



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School
at 10am on Thursday 22 February 2024

XX = Council relevance

Present (Ex officio):

Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:

Professor Rachel Mc Loughlin, 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 Jennifer O'Meara, 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 Jane Suzanne Carroll, School of English
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology
Professor Martine Cuypers, School of Histories & Humanities
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 Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics
Professor Lorraine Swords, 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

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services
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)

Postgraduate representatives – attendance for all items:

Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo
Mr Rory O'Sullivan

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

Apologies:
Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)
Professor Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Professor Micha Ruhl, School of Natural Sciences
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)
Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)
Prof. Mary Hughes (WP#6 Lead) for items GS/23-24/103 and GS/23-24/104

In attendance for individual items:
Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director and Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning (Academic Registry) for items GS/23-24/098 and GS/23-24/099
Prof. Emma Stokes, Vice President for Global Engagement, and Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing (Trinity Global) for item GS/23-24/100
Prof. Clare Kelly, Director of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate (School of Psychology) for item GS/23-24/105

Prof. Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies, sent her apologies and the meeting was chaired by Pro-Dean Prof. Sarah McCormack.

XX Section A

XX GS/23-24/096 Minutes of GSC of 25 January 2024

The minutes were approved as circulated.

XX GS/23-24/097 Matters Arising

The Pro-Dean advised members that all Actions from the January meeting had been completed or attended to. She also noted that all Decisions from the previous meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by the last Council on the 14th February. Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

In addition, the Pro-Dean updated members in relation to Industrial PhD Action GS/23-24/082 (iv). As a lead of the WG she has met with six Schools discussing ideas how to develop the concept within each School. She invited members to join the working group.

Action GS/23-24/097: Renewed request to members to consider joining the WG on Industrial PhD by contacting the School of Engineering DTLP directly.

XX GS/23-24/098 Academic Registry Annual Report for 2022/23 – Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director and Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning (Academic Registry) to present

The Pro-Dean welcomed Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director, and Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning (Academic Registry) to speak to the Academic Registry Annual Report 2022/23 circulated in advance of the meeting. Ms Pepper spoke to a slide presentation. She provided an

overview of the AR activities in 2022/23 such as key statistics on applications, admissions and increased registration numbers, student finance and profile, entrance exhibitions, student cases, assessment and progression including examination sittings and graduations, SITS enhancements and tuition income to College. Numbers in some areas such as student cases and in person assessment have returned to the pre-Covid levels. In terms of “highlights”, it was noted that assessment continued in hybrid format. The Online Module Enrolment system was enhanced in relation to timelines and processes. A reporting capability was developed with Power BI generating operational management reports for Admissions. The AR engaged with the Postgraduate Renewal Programme across all Work Packages. A quiet space was set up in the Academic Registry Service Desk in collaboration with Disability Service. Budget 2023 supports were implemented for eligible students for tuition fees. Service delivery model was continually developed. University policies and associated system changes were implemented. In terms of PGT applications, overall, there was a 7% and 10% increase respectively in the AHSS and Health Sciences applications and a decrease of 5% in STEM. The figures for PGR were decreased by 16% and 1% respectively in AHSS and STEM and increased by 9% in Health Sciences.

Members congratulated the Director of Academic Registry for work well done by the AR staff in 2022/23. The Pro-Dean thanked Ms Pepper for her presentation. There were no questions from the floor.

XX GS/23-24/099 AR Demonstration of Power BI Applicant and Student Demographics Reports – Ms Jennifer Pepper, Director and Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning (Academic Registry) to present

The Pro-Dean invited Mr Peter Hynes, Head of Business Support and Planning, to demonstrate Power BI Reports in the display of applicant and student demographics data. The reports are dynamic and display live data from SITS as well as the HEA data which constitute the definitive data for student statistics for each academic year. The reports have been available to School Managers for the last few months. The functionality is being rolled out across College. The next step is to roll it out the following week to Directors of Postgraduate Teaching and Learning. Mr Hynes clarified that his demonstration aims to acquaint DTLPs with the broad functionality of the reports in advance of the roll out. The reports make it much easier to see changes over time and to track increases in the ‘live’ system. Mr Hynes took members through a number of tables showing figures on the fee status, registrations and gender break down, volume of courses and geographic distribution of students. Any data category can be filtered by Faculty, School or course type. A similar approach has been taken with application data displaying current applications and their status (firm and conditional offers made, applicant decisions, applications in progress and unsuccessful) which can be accessed by Faculty, School or course type. A trend analysis can also be viewed. Power BI reports are the definite sources of solid, accurate and consistent data in College and will replace other alternative sources of information currently used. Since the reports’ functionality is still being developed, Mr Hynes has requested feedback from DTLPs when they start using the reports.

