



**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 on Thursday 21 March 2024

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**XX = Council relevance**

*Present (Ex officio):*

Professor Martine Smith, Dean of Graduate Studies (Chair)

*Directors of Teaching and Learning (Postgraduate) as follows:*

Professor Rachel Mc Loughlin, School of Biochemistry & Immunology

Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry

Professor Ivana Dusparic, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Jennifer O'Meara, School of Creative Arts

Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education

Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering

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 Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Etain Tannam, School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies

Professor Tara Mitchell, School of Social Sciences & Philosophy

Professor Erna O'Connor, School of Social Work & Social Policy

Ms Siobhan Dunne, Sub Librarian for Teaching, Research and User Experience

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

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

*In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items:*

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

*Postgraduate representatives – attendance for all items:*

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 Wladislaw Rivkin, Trinity Business School  
Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science  
Professor Jane Suzanne Carroll, School of English  
Professor Russell McLaughlin, School of Genetics & Microbiology  
Professor Catherine Darker, School of Medicine  
Professor Micha Ruhl, School of Natural Sciences  
Professor Brian Keogh, School of Nursing & Midwifery  
Professor Graham Cross, School of Physics  
Professor Lorraine Swords, School of Psychology  
Professor Jake Byrne, Academic Director, Tangent  
Mr Rory O'Sullivan, Postgraduate representative  
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)  
Ms Frances Leogue, IT support Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies  
Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)  
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services  
Dr Andrea Uí Chianáin and Dr Melanie Ní Dhuinn (Marino Institute of Education)

*In attendance for individual items:*

Dr Seán Delaney for items GS/23-24/113 and GS/23-24/114  
Prof. Richard Reilly (PG Renewal Co-Lead, Work Package #1 PT Taught) for items GS/23-24/121 and GS/23-24/122

The Dean advised members that due to staff shortages it was not possible to accommodate a Zoom-based mode of attendance. She also noted that it may be necessary to revert to in-person meetings in 2024/25 in line with other College committees.

**XX Section A**

**XX GS/23-24/111 Minutes of GSC of 22 February 2024**

The minutes were approved as circulated.

**XX GS/23-24/112 Matters Arising**

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the February meeting had been completed or attended to. She also noted that all Decisions from that meeting on Agenda A and B were approved by Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> March. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

**XX GS/23-24/113 New MIE course proposal: Validated MES in Further Education (Online) – Dr Seán Delaney, Dr Andrea Uí Chianáin and Dr Melanie Ní Dhuinn (Marino Institute of Education) to present**

The Dean invited Dr Seán Delaney, Registrar from Marino Institute of Education, to speak to a new MES course proposal in Further Education (Online) which incorporates an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma. The proposal is the first Level 9 qualification in Ireland taught fully online, that is focused on the field of Further Education. It is a part-time Masters offering of 90 ECTS over two years commencing in September 2024. It builds on and is a progression pathway from the existing Professional Diploma in Further Education (Level 8) accredited by the Teaching Council, but unlike the diploma it is not intended as a professional teaching qualification. It has been put together to address gaps in Level 9 educational opportunities for practitioners to engage in reflective, critical and scholarly research by means of lifelong learning and continuing professional development, as mandated by the Teaching Council of Ireland (2016) and SOLAS (2020).

The proposal has been developed in line with the strategic objectives of MIE. There has been extensive consultation with the School of Education in Trinity to ensure complementarity of scope with existing offerings.

In response to a query, the MIE Registrar expressed confidence that the course will at least recruit the anticipated minimal number of 20 students in its first year. He concluded his presentation by referring to the new course learning outcomes differentiating it from those of the Professional Diploma and confirmed that the proposal had been approved by the MIE Academic Council and the Associated College Degrees Committee in Trinity. He expressed his thanks to the School of Education and Academic Affairs for their helpful feedback provided during the development of the proposal.

There were no further items for discussion, and the committee endorsed the proposal subject to favourable external review.

**Decision GS/23-24/113:** The committee endorsed the proposal for submission to Council subject to favourable external reviewer's report.

