at the School level in relation to what the student is paid for. Schools should outline to students the pay in terms of teaching, marking and preparation from the outset so that students' expectations are clearly set, and they do not do more than it is required.
(iv)   Teaching opportunities need to be clearly advertised to PGR students ensuring that they do not misconstrue them for a job vacancy but at the same time that they appreciate the opportunity and can be confident of a fair and transparent selection process.
(v)   Should PGR students have responsibility for setting tutorial topics? The Dean clarified that even though PGR students frequently avail of teaching opportunities to enhance their own skills and may benefit from some autonomy in organisation of that teaching, responsibility for the academic integrity of the module lies with the module coordinator and the course director. Hence the extent of PGR student autonomy is limited, commensurate with their level of responsibility for the module.

Decision GS/23-24/061: The committee endorsed the proposed framework for the guidelines to be developed under Horizon 2 for Council approval.

Action GS/23-24/061: The framework to be revised on foot of the members' feedback before it goes to the next Council.

XX GS/23-24/062 Horizon 1: Proposal to recognise teaching and learning supports provided by PGR students – Memorandum and paper from Professor Rachel McLoughlin (Work Package #2 Lead - PG Research) to present

Prof. McLoughlin noted that the item is connected to the previous one. For some time, PGR students have expressed interest in having their contributions formally recognized in a way that enables them to evidence their teaching externally. Prof. McLoughlin's memorandum outlined the benchmarking results of international and national HEIs and practices already taking place in some Schools in College. She also referred to the UK-based fellowship scheme "Advance HE", dedicated to championing teaching excellence. It offers professional recognition in teaching through its Fellowship scheme. Horizon 2 will further look into the Fellowship whether Trinity should join the scheme. In Ireland, some HEIs are already members but while Trinity is currently not an institutional member of "Advance HE", individuals can still apply directly for Fellowship recognition through "Advance HE" with an associated fee.

Prof. McLoughlin referred to another notable practice emerging from the benchmarking exercise which involves the use of unique researcher identifiers, such as ORCID ID, included on the researchers' CVs. ORCID ID offers researchers a method for linking their research activities and outputs to their unique identifier providing a reliable platform to showcase publications, grants, teaching experience and employment history. At Trinity, the Research Support System (RSS) permits postgraduate students to document their teaching responsibilities within the RSS CV section under "Teaching interests and responsibilities" but it is not likely that the opportunity is currently widely used by students. Additionally, the RSS profile allows for the inclusion of an ORCID ID, facilitating seamless updates across both profiles.

In the absence of a formal system to recognise the teaching contributions of PGR students, a "Certificate of Teaching Contributions/Demonstrating provided by a Postgraduate Research Student" could be introduced as an interim voluntary measure in Trinity controlled by the student. Prof. McLoughlin talked members through the proposed downloadable Certificate template to be filled out by the student and signed by relevant module coordinator. Such a Certificate will formally evidence the student teaching, can be appended to the student CV and used as a reference confirming the student teaching without the need for the module coordinator to write a reference. It is suggested that the proposal implies no additional workload for the School. The approval for the Certificate as an interim measure was sought from the committee. The WP2 also plans to engage with the Academic Practice to promote existing resources and platforms to enhance the teaching skills of PGR students.

In response to a query, Prof. McLoughlin explained that the Certificate is being proposed in response to employers' seeking formal evidence from students in terms of the teaching they carried out. The Dean noted that there is no obligation on the student to use the Certificate as it is entirely voluntary. A suggestion was made that the Certificate could offer on one page a list of multiple modules taught by the student so that the combined record can be submitted to the employer. The Dean concluded the discussion by noting that the investigation into the issue has brought to light numerous local practices in Schools, such as local teaching awards, teaching excellence in disciplines and evaluations of teaching assistants, helping students evidence the quality of their teaching for their future careers.