Action GS/23-24/099 (i): The AR to roll out Power BI reports facility to DTLPs the following week.

Action GS/23-24/099 (ii): Mr Hynes requested feedback from DTLPs on their forthcoming use of Power BI reports.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- (i) The Power BI reports are a new reliable tool available to the College staff to analyse statistical data on applications, admissions and registrations. The roll out is gradual. A new landing page for the reports is also being developed to keep them in one area.
- (ii) This is a browser-based application, but a Power BI viewer licence is required to view the data. The licence can be requested via a designated form on the IT Services website. Once a user logs into the College system access to the reports is automatic. The data can be exported.
- (iii) DTLPs were given a licence as part of the PG Renewal project at the point when the PGR progression was moved to the Power BI the previous year.
- (iv) There should be a facility within Power BI to enable sharing PGR applications across a number of academic staff with relevant expertise in order to finalise decision for admission.

As there were no further questions from the floor, the Pro-Dean thanked Mr Hynes for his presentation.

Action GS/23-24/099 (iii): Any specific queries members may have in relation to the use of Power BI and its further development facilitating specific local requirements should be emailed directly to Mr Hynes.

XX GS/23-24/100 PG Virtual Open Day and PGT Admissions – Memorandum from Prof. Emma Stokes, Vice President for Global Engagement, and Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing (Trinity Global) to present

The Pro-Dean welcomed the Vice President for Global Engagement Prof. Emma Stokes, and Ms Beibhinn Coman, Director of Marketing, and invited the Vice President to speak to the issue of how Trinity Global can best understand the needs of Trinity’s diverse PGT courses in order to provide optimal supports to recruitment, and whether Trinity Global should progress with a virtual Open Day, revert to in-person evenings or organise additional PG promotion initiatives in Spring 2024.

The Vice President noted that the Global Relations Strategy (GRS3) will be extended by a year to September 2025 to align it with the Institutional Strategic Plan of Trinity. The Vice President stated that applications, both from the EU and overseas for 2024/25, have gone up significantly – more than a 50% increase over the same period last year indicating that some courses are very popular but perhaps concealing the underperforming ones. The Global Marketing staff have therefore been working directly with individual course coordinators to address specific needs of their courses.

In order to inform the decision whether to organise a virtual open day in Spring 2024 a survey was conducted by Trinity Global of just over 900 PGT students registered in 2023/24 across the three Faculties. The response rate was 26%. The findings showed that Trinity’s reputation, career opportunities, course reputation, first offer received, word of mouth recommendation, tuition costs and Dublin as a study destination were the most important factors influencing international and Ireland-based students in choosing Trinity. Post-qualification two-year stay back visa was important for 64% of non-EU students. Respondents ranked low “PG Virtual Open Day” as a factor influencing their decision to study in Trinity. Unfortunately, exact conversion data of participants in the last virtual event in 2023 to newly registered students are not available. It is assumed however that the number of students who attended and subsequently converted was quite small i.e., around 40 in total. The survey had limitations one of which was the lack of question seeking to establish how respondents became aware of Trinity. A light touch survey was also sent out to around two thousand applicants who received an offer from Trinity but did not take it up. The response rate was 12% and the respondents indicated the price-related factors (cost of living in Dublin, high tuition fees, cost of accommodation and limited scholarships) preventing them from accepting the offer.

Respondents in both surveys also provided rich qualitative data indicating for example that some documentation required on application was excessive and redundant such as seeking submission of transcripts from an applicant with a Trinity degree.

It was noted that the recent increase in the overall number of applications places more demands on course coordinators and the admissions team in the Academic Registry. A designated team based in China assists Trinity-based staff with applications from that region. As an additional support measure, Trinity Global is investing in a new joint appointment straddling the AR and Global. The role will bring a strong technical expertise to enhance efficiency in processing the increased number of applications, thereby reducing the workload that might otherwise fall on Schools.