**XX GS/23-24/114 New MIE pathway proposal: Validated PME (Primary Education) via Irish - Dr Seán Delaney, Dr Andrea Uí Chianáin and Dr Melanie Ní Dhuinn (Marino Institute of Education) to present and Memorandum from Dr Seán Delaney (MIE Registrar)**

The MIE Registrar continued to speak to the next agenda item on the proposal for a new Irish pathway on the existing two-year Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching). The PME is recognised by the Teaching Council for the purpose of teaching in primary schools in Ireland. The new pathway aims to prepare teachers for an Irish-language setting i.e., Gaelscoileanna and Scoileanna Gaeltachta. Applicants register on the existing PME to achieve the existing degree award of Professional Master in Education (PME) upon completing their studies. As a pathway within an established programme, it has the same programme learning outcomes as on the "parent" PME with a few additions pertaining to the extended Irish component.

The MIE Registrar clarified that students will only be recruited to the Irish pathway and the pathway will only run if it is approved and recognised by the Teaching Council. While the Teaching Council has approved the PME, they have not as yet approved the Irish offering. MIE representatives have met with the Teaching Council who understand that the pathway is only an addition to the currently accredited PME programme, and that recognition may therefore be accelerated. In the meantime, successful applicants will register on the existing PME having indicated on application that they wish to take the Irish-language pathway, if it is offered. Such applicants will be required to meet extended Irish language entry competencies (an oral, aural, and written competency exam) in order to be accepted onto the pathway. Applicants will therefore be presented with the choice of studying on an Irish-language pathway, but without a guarantee that it will be offered. Offering this pathway will be contingent on at least 20 students expressing interest in availing of it. An Irish-medium pathway transcript will only be issued if a graduating student meets the required exit language standard (B2 equivalent on the common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR)). A student who does not reach that standard but who passes all course requirements will receive an English-medium pathway transcript, even if they attended classes on the Irish-medium pathway. The course content mirrors that of the PME through English with an additional focus on research, pedagogy, and practice in Irish-medium settings. All modules, except for English-language modules, will be delivered and assessed through Irish. Students on the PME through Irish pathway will be taught separately to the PME through English students and will have access to resources and reading materials through Irish, including bespoke handbooks.

The Dean noted that the MIE is faced with a difficult situation – the Teaching Council requires the reassurance that the programme is ‘ready to run’ and has the approval of Trinity while the university needs assurance that graduates who opt for the Irish pathway will have their studies approved by the Teaching Council for professional registration purposes. Therefore, the ask from the MIE Registrar is that GSC and University Council approve the proposal for the new Irish pathway, subject to the forthcoming recognition of the Teaching Council. No students will be recruited to the pathway unless the Teaching Council approves the route for the purposes of registration. The School of Education DTLP has noted that the recent re-accreditation of the School’s PME programme faced a similar timeframe accreditation synchronisation with the Teaching Council. The Dean thanked the MIE Registrar for his presentation and advised members that as this was a proposal for a new pathway within the existing course rather than a new course proposal, the submission will not be externally reviewed.

The MIE Registrar acknowledged with thanks the support provided by Academic Affairs and the School of Education during the development of the proposal. There was no further discussion, and the committee endorsed the proposal for Council.

**Decision GS/23-24/114:** The committee endorsed for Council approval the proposal for a new Irish pathway on the existing Professional Master of Education (Primary Teaching).

**XX GS/23-24/115 Proposed convention on titling non-major awards by Quality and Qualifications Ireland – Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L) to present**

The Dean invited Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary, to speak to the item. Three short documents have been circulated, i.e., the proposed convention from QQI, a set of three questions from QQI, and a paper on major and non-major awards in Trinity.

In 2009 the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), QQI’s predecessor, and the IUA agreed a sectoral Convention on the titling of non-major awards which was reaffirmed in May 2023, when the IUA presented a *Discussion Paper on Sectoral Consistency in the use of Non-Major Awards* to the Irish Quality and Qualifications Forum (IQQF) Statutory Awarding Bodies Group (SABG). The IUA paper also contained a proposal to limit the usage of the word ‘professional’ in award titles. QQI recently circulated three questions to awarding bodies on the proposed Convention on the Titling of Minor, Special-Purpose, and Supplemental Classes of Awards asking:

- (Q1), whether institutions agreed to abide by the proposed titling convention for minor, special purpose and supplemental awards classes,
- (Q2), whether institution recommended that the titling of minor, special purpose and supplemental classes of awards should be regulated by a formal NFQ determination, and
- (Q3), whether there should be a convention restricting use of the term “professional” in award titles.