Prof. McLoughlin summed up Horizon 2 Recommendations for endorsement by the committee as follows:
1) To engage with Academic Practice to discuss opportunities;
   i) to enhance formal recognition of PGR students who complete two modules for Graduate Teaching Assistants;

ii)　　　to enhance access to the 15 ECTs Special Purpose Certificate in Teaching, Learning & Assessment for Academic Practice to PG research students;

iii)　　　to identify the resource requirements to scale (i) and (ii) above.

2) To promote RSS and ORCID ID as platforms to showcase students' teaching experience.

3) To carry out cost/benefit analysis of institutional membership with Advance HE.

Decision GS/23-24/062: The committee endorsed the proposed Certificate and the three Horizon 2 recommendation for Council approval.

Action GS/23-24/062: The proposed Certificate to be revised in line with members' feedback before it goes to the next Council for approval.

XX　**GS/23-24/063 Horizon 1: Guidelines for Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees – Memorandum and paper from Professor Rachel McLoughlin (Work Package #2 Lead - PG Research) to present**

Prof. McLoughlin spoke to a newly developed proposed set of guidelines to support recently revised Terms of Reference related to Thesis Committees, their composition and their roles approved by Council towards the end of the previous year. Both documents are intended to be read together. Prof. McLoughlin referred to the forthcoming Calendar change related to the current historical reference to the confirmation process taking place at 18 months for FT and 30 months for PT students. In a recent survey on the most appropriate date for completion of the confirmation process, a significant majority voted in favour of setting the 30th June as an absolute deadline for September registrants and the 31st January for March registrants. It follows that all progress review elements i.e., annual progress review for Years 1 and 3 and confirmation process for Year 2 students, would fall due on the same date – a streamlining benefit for students and academics in Schools and for the Academic Registry. The new dates should systematise progressing PGR students timewise on the understanding that they are the absolute final dates but any School with an already established earlier completion date can continue with its local deadlines.

In a discussion which ensued the following issues were raised:

1) The role of DTLP is chairing the confirmation process. Prof. McLoghlin clarified that the DTLP needs to sign off on the confirmation process of every student but as it might not be possible for a DTLP to chair every confirmation process in a particular School due to a potentially significant number of PhD students, a DTLP designate would take on the role as an independent Chair.

2) A particular situation in the School of Computer Sciences and Statistics was discussed where there might be 30 to 40 PhD students going through the confirmation process in any given year. In such circumstances even identifying a designate might be onerous and therefore having an independent Chair is hardly feasible. The Dean suggested that an alternative work-around mechanism should be found and as an absolute minimum the School DTLP should be in a position to stand over the legitimacy of confirmation result even if they were not present at the confirmation meeting. A revised wording was suggested that "DTLP or the designate chairs but that one of the committee members can also be a chair" which would make the committee of three or two members respectively making room for the DTLP/designate to chair anticipated problematic situations while another committee member would ordinarily chair unproblematic ones. Prof. McLoughlin concluded with a suggestion for a revised wording that "the confirmation process can be chaired by the DTLP or their nominated representative who may be a member of the thesis committee" should provide the flexibility to ensure that when the DTLP is required they will be in place.

3) Prof. McLoughlin noted the membership of the thesis committee as approved by Council the previous year i.e., that the required number of independent academic members of Trinity staff from within a School is at least one; the second independent member of a thesis committee may be an additional academic member of staff from within the university or a recognized external expert in the student's field of study. It follows that if a School-based member is the School DTLP it fulfils the requirement.

4) The School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies DTLP raised another query in relation to the proposed regulations. The School does not have sufficient number of academics with expertise in each composite discipline and the DTLP chairs every confirmation panel. The Dean clarified that a thesis committee needs to be in place for the four years of each student's PhD, and the regulations require that the DTLP as a role is represented not as the same individual person; it is legitimate for a new academic in the DTLP role to represent continuity on the thesis committee when its holder changes half way through the student's four years on the PhD register.