Finally, the Vice President underlined that marketing staff in Trinity Global were very keen to work on a bespoke recruitment approach with individual course directors to explore markets of particular interest for admission to their courses to establish whether any custom-made measures can be put in place to make sure that there is awareness of Trinity in those localities. Courses sharing synergies can be marketed together.

In response to the question on the merit of holding a virtual open event in Spring 2024, a short discussion ensued:

- (i) The School of Medicine DTLP shared her experience with two virtual events. The College-wide event in April 2023 was well attended while a subsequent virtual India-China event attracted practically no interest. It should be confirmed with a local vendor that sufficient preliminary interest has been established if a bespoke recruitment event were to be organised.

The Vice President commented that targeting a jurisdiction is not considered “bespoke”; instead, the CRM data should be used to identify applicants indicating an interest in the course/s to be marketed in a bespoke event.

- (ii) The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy DTLP noted that her School does not see value in holding a virtual open event in Spring 2024 as such events have limited contribution to recruitment but are time consuming for the staff to attend. The School receives sufficient applications but offers do not convert into acceptances due to high costs of living in Dublin and limited scholarships available in Trinity.
- (iii) The School of Histories and Humanities DTLP noted no impact of the previous virtual open day. The School is keen to see an improved pace of issuing offers by the AR.

The Vice President noted that the new joint post will assist in the admissions process in terms of providing technical expertise within the AR creating additional capacity for speeding up the offer-issuing process within the AR. Currently, a pilot is in place for a number of courses recruiting from China reviewing the whole admissions process to identify stumbling blocks to efficiency. Staff with technical expertise ensure that the submitted documentation on degree award and language competency are authentic. The applicant also needs to have genuine academic qualifications in the required discipline to be reviewed by academic staff in the School.

The Pro-Dean concluded that on the basis of the survey data presented and the discussion a College-wide virtual recruitment event will not go ahead in Spring 2024 but smaller bespoke local events can be organised at the request of Schools. She thanked the Vice President for her presentation.

Decision GS/23-24/100: A College-wide virtual recruitment event will not go ahead in Spring 2024.

Action GS/23-24/100: Schools to proactively contact Trinity Global to set up local bespoke events when needed by individual Schools.

XX GS/23-24/101 Adoption of Revised Procedures for LENS REPORT and accommodations for disabled students – Mr Declan Treanor (Director, disAbility Service)

The item has been deferred to a future meeting.

XX GS/23-24/102 PGR monthly update (February) – 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 February. All Work Packages (WP) of Horizon 2 are actively engaging with students, Schools and professional units to capture the voice of the community to be included in the development of their proposals. Two proposals from WP#6 are on the agenda. Applications for Trinity Research Doctoral Awards and for the Sanctuary awards are in progress. Allocation of School-specific awards have already been confirmed. The pilot for a write down of the fee differential for new PGR students will continue to run for another year covering admissions into 2024/25. A recommendation to Board will then be made on the basis of two years of data. The PG Renewal Programme Director will contact Schools shortly to gather their feedback on the running of the pilot in its first year and its impact on the PGR recruitment. Each WP will be bringing their proposals shortly for the GSC consideration across the remaining three meetings. The Pro-Dean thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for her presentation.

Action GS/23-24/102: The PG Renewal Programme Director to contact Schools shortly to gather their feedback on the running of the write down fee differential pilot in the first year and its impact on the PGR recruitment.

XX GS/23-24/103 PGR: HORIZON 2 – PhD/Doctoral Programmes (Supervision): Interim online resource for resolving conflict in supervisor - research student relationship – Prof. Mary Hughes (WP#6 Lead) to present

The Pro-Dean acknowledged apologies from Prof. Mary Hughes (WP#6 Lead) and invited Ms Ewa Adach, PG Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator, to speak to the Agenda item. In November 2023, Council approved the recommendation from WP#6 to develop guidelines on conflict resolution between supervisors and their PGR students to be uploaded on the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies website. The present guidance for members' consideration reflects documentation that the Postgraduate Advisory Service had already in place and an input from WP#2 and #5. WP#6 has structured its guideline around avoiding conflict in the supervisor - research student relationships, using supervisor – PGR Student Agreement as a tool to manage mutual expectations, approaching a conflict when it arises, using a Thesis Committee towards resolving issues, listing various conflict resolution styles, and escalating to a formal process; it also contains links to relevant Policies and Resources. Members were asked for feedback.