In order to facilitate discussion on the QQI questions, the Academic Secretary briefly outlined the award categorisation in Trinity noting that its awards are classified as Major (at NFQ levels 7, 8 and 9 at diploma, degree and master levels, and typically of 60/90/120/240 ECTS value), Minor (postgraduate certificate at NFQ level 9 with 30 ECTS), and other Non-Major Awards. All Major Awards are aligned with the National Framework for Qualifications and are the principal class of awards made at level 8 and 9 at Trinity. It was noted that Postgraduate Diploma is the title of an established major award type and cannot therefore be used for non-major awards or any other major award type. The NFQ defines Minor awards for “partial completion of the outcomes of a Major Award”, e.g., Postgraduate Certificate at Level 9. Non-major awards other than above are confined in Trinity to “Special Purpose Awards”.

In terms of the QQI questions, the Academic Secretary noted that with the exception of the level 7 Diploma in (i) Dental Nursing and (ii) Dental Hygiene that each carry 120 ECTS, all other special purpose awards align with the ECTS values proposed by the QQI convention, thus abiding the first proposed titling convention for minor, special purpose and supplemental awards classes.

The Academic Secretary stated that diverse views may emerge however in relation to how the word “professional” can or cannot be incorporated in Trinity into any future award titling convention. The current practice in Trinity, as illustrated by the PG Calendar part III Section on Professional Higher Degrees lists only three instances, out of thirteen, of award titles containing the word “professional” namely, Professional Doctorate in Dental Surgery (DChDent), Professional Doctorate in Education (DEd) and Professional Master in Education (PME). The other ten titles do not contain the word “professional” even though they are listed as professional awards. It will be difficult therefore to comply with the QQI-recommended definition that “The word ‘professional’ in award titles from levels 6 to 9 should be reserved only for awards that require external regulatory accreditation or recognition by the State or a professional body within a given disciplinary profession or awards that grant access to practise an occupation, whether *de jure* or *de facto*.” Difficulty to unambiguously define “professional” arises from the long established practice in Trinity that many courses are considered “professional” without being so titled. On the QQI-recommended wording, it will be difficult to conclude, that *any* course is not professional. For example, law leads *logically* to the professions but by no means does so *inevitably*. Also, many courses are highly professions-focused but do not prepare people to practice as they are rather aimed at *upskilling practitioners*. Trinity’s feedback to the QQI third question would need to be carefully expressed in terms of drawing a connection between a Trinity degree and a professional qualification.

In a short discussion which ensured the following views were expressed:

- i) a “professional” course can be seen as low level skills oriented in opposition to a more demanding “academic” one;
- ii) qualifying a programme as “professional” can undermine its academic focus;
- iii) industrial PhD in engineering-related disciplines can be an example of a research area where “professional” input is appreciated and necessary;
- iv) a “professional” award may give graduates a better access to jobs in some professional careers and students value it;
- v) the current practice in Trinity does not preclude the use of “professional” in award titles.

The Dean thanked the Academic Secretary for her clear presentation of the complex technical issue of award categorisation and members for their contribution to the discussion. She summed up what was agreed at the meeting in the Decision GS/23-24/115 below.

**Decision GS/23-24/115:** The Academic Secretary to advise Council that the GSC recommends the following feedback to the three QQI questions:

Re Q.1 – Trinity agrees to abide by proposed titling convention for minor, special purpose and supplemental award classes.

Re Q. 2 Trinity’s preference is for convention rather than determination.

Re Q.3. Trinity considers the current proposed wording for the use of ‘professional’ as ambiguous. Trinity’s current practice shows a limited use of the stem “professional” in award titles. A further broader consultation within the whole Sector should be carried out before the definition on what is a “professional” award can be unambiguously determined.