5) Absolute Progression deadlines. The Dean reconfirmed that the 30th June is an absolute progression deadline for September registrants inclusive of a referral back for a second interview and the 31st January is for March registrants. Prof. McLoughlin confirmed that the proposed new deadlines are the hard dates where the AR system needs the progression results to have been inputted for the roll over to take place at the AR level to invite students to register for the following year. To be on the safe side timewise Schools can run the confirmation process earlier in advance of the hard deadlines, having built in additional time to allow for repeat reviews for students who are initially unsuccessful in the review process.

6) A member questioned the two months of July and August required by the AR to set the system up for registration in September. The Dean clarified that the current system is not sufficiently automated. It relies on manual staff intervention during a particularly busy summertime, when staff shortages routinely occur due to annual leave. In order to ensure registrations can open in August (particularly important for international students), the AR requires the information by June 30th to be in a postion to process data on almost 1,600 students within four weeks. Ms Breda Walls, the Director of Student Services, invited members to liaise directly with her with any issues concerning the AR.

7) A member suggested that an indicative timescale could be worked out backwards from the hard deadlines to establish when earlier stages of the confirmation process should ideally take place. Prof. McLoughlin clarified that setting such intermittent lead up times had been deliberately avoided, out of concern that they might diverge from local timelines already established in many Schools possibly causing confusing. The aim was to ensure that Schools are given the responsibility and the flexibility to manage the process locally the way it works best for them so long as they meet the final hard dates. The Dean noted that automated emails will issue through the progression process notifying the College community of consecutive stages of the process which could be used as part of the operational calendar reminding Schools of what they should do.

Prof. McLoughlin thanked members for their feedback.

Decision GS/23-24/063: The committee endorsed the proposed guidelines for Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees for Council approval.

Action GS/23-24/063: The proposed guidelines for Terms of Reference for Thesis Committees to be revised in line with members' feedback before they go to Council.

XX   GS/23-24/064 Horizon 1: Ways of Working - Paper from Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager and Leona Coady, Programme Director (PG Renewal)

The Dean invited Mr Mark Sheridan, Senior Project Manager, PG Renewal Programme, to explain to members how the PG Renewal Programme will progress its workplan across Horizon 2 and possibly Horizon 3. Adopting a new approach of "lean" principles, each piece of work will progress systematically across seven stages, with key gatekeeping elements at key stages. Essentially, the approach aims to systematize the work so that the team can report on progress focusing on outputs rather than work packages. The "lean" approach draws inspiration from a Quality Assurance Framework introduced by SUMS Consulting and Lean methodology widely used across the HEI sector. The elements were aligned with Trinity's structure and the unique needs of HEIs in terms of choice of Business Process Improvement (BPI) methodologies. Mr Sheridan spoke to the PowerPoint presentation detailing the proposed "lean" approach.

Having concluded his presentation, Mr Sheridan took a few questions. He explained that current improvements to the progression process are temporary stop gaps which will be replaced in due course by modifications to the IT system with a view to DTLPs progressing their students directly through the portal. It was acknowledged that for some Schools with few PhD students the improvements recently introduced might have been less than optimal, but they worked well for most Schools. The Dean noted that the team will reach out to every School in the future to better understand its local challenges and to capture sometimes significant differences across Schools and challenges they face.

> **Decision GS/23-24/064:** The committee approved the proposed "lean" approach towards progressing the proposed PG Renewal Programme workplan across Horizon 2.

XX   GS/23-24/065 Horizon 2 Plan: proposed deliverables and timelines by Work Package and Team – Dean of Graduate Studies and Leona Coady (PG Renewal Programme Director) to present