In a discussion that ensued, the following issues were raised:

- i) A PG Representative suggested that the current wording should be changed in the guideline to replace a stipulation that a third person “may” be present to a third person “is required” to be present when a conflict cannot be resolved in a normal context.

The Postgraduate Student Support Officer agreed that there is some ambiguity around the current wording which should be tightened up. He explained that at present there is not a

formal structure to automatically involve a third person, hence the “may” refers to an additional permission required from the Dean of Graduate Studies or the relevant DTLP for a third person to participate. The PG Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator has undertaken to incorporate the suggestion in further development of conflict resolution resources such as briefs for a mediator and a conflict ombudsman.

Action GS/23-24/103 (i): The PG Renewal Programme to incorporate the suggested change of wording that a third person “may” to “is required to” be present in further development of conflict resolution resources such as briefs for a mediator and a conflict ombudsman.

- ii) Confirmation was sought that a thesis committee should not, as has already been agreed, have any pastoral role. The Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator re-confirmed that thesis committees do not have a pastoral role as such but do have a role in sign-posting students to appropriate College support services.
- iii) A PG Representative noted the recent formalisation of the supervisor – PGR student relationship representing an increasing trend towards institutionalisation of that relationship which can be confused with an institution’s professional employee style dynamic.
- iv) It was confirmed that the guideline is for both students and supervisors.
- v) A query was raised about initiating emails in an informal conflict resolution. There appears to be conflicting advice recommending not sending an email and also sending a follow up email avoiding accusatory language. However, it is difficult not to escalate the language once it gets into the email and the other party responds in a similar vein. The Postgraduate Student Support Officer acknowledged the ambiguity of the instruction. He explained that the intention was to recommend that initial discussions between the supervisor their PGR student should be face-to-face rather than by writing accusatory emails, but the in-person process should be concluded by a closing email recording unambiguously an Action Plan of steps to follow as agreed between the two sides without the accusations re-surfacing.

The Pro-Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion and invited them to provide further feedback directly to WP#6 Lead.

Action GS/23-24/103 (ii): Members invited to provide further feedback directly to WP#6 Lead.

XX GS/23-24/104 PGR: HORIZON 1 – Staff Experience (Community): Recommendations for integration of adjunct staff into the university community – Prof. Mary Hughes (WP#6 Lead) to present
Ms Ewa Adach, PG Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator, continued to present another Agenda item on behalf of WP#6. A very wide variety of practices have been identified across the university in managing relationships with “adjunct staff” covering staff categories of Adjunct and Honorary Professors. The findings have brought to light some inconsistencies across College, but they mostly pertained to the Human Resources rather than Work Package 6 which focuses solely on addressing divergencies of the integration practice of adjunct staff into the College community, their insufficient visibility in course materials, on School websites and in handbooks.

WP#6 recommends that further work needs to be done if the contributions of adjunct staff are to be consistently recognised into the delivery of PG programmes across the university. A committee’s approval was therefore sought for four recommendations. Firstly, to put together best practice guidelines on the integration of adjunct staff supporting the delivery of PG programmes in relation to the visibility of adjuncts on School websites, in handbooks and course material. Secondly, to commence engagement with adjunct staff, Heads of School and DTLPs to identify ways in which the

integration of adjunct staff can best be facilitated in terms of social engagement and resources. Thirdly, to put together a set of proposals for implementation later in Horizon 2. And fourthly, to conduct a benefit and impact analysis of the implemented recommendations.

In a short discussion that followed, a PG Representative referred to a growing practice of “staff casualisation” of questionable legality and a high human cost. He drew members’ attention to an recent IFUT report on precarious employment in higher education, and in particular to one of its recommendations on pathways to permanent employment for adjunct staff. He suggested that a question could be included in a survey for Schools to reflect on what pathways to permanent employment they might be offering.

The committee approved the four recommendations from Work Package 6 solely focusing on the integration of adjunct staff without the additional one on pathways to permanent employment extemporaneously suggested by the PG Representative. The Pro-Dean was not certain whether the latter was within the committee remit and deferred it to the Dean’s judgement at a future meeting. The PG Renewal Programme Director clarified that the proposed additional recommendation was not within the remit of the PG Renewal Programme.