**XX GS/23-24/116 Results of Graduate Outcomes Survey: Report on 2022 Class – Ms Sorcha Mulcahy, Acting Directors of Careers, and Mr John Wynne, Careers Consultant (Careers Advisory Service) to present**

The item has been deferred to a future meeting.

**XX GS/23-24/117 Review of State supports for PhD students and IUA response: circulation of papers submitted by Student Representatives - Dean of Graduate Studies to lead discussion**

The Dean noted that the Agenda item was a follow on discussion from the previous meeting (GS/23-24/106). She referred to two documents circulated on behalf of the PG Representatives i.e., the “Response to the IUA Arguments against Employee Status” and “Workers in all but name, pay and conditions”. She noted that she could see from the minutes that there was a very engaged discussion on the issues at the previous meeting which she was keen to continue with a view to deciding what would be useful to share with Council, where further discussion is anticipated. The Dean will share the GSC feedback with Council.

On points of clarification, the Dean explained as follows:

- 1) The publication date of the IUA “Universities Supporting Postgraduate Researchers” is pending and is planned to coincide with the imminent publication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> report requested from the Minister of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to follow the National Review of State Supports for PhD Researchers (2023). Although the IUA document is still unpublished, it has been approved by the Rectors Assembly as final and will not therefore be amended.
- 2) Data on PhD funding in College is available via Power BI reports without providing granularity of information on the source of funding.
- 3) The profile of the source of funding varies across each discipline, where it is most useful for making meaningful statistical comparisons.
- 4) “Self-funded” category captures fee income paid directly by the student to College but covers a diversity of situations.
- 5) Students are a very diverse body with respect to funding and that needs to be acknowledged.
- 6) The IUA has always supported granting PGR students an entitlement to maternity “leave” in terms of designated time off books but has no influence on granting financial maternity “benefit” which is a government domain. Revenue recognises that PGR stipends are tax free only when students are registered on books actively pursuing their course of study. Once the student is off books any income is taxable for the duration of leave. The IUA has tried to engage with Revenue and sought legal advice how possibly to address the issue but has received conflicting advice.

The Dean summed up the points upon which consensus has been reached at the previous meeting as follows:

- i) PGR students should be in receipt of a liveable annual stipend of €25,000.
- ii) PGR students who are funded should be granted paid maternity and sick leave benefits.

The Dean noted that on the issue of student versus employee status no consensus has been reached, and it appears that it might continue to be the most controversial issue to agree on. In a discussion which ensured the following comments were made:

- i) The PG Representative noted that when students made a Freedom of Information request to College seeking evidence on College communication with Revenue no such information was captured in the returned report. The Dean offered to progress the issue offline.
- ii) The PG Representative stated that PGR students’ preference is to be treated as employees and not as students.
- iii) In some UK universities, PGRs have an employee status which is more formalised and managerial, but it appears that PhDs have less autonomy.
- iv) In Trinity, in labs where there is a mixture of postdoctoral researchers and PGRs the employee status of the first determines that they are “managed”, expected and required to perform efficiently so that outputs are delivered, and publications follow while PGRs are “taught and