The Dean invited Ms Leona Coady, PG Renewal Programme Director, to speak to the proposed deliverables and timelines for workplans for Horizon 2 envisaged for two years with its scope built around Horizon 1 four themes to remain on Horizon 2. Its deliverables represent the continuation of the proposals and recommendations already endorsed by the committee the previous year. The themes of "Structured PhD and Doctoral Programmes", "Curriculum and Triple I", "Student/Staff Experience" and "Student Lifecycle" will be worked on in Horizon 2. Some elements of Horizon 1 "Financial" packages will also be advanced through Horizon 2 primarily through the "Structured PhD and Doctoral Programmes" work package. The fifth new package in Horizon 2 is "Structures and Spaces". A benchmarking exercise evaluating dedicated doctoral structures in research intensive HEIs has already commenced. Work will also focus on physical spaces for PGR students to work, socialise, network together and build collaborative connections across the PGR community in College. The circulated excel spreadsheet illustrates the proposed timelines for the work on each individual work package in Horizon 2. The work plan for most work packages has been largely defined although the "Systems and Processes" and "Student Experience" work packages continue their deliberations on the full scope of deliverables to be achieved. The committee has been asked to endorse the plan which will be included in the final Horizon 1 report to be submitted for Council approval in January.

In response to a query, Ms Coady explained that further consultations around the "Structures and Spaces" work package will avail of the PG Student Forum i.e., a new consultative platform of Horizon 2 governance structure. Students will be invited to participate in discussions with individual work

packages as their proposals develop. Student input will be sought into the plans as they are being formulated before presented to the committee and on to Council. An independent "Circle of Critical Friends" comprising external experts will also be established to provide critical advice from the external perspective. Its role will be to support primarily the externally facing "Triple I" work package. The Dean will continue to update students on Horizon developments and achievements via her monthly Newsletter.

> **Decision GS/23-24/065:** The committee endorsed the proposed Horizon 2 Plan with its deliverables and timelines for Council approval.

XX   GS/23-24/066 Horizon 2: Trinity Research Doctorate Award allocation to Sanctuary student: proposed application process, eligibility and evaluation criteria for 2024/25 – Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies (to present), Leona Coady (PG Renewal Programme Director) to present and Sinead Corcoran (Trinity Global Scholarships, Bursaries and Supports Manager)

The Dean reminded members that one of Trinity Research Doctorate Award was permanently allocated to a "Sanctuary" student on an annual basis. The 2023 award was allocated to an existing student due to time pressures. However, discussions have since concluded between the PG Renewal Team with the Sanctuary Committee and Trinity Global resulting in the proposal for the application process for the landmark "Sanctuary" award encompassing the eligibility and evaluation criteria of applicants. Members were asked to ensure that the award is widely visible in their Schools to attract strong candidates. There was no discussion, and the submission was endorsed to proceed for Council approval.

> **Decision GS/23-24/066:** The committee endorsed the proposed application process for the "Sanctuary" award and the eligibility and evaluation criteria of applicants for Council approval.

> **Action GS/23-24/066:** DTLPs to ensure that the "Sanctuary" award is widely visible in their Schools to attract strong applicants.

XX   GS/23-24/067 Horizon 2: Recommendations from WP#1 – proposed exit award framework for all Masters programmes - Memorandum from Prof. Richard Reilly and Prof. Ashley Clements (Work Package #1 Co-Leads - PG Taught); Prof. Ashley Clements to present

The Dean invited Prof. Ashley Clements, the WP1 Co-Lead, to speak to the Agenda Item. Prof. Clements noted that recommendations brought before the committee were the result of laborious work undertaken by WP1. Most of Masters programmes in Trinity offer the option of exiting with a Postgraduate Diploma to those students who accumulate the requisite 60 ECTS of taught credits but either do not progress to or are unsuccessful in the dissertation element. However, a small number of programmes have been identified that do not have the option undermining consistency and fairness of the provision across the student body.

WP1 has identified five current Masters without exit Postgraduate Diploma awards. These are internal Trinity courses not requiring external accreditation i.e., MPhil in Creative Writing, MPhil in Early Irish, MSc in Hospital Pharmacy, MSc in Biomedical Sciences (Intercalated) and MSc in Applied Psychology.