Decision GS/23-24/104: The committee approved the four recommendations proposed by the Work Package 6 solely focusing on the integration of adjunct staff into the College community.

XX GS/23-24/105 Challenges of Generative AI tools to assessment – Prof. Clare Kelly (School of Psychology Director of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate), to present

The Pro-Dean invited Prof. Clare Kelly, School of Psychology Director of Teaching and Learning Undergraduate (DUTL). The Pro-Dean clarified that as DUTL for Psychology, Prof. Kelly had already presented an overview of the UG programmes’ response to the challenges posed by Generative AI (Gen-AI) at January’s Undergraduate Studies Committee. Prof. Kelly’s talk at the GSC was to stimulate discussion of the ongoing challenges, which apply equally to PG and UG education.

The main topic covered in the presentation was an overview of current assessment methods at UG level in Psychology with written continuous assessments and reports dominating since Covid and constituting a major risk of students’ inappropriate Gen-AI use. Numerous module learning outcomes relate to critical evaluation and application of knowledge which do not preclude Gen-AI use, and any student determined to use it can use it with ease. Sceptical academics should “play around” with Gen-AI use in relation to their modules to fully understand the vulnerability of their assessment topics. Academics working in research niche areas might even recognise some of the content from their published papers in essays generated by Gen-AI. Prof. Kelly illustrated the difficulty or even the impossibility of detecting students’ inappropriate Gen-AI use by a “ChatGPT challenge” in Psychology which generated two fake essays subsequently given II-1 and II-2 by academics as part of the anonymously marked test-case. Both markers noted “red flags” in the fake essays i.e., repetition of key points, highly descriptive approach, no examples from the research literature to support points made, lacking references to material covered in lectures and recommended reading, but stated that these were also typical features of their students’ authentic work.

The UG Psychology programme responded to the “ChatGPT challenge” findings by informing and educating academic staff about Gen-AI risks especially those academics who do not use it as they may not fully appreciate the threat. It was noted that requirements for references to specific module content and applications are not necessarily an obstacle against using Gen-AI. Survey responses illustrate that a substantial proportion of students use Gen-AI. The UG Psychology programme will

continue to rethink assessments guided by a new bespoke Working Group set up in the School, which will review marking schemes to increase emphasis on originality, integration of module-specific content and broader relevant reading. Issues of time poverty that are a barrier to alternative assessments will be addressed, take-home exams will be discontinued, and attendance requirements will be reconsidered; all measures in an effort to enhance engagement with students and broaden out the discussion of the purpose of 3rd level education and the quality of students' learning experience.

The School of Psychology's Generative AI Policy and Declaration, circulated in advance of the meeting, was based on the approach that banning Gen-AI is not tenable as many official institutions like journals and granting agencies accept text with Gen-AI input. Instead, students are asked to declare their use of Gen-AI. Content generated by Gen-AI must be appropriate and declared in all assessments. In Michaelmas term assessments there was only one declaration. In conclusion, the presenter raised various ethical and environmental issues and racial and gender biases inbuilt into Gen-AI.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- i) The Trinity Business School also uses a declaration and has experienced similar issues with students' use of Gen-AI. Students are aware that there are no means to reliably detect content generated by AI in their assessment. It is unworkable to "police" AI-generative plagiarism as it is impossible to prove. Course directors are frustrated waiting for College-based guidelines but none seem to be forthcoming. The School is therefore setting up an academic AI "task force" to develop local guidelines.
- ii) Appealing to students' "better nature", educating, informing and asking them to be honest might not work. Therefore, in the face of no obvious solution perhaps an interim measure could be a return to the old fashioned written and oral examinations.
- iii) By using Gen-AI, students are "robbing themselves" of their own creative thought process.
- iv) Oral examinations and in person appointments with academic staff can easily reveal students avoiding thinking in STEM disciplines. Tutorials requiring students' presentations to the class are also helpful to ascertain the student's knowledge.
- v) Students are afraid to fail and equate passing assessments with acquiring education. Hence, they use Gen-AI, but this deprives them of the agency to think independently and critically.
- vi) One cannot slip into thinking that the current generation of students are pre-disposed to plagiarising because the tool is there. It is rather that the current generation of students are "obsessed" with convenience. The battle is not to criminalise the tool but teach students that they are losing the ability of independent thought and synthesis and make the use of Gen-AI more inconvenient by requesting detailed declarations.
- vii) Students should not be seen as uniformly willing to cheat. There is no unilateral distribution of students but a cohort of individuals with different preferences and approaches to Gen-AI, and some sub-groups influence other sub-groups into using Gen-AI in their classroom interactions.
- viii) Interactive style examinations offer a solution. A student might have used a Gen-AI-based content, but if they have engaged with it and can perform well in the viva the assessment can still be valid.
- ix) It remains to be established how the self-declared use of Gen-AI should be weighted, and the lack of transparency may be the reason why so few students in Psychology might have made declarations out of concern that they will be penalised.
- x) Non-native English speakers might be motivated to use the tool to improve their English. It will be interesting to establish to what extent students with disabilities might use Gen-AI mistaking it as a type of assistive technology tool. College should accept that Gen-AI exists and manage its use. A mandatory interactive tutorial on the use should be put in place. Perhaps an up-front declaration that the student has done the tutorial should be helpful. Schools have