Prof. Clements stated that a standardised approach allowing for exit awards has evolved over time, but there has been no retroactive application of exit awards made to pre-existing programmes, there is no definition of an exit award in Trinity, and there is no national guidance available on the definition of an exit award, or conditions under which an exit award might apply. Course Directors of the five identified programmes wish to introduce exit awards into their Masters programmes.

Prof. Clements concluded with four following recommendations:

1. To introduce new language to the Calendar to define and describe the purpose of an exit award and qualifying criteria.
2. To introduce Postgraduate Diploma awards at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications for each of the five identified programmes currently without an exit award.
3. To include exit award as standard in the Proof of Concept for PGT programme proposals going forward.
4. To seek approval for a second stage of this project to examine the feasibility of introducing exit awards for ten identified professionally accredited programmes without an exit award.

A comment was made from the floor that the current language negatively describes a condition for being awarded an exit postgraduate diploma award for a failure in a Masters dissertation although sometimes the student chooses to leave with an exit award to accommodate new work opportunities preventing them from completing the Masters course rather than failing it. Prof. Clements undertook to consider that an exit award be presented not as a consolation price for failure in the research component but a worthy academic achievement in succeeding to complete the taught component of the course.

> **Decision GS/23-24/067:** The committee endorsed the recommendations on the postgraduate diploma exit award for Council approval.

XX   GS/23-24/068 PGR/PGT National Student Survey – Memorandum from Ms Roisin Smith (Quality Officer) to present and Prof. Richard Porter (Dean of Students) to attend

The Dean invited Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer, and Prof. Richard Porter, Dean of Students, to speak to the summary report on the findings from the National Student Survey relevant to Trinity. Two separate instruments i.e., the taught survey since 2013 and the research survey since 2018, reflecting two very different education experiences have been in place. The 2023 i.e., most recent taught survey uptake saw a response rate at 20% while that on the research survey was higher at 36%. 64% of PGT responders were international students of whom 79% reported "good/excellent" experience in Trinity. PGT students with families and those in employment look for greater flexibility and enhanced feedback on assessment. Students withdrawing from study tend to ascribe this mainly to the ineffective teaching practices, inadequate supportive environment, financial shortfalls and family commitments. 48% of PGR students were international and 97% responders were on the PhD register. Trinity PGR students complained that their student experience lags behind the comparator group of universities namely the Irish designated awarding bodies. Inadequate funding and financial concerns were of high concern for the cohort. Surprisingly, in spite of determined efforts by the Postgraduate Student Support Service, 75% of PGR responders reported limited awareness of student supports available in Trinity. A data protection agreement has been signed not to provide granular level data for Schools with fewer than ten PGR students overall or fewer than ten students per programme. The Quality Officer drew members' attention to those Schools which would not receive the School report for that reason. Schools may request a report at the School level but not at a programme level if there are more than ten PGR students within the School but not within any single programme.

The Quality Officer referred to a number of "intractable issues" which consistently showed low levels of awareness by the responder on annual surveys such as only 6% students showing awareness of innovation and entrepreneurship training, 58% of responders indicating no awareness of supports other than their supervisor and 47% of Graduate Teaching Assistants receiving training to assist them in their role. In conclusion, the Quality Officer advised members that the taught survey will not be delivered in 2023/24 and the research survey due to be administered in 2025 has not been confirmed either. She also mentioned that a positive student experience is a very important marketing and effective international recruitment tool for Trinity. The Dean of Students

enhanced the Quality Officer's message of the great value of the surveys. The Quality Officer concluded her presentation by asking the PG Renewal attendees to consult the data in both survey reports to inform their work to enhance in particular the student experience with respect to both taught and research cohorts.