different disciplinary focus but the approach to the Gen-AI should be standardised as much as possible across College.

- xi) The Library has been working on updating the Academic Integrity guide and engaging with students on their learning journey.
- xii) The Information Technology Services Representative underlined that there is a broader framework to be worked out around research, intellectual property, copy right, data protection, security, uploading material into Open-AI/Gen-AI. A wide-ranging university policy is required to be put in place. AI is there because of its efficiency; it is going to stay in the workplace. It is only the beginning of its presence, and its capabilities will grow exponentially and hence Gen-AI is getting such traction. University data can be linked into Gen-AI and all kinds of questions can be asked assisting administrative processes.

The Pro-Dean thanked the Prof. Kelly for her presentation and members for their participation in the stimulating discussion which has underlined that a College-based policy is needed to be supplemented by discipline-based local guides bespoke for individual Schools.

XX GS/23-24/106 Review of State supports for PhD students and IUA response – Pro-Dean of Graduate Studies to report

The Pro-Dean referred to two papers circulated in advance of the meeting. The first one was the independent National Review of State Supports for PhD Researchers published in May 2023. That report identified many of the core challenges facing PhD researchers including stipend levels and visa requirements. It was to be followed by the publication of a second report not yet available which is disappointing, given that many of the more challenging issues were postponed to the second report. The second circulated paper, “Universities Supporting Postgraduate Researchers”, was authored by the IUA setting out the five-point advocacy position agreed by the Irish universities.

The Pro-Dean referred to the recommendations of the first national report focusing on financial supports, and issues encountered by PhD researchers coming to Ireland from outside the European Union/European Economic Area and improving PhD graduate outcomes. The report recommends an increased stipend level, with an optimum target of €25,000 acknowledging the potential ramifications of such change on public finances and recognising that significant additional work will be needed in order to give effect to such a recommendation. Subsequently, the Pro-Dean called the five key points comprising the IUA advocacy position:

- i) that a national minimum PhD stipend level is set and that IUA is working with government and other stakeholders to seek to achieve this.
- ii) that all PGRs are to have fair and equitable conditions in respect of maternity leave, provisions for sick leave and other statutory options.
- iii) that there is greater benefit for the PGR to hold student status as long as that status includes fair and equitable conditions.
- iv) that a reform of the visa regime for non-EU PGRs is undertaken and that the burden of the cost of health insurance and visa renewal charges be appropriately addressed.
- v) that the most inclusive systems acknowledge that a range of options are necessary to support PGRs, and that IUA members want to maintain that diversity and press the importance of self-financed undertakings along with national and international funding and university-based funding.

The Pro-Dean acknowledged that PG Representatives have circulated two additional documents i.e., the “Response to the IUA Arguments against Employee Status” and “Workers in all but name, pay and conditions” subsequent to the circulation of committee papers but given that lateness members might not have been able to read them.

The Pro-Dean gave the floor to Mr Rory O'Sullivan, PG Representative who made the following points:

- i) He asked that a date of publication of the IUA document (dated December 2023) will be ascertained.
- ii) The professionalisation of PhD has been coming, and the transition to the PI research-led model evidences it. The question is whether it will result in a precarious student status for PhD researchers or whether it will lead to a situation where PhD researchers will have rights and responsibilities commensurate to their work.
- iii) The IUA has agreed to acknowledge sick leave and maternity leave as entitlements contrary to its previous stand that such entitlements will not be possible.
- iv) A discussion of the PhD status initiated at GSC should be opened up to the entire College community and a debate will be facilitated by the two opposing documents i.e., the IUA one and the "Response to the IUA Arguments against Employee Status". This is an opportunity for Trinity to take the lead on this important issue.

Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo, the other PG Representative, supported Mr O'Sullivan's comments, additionally raising the question whether changes can still be made to the IUA document given that it has not yet been published.

Action GS/23-24/106 (i): Members were asked to email feedback on the "Response to the IUA Arguments against Employee Status" directly to the two PG Representatives.

The Pro-Dean has conveyed the message from the Dean that she would be keen to be present at the discussion of the topic, and therefore it will be further debated at the next meeting. Today's meeting was to garner DTLPs' views whether they can support the five recommendations from the IUA. In a further discussion the following comments were made:

- i) Changing the student status to an employee status might not be the best answer as this would change the education focus from the development of the student to the project as an outcome. The outcome of the PhD is the graduate, and the thesis is the artefact demonstrating the graduate's attainment of the learning outcomes. The motivation for the University is the development of the graduate through the research process rather than the generation of the thesis or the research that going into it.
- ii) Some generalities articulated in the "Response" might not hold. For example, the PI large scale research-led model is only one of a number of PhD funding arrangements, and that kind of experience is not universal across College and may not even be recognised in some Schools. There are statements in the "Response" which do not seem to apply to all the disciplines.
- iii) A query was addressed to the two PG Representatives (Trinity's leads of the Postgraduate Workers Organisation Ireland - PWOI), seeking clarification as to how representative of the whole PhD student body their organisation was, how the student support is distributed across the disciplines, and whether the movement is present in the twelve Schools in the Arts and Humanities area.
- iv) Mr O'Sullivan responded by underlining the risk being drawn between the PhD student personal development and that of their skills. A PhD status should be comparable to that of a junior doctor in terms of its rights. He commented that there has been for definite a transition to the PI research-led projects. These attract majority of the funding from Trinity's internal awards and from government (as evidenced by "Impact 2023: Ireland's Research and Innovation Strategy"). The question arises as to how the PhD student benefits from the supervisor's relationship that is being transformed. Under the current student status PhD students do not get rights commensurate with their situation such as a liveable wage and security of conditions.

The PWOI trade union membership attracts 20% of PhD students in Ireland even though it is not recognised as a trade union by the university or in Ireland, but the proportion of its active membership is on a larger scale than that in student unions or in many other trade unions, like IFUT, recognised in the higher education. The PWOI reflects the majority opinions of the PhD student body. PhD students are seeking a clear employment status with the university allowing them to claim all rights.

- v) The Social Sciences and Philosophy DTLP clarified that the PI-led research model does not apply to her School. Government funding supports a tiny minority of PhD students in the School, and most are funded from the School's own resources. There is no intention to move towards the PI-led research model. Recognition of this diversity of funding for PGR students needs to be part of any discussion of the PhD status as should the fact that PhD students can choose their own research topics in most disciplines.
- vi) Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo referred to ways how other countries deal with the PhD status. Some recognise two types of status in the same university, i.e., that of an employee and that of a student. A PGR student will have an employee status if funded by the university but a student status if in receipt of a scholarship.
- vii) A member noted an example of the University of Edinburgh where PGR students have an entitlement to sick leave and an index-linked employment contract.
- viii) In preparation for a further discussion of the issue at the March meeting, the Postgraduate Student Support Officer would welcome confirmation of the support level across all disciplines in Trinity for the asks listed in the "Response" as this would speak to the level of support within different moulds of PhD engagement. The overall percentage of support should be broken down into disciplines to illustrate if Arts and Humanities students support the asks to the same degree as STEM students.
- ix) A member noted that most PhD students in Arts and Humanities are self-funded unlike those in Sciences who are normally in receipt of funding, channelled either via an employment contract or as a stipend making a difference between contributing to pensions in the first instance. It would be helpful if data could be provided on the numbers of self-funded and funded students. Technically speaking self-funded students may not claim employment rights.

Action GS/23-24/106 (ii): To provide data on the numbers of self-funded and funded students in Trinity in Schools across College.