In a discussion which ensured the following issues were raised:

i) The communication issue: The Postgraduate Student Support Officer would be interested to access the proposed Student Forum to identify further ways of enhancing PGR students' awareness of the service.

ii) The Postgraduate Student Support Service was praised for their work with students in Schools. The increased awareness of these supports amongst students will however require additional resources in the Senior Tutor's Office to match the anticipated student uptake in demand.

iii) The terminology used in the surveys: There is no certainty that student responders understand certain key terms the same way as academics do or HEA would e.g., induction can be understood at a School or College level. PGR students affiliate with their School more than with College, and therefore it is important that DTLPs effectively disseminate information around the School.

iv) Student attendance at Student Counselling and Disability Services is significant and it appears that students in need find their way to the relevant services. It is therefore surprising that such a high percentage of students in the survey claim lack of awareness of the services but perhaps such students do not have the need to be aware of them. Alternatively, the reason may lie in the services being collectively labelled as "support" which may confuse students.

v) As a significant number of international students use the support services, College should ensure that the students have a clearly sign-posted access to them.

vi) A lot of supports important to PGR students (such as sick and parental leave and an ability to claim PRSI contributions) are not currently in place and are therefore not captured in the survey.

vii) The Quality Officer noted that because the PGT survey is not taking place the following year, there might be an opportunity for the PG Renewal to step into the gap year with measures to enhance the student experience feeding into the surveys. The Dean went through the "intractable issues" pointing out that most of them are already being currently addressed by the PG Renewal project including the introduction of improved induction and orientation events separate for PGT and PGR students. However, survey results are always unpredictable and there is no guarantee that they will reflect the good work being carried out. Inability to claim PRSI contributions by PGR students is a sectoral issue and even though Trinity is not in a position to address it, the issue might still colour the responses returned.

viii) The Dean of Students is arranging another informal "mixer" event with PGR students and noted that the last one was attended by over two hundred students. The aim is to provide a networking opportunity for PGR students to meet colleagues from different disciplines and years and exchange information on services and supports available in College.

ix) Tangent needs more engagement with Schools to disseminate information on the availability of their entrepreneurial courses. Arts and Humanities Schools with their lower numbers will be targeted in particular.

x) There may be a survey saturation amongst students.

The Dean thanked Ms Roisin Smith, Quality Officer, and Prof. Richard Porter, Dean of Students for their participation in the meeting.

XX   **GS/23-24/069 Any Other Business**

(i) Academic Integrity: internally circulated student information and GDPR requirements
The Dean noted that Academic Affairs have requested that staff who email queries to their designated Academic.affairs acadaff@tcd.ie (AA) account about students ensure that they do not inadvertently include personal and potentially sensitive information about students' identity to avoid breaching GDPR. Any queries sent to AA email account should be anonymized.

> **Action GS/23-24/069 (ii):** DTLPs to advise their colleagues in Schools to anonymize student sensitive information in their emails to the Academic.affairs acadaff@tcd.ie account.

(ii) Reminder of deadlines for appeals processes
As Schools head into the assessment period, the Dean asked members to remind their colleagues that it was agreed by the committee in 2022/23 that a window of at least 10 days would be provided between the issuing of results and the deadlines for School Appeals. The Postgraduate Advisory Service cannot provide the support students need if the deadline is followed too closely from the date of issuing of results.

> **Action GS/23-24/069 (ii):** DTLPs to remind their Schools that students need to have at least 10 days between publication of results and the deadlines for School Appeals.

(iii) VLE update by Dean of Graduate Studies
The Dean thanked members for identifying contacts in their Schools and advised that academic specifications on the VLE project should be captured by late February.

(vi) Industrial PhD – an initiative from the School of Engineering
The School of Engineering DTLP advised members that the School is considering setting up a new PhD format entitled an Industrial Doctorate programme on foot of an apparent industry interest to engage with the School at the postgraduate research area. A wider discussion would be useful to establish whether the new PhD format as an emerging trend in doctoral education might also be of interest to other Schools. The industry interest is to be considered in a broad way covering the Humanities in addition to the STEM disciplines. The DTLP offered to set up a working group to work through the issues, opportunities and challenges associated with the new format and bring finding to the committee at a future date.