- x) Mr O'Sullivan responded by clarifying that PWOI has data on the numbers of self-funded and funded students amongst its members but not for the whole university. Self-funded PhDs evidence a systematic de-prioritisation of certain disciplines and types of research. Self-funded PGR students see themselves as un-funded in need to work part-time to get by. For many of them gaining a PhD degree is an indispensable career progression means. Even though, technically speaking self-funded students may not appear to be eligible for employment rights, their situation is still part of the same discussion to do with a trend for funding restrictions squeezing out some disciplines of resources. Self-funded PhDs should not be regarded as a barrier to employment but as a problem of the current funding system which the employment model draws an attention to.
- xi) Mr O'Sullivan noted that there is no substantial difference in terms of membership supports for the PWOI position between the Arts/Humanities and Sciences. The difference lies in the "active" membership which results from more engagement in the Sciences where by working collaboratively in labs on group projects students can organise themselves more naturally. Students in Arts/Humanities tend to work on individual topics in isolation. The PWOI can provide indicative levels of support from

surveys, but they did not cover the PhD cohort in its entirety. There is a substantial number of PWOI active members from the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy. There is nothing about the employee status that would necessitate impersonal and transactional relation between the student and the supervisor. Systems recognising the PhD status as employee are common in Europe showing a greater acceptance of the PhD work as work and of the PhD situations as being that of an employee deserving commensurate rights and dignity. A further discussion at the March meeting should be a stepping-stone towards opening it out to the wider university participation.

The Pro-Dean thanked the two PG Representatives and members for their contribution to the animated discussion in advance of a follow up debate at the March meeting.

XX GS/23-24/107 Any Other Business

There was no AOB.

XX Section B for Noting and Approval

XX GS/23-24/108 Proposed change of course title from MPhil in Early Irish to MPhil in Medieval Irish from 2025/26 – Memorandum from Prof. Jürgen Uhlich, Director of MPhil in Early Irish

The committee noted that the proposed name-change requires only minimal changes in the course learning outcomes (references to 'Early Irish' will be replaced with 'Medieval Irish' as appropriate). The MPhil in Early Irish is a highly specialist programme unlikely to ever attract large numbers but a change from 'Early Irish' to 'Medieval Irish' would improve the marketability of the course. 'Early Irish' has little currency outside of professional academic circles, while 'Medieval Irish' is a clearer term readily understandable to applicants. The course as currently delivered has always touched on topics outside of 'Early Irish' strictly defined. The proposed name change better captures the full breadth of training provided on the current course and should ensure that the title of the award for students who exit with a PGDip more accurately reflects the programme content. The committee noted and endorsed the request for a change of course title from MPhil in Early Irish to MPhil in Medieval Irish from 2025/26.

Decision GS/23-24/108: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed change of course title from MPhil in Early Irish to MPhil in Medieval Irish with a corresponding change of the PgDip exit award title change from Postgraduate Diploma in Early Irish to Postgraduate Diploma in Medieval Irish from 2025/26.

XX GS/23-24/109 Revised Programme Handbook Policy and Handbook Templates - Memorandum from Dr Liz Donnellan, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

The revised Policy and associated templates resulted from the feedback received on foot of the discussion of the Programme Handbook Policy, including Appendix 1 (Core content for inclusion in handbooks), and the Programme and School Handbook Templates by the Graduate Studies Committee on the 9 November 2023 (GS/23-24/048) and by the Undergraduate Studies Committee on the 14 November 2023 (USC/23-24/032). In addition, updated references and links to Academic Integrity regulations and resources have been included, and the requirement to outline in PGT handbooks the model(s) for PGT research components selected by the course director for that programme, reflecting the recently approved 5 Model Framework for Postgraduate Taught Research. Constructing handbooks on an annual basis is an onerous but necessary task. The aim of the revised templates is to make the task simpler for Schools. The committee noted and endorsed the revised Programme Handbook Policy and Handbook Templates.

Decision GS/23-24/109: The committee recommended for Council approval revised Programme Handbook Policy and Handbook Templates.

XX Section C for Noting

GS/23-24/110 Minutes of Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee of 4th September 2023

The Lir Academy Joint Academic Committee is new governance structure to enhance information sharing between the Lir and both USC and GSC. Its minutes of 4th September 2023 were circulated to members.

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

Prof. Sarah McCormack

Date: 22 February 2024