> **Action GS/23-24/069 (iv):** The School of Engineering DTLP to liaise with DTLPs interested in exploring the new Industrial PhD format and set up a working group to work through the issues towards a proposal for GSC.

(v) Dean's notifications:
- Combined USC/GSC Christmas event on the 18th December in Regent House;
- Christmas Carol concert on the 17th December in the Chapel to collect funds for the Sanctuary award.

XX   **Section B for Noting and Approval**

XX   **GS/23-24/070 Preparing, publishing, and promoting a scientific paper (5 ECTS structured PhD module Cat 2) – Proposal from Prof. Aideen Long, Module Coordinator (School of Medicine)**
The Dean called out the proposed module as a welcome new opportunity for students in the School of Medicine and suggested that other Schools might consider setting up a similar module across their disciplines possibly one per Faculty.

Action GS/23-24/070: The Dean asked DTLPs to advise her directly if they were interested in creating a more generic Category 2 version of the proposed module that students across a range of Schools might take.

The committee noted and endorsed a new structured PhD module of 5 ECTS available to PhD and MD students in the School of Medicine with permission of their supervisors in fulfilment of the Structured PhD/MD requirements. MSc by Research can also attend. The module is to commence in Semester 2 (2024) to be delivered annually once during an academic year starting from 2023/24.C

Decision GS/23-24/070: The committee recommended for Council approval a new structured PhD module of 5 ECTS entitled "Preparing, publishing, and promoting a scientific paper" in the School of Medicine to be delivered annually from 2023/24 in Semester 2.

XX **GS/23-24/071 MSc Nursing Child Health & Wellbeing Course title change – Request from Prof. Brian Keogh (School of Nursing and Midwifery DTLP)**

Decision GS/23-24/071: The committee recommended for Council approval a change of course title from MSc in Nursing Child Health & Wellbeing to MSc in Nursing – Advancing Child Health & Wellbeing and accompanying postgraduate diploma and postgraduate certificate exit award title change from PgCert/PgDip In Nursing - Child Health and Wellbeing to PgCert/PgDip in Nursing – Advancing Child Health and Wellbeing from the academic year 2024/25.

XX **GS/23-24/072 PgCert./PgDip./MScChild Adolescent and Family Mental Health – Request for course suspension in 2023/24 from Brian Keogh (School of Nursing and Midwifery DTLP)**
The committee noted a proposed suspension of PgCert/PgDip/MSc in Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health for 2023/24 to allow the Head of School and the Head of Discipline to recruit a subject expert to lead, develop, and deliver the programme. The mental health nursing discipline aims to redevelop the course content with the subject leader and support the redesign and delivery of the revised programme.

Decision GS/23-24/072: The committee recommended for Council approval a suspension for 2023/24 of PgCert/PgDip/MSc in Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health.

XX **Section C for Noting**
Completion of Delivery Closing Reports from WP#3 (Systems & Processes) and WP#5 ((Student Experience)
The Dean referred to the eight closing reports, listed below, highlighting achievements of the work of Work Packages 3 and 5. The Dean underlined that for those members who were not on the committee the previous year when the items were discussed, the reports illustrate the important changes achieved.

GS/23-24/073 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#3 (Systems & Processes) on "PGR Progression";
GS/23-24/074 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#3 (Systems & Processes) on "Off books recommendations";
GS/23-24/075 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#3 (Systems & Processes) on "Impact drivers for Graduation Experience";
GS/23-24/076 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#5 ((Student

Experience) on "Presentation Skills";

GS/23-24/077 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#5 ((Student Experience) on "Mapping College events";

GS/23-24/078 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#5 ((Student Experience) on "Academic Appeals";

GS/23-24/079 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#5 ((Student Experience) on "Review of supports for international PG students seeking accommodation;

GS/23-24/080 Horizon 1 PGR Completion of Delivery: Closing Report from WP#5 ((Student Experience) on "Review of supports for international PG students seeking accommodation.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.55pm.

Prof. Martine Smith   Date: 7 December 2023