- guided” towards research outputs and their supervisor’s name does not appear on their research. Aligning the mix to the only one employee model could be damaging to the discipline and PGRs.
- v) PGRs are protected in what they do while the postdoctoral fellows must deliver on the projects for which they are contracted.
  - vi) Should PGRs become employees their stipend/grant will be treated as a salary and the PI will have to pay PRSI and other employee-related charges out of their project grant thereby reducing the pot of money available to recruit fewer PhD candidates.
  - vii) Shift in PGR status is beyond the decision of any one university in Ireland; any changes to academic staff numbers in the Higher Education Sector have to be approved by the Government as public service employees.
  - viii) Some Schools fund PhDs from their own resources and any change in status would inevitably result in smaller cohorts of PhD candidates as well as a fundamental change in the supervisor’s engagement with the student.
  - ix) Shift in status might have an impact on the immigration status of non-EU PhD candidates (who comprise approximately 30% of PhD candidates nationally). The five years’ residency in the State required to apply for Irish citizenship will overlap to a significant extent with the duration on the PhD register and may lead up to citizenship entitlement.
  - x) In some universities in the UK, PhDs have dual status of employee but also a student for visa purposes.
  - xi) On the immigration issue, the PG Representative noted that non-EU PhDs arrive on a student visa which prevents their partners from working. It falls upon them to maintain the family on their stipend. A significant number of candidates cannot accept a PhD offer as they cannot bring over their families. The time spent on the PhD register does not count towards the citizenship.
  - xii) On the issue of unfunded PhDs, the PG Representative noted that unless retired or having an independent source of income, students would normally have to work to get by. The University should lobby the government which is not listening to PGRs who are therefore pushing the Universities to pressurise the government to agree to the shift in status.
  - xiii) On the issue of possible reduction in the number of PhDs resulting from the shift in status, the PG Representative noted that this is not a good enough reason *not* to change the status and *not* to grant PGRs employee rights. Students should be brought into the discussion to articulate which status they prefer.
  - xiv) On the issue of being “managed” as an employee, the PG Representative noted that PhD candidates also undergo periodic reviews and are required to regularly submit reports to funding bodies; they are treated *de facto* as employees. Supervisors do not discharge a pastoral care in their relationship with PhDs.
  - xv) In the Netherlands PhDs can follow along multiple paths to the degree, with no requirement to pay fees and no time constraints in terms of completion. In Trinity there is currently only one model and perhaps it should be diversified.

The Dean thanked all participants for their contribution to the discussion.

**Action GS/23-24/117:** The Dean to collate main discussion points and circulate them to the committee members for feedback before submission goes to Council.

**XX GS/23-24/118 VLE – Dean of Graduate Studies to update**

The Dean provided a verbal update on activities that have taken place over the past few weeks as College explores the rationale for and implications of any change to its current learning management system (LMS) and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and determine its future needs. She thanked members who participated in the review of the Schools’ needs. The current Blackboard licence will be expiring shortly, and the current version of Blackboard is reaching end of life, and a decision will have to be taken how to replace it. It is difficult to assess which particular platform should replace

the current one without having detailed knowledge of alternatives. The Dean thanked those who have been engaged in this review process.

**XX GS/23-24/119 Statement on Gen-AI – Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L) to present**  
The item has been deferred to a future meeting.

**XX GS/23-24/120 PGR monthly update (March) – 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 March. All Work Packages of Horizon 2 are actively engaging with students, Schools and professional units in the development of their proposals. Two proposals from WP#1 are on the agenda. Applications for Trinity Research Doctoral Awards and for the Sanctuary awards are in progress. School-based awards have been recruiting too.

**Action GS/23-24/120:** The PG Renewal Programme Director to email out a bespoke template for Schools for returning their candidates.

The pilot for a write down of the fee deferential for new PGR students will continue to run for another year covering admissions into 2024/25. Schools will be contacted shortly (once data on March registrants becomes available) for their feedback on the running of the pilot in its first year and its impact on the PGR recruitment. Schools currently not engaged in the pilot in year 1 will also be included. A business case for further funding for the second year of Horizon 2 is under discussion. Each WP will be bringing their proposals shortly to the GSC across two remaining meetings. The Dean thanked the PG Renewal Programme Director for her presentation.

**XX GS/23-24/121 PGR: HORIZON 2 – Curriculum: Proposal for a PGT Research Supervision Framework Memorandum from Profs Richard Reilly and Ashley Clements (Co-Leads, Work Package #1 PT Taught); Prof. Richard Reilly to present**

The Dean invited Prof. Richard Reilly, a co-lead on Work Package 1 to speak to the Agenda item. A proposal for a Postgraduate Taught Supervision Framework developed by WP1 aims to build on previous work done on enhancing the structures around the format of research outputs that are discipline appropriate across PGT programmes. The proposal was informed by internal data gathered across Schools. Views of twenty two DTLPs obtained under the ‘Voice of the Community’ exercise were also considered. The findings captured the following observations:

1. The supervision of taught postgraduate (PGT) student research can involve a diverse array of people from various backgrounds, with a range of expertise and professional affiliation.
2. All supervising individuals play crucial roles in guiding students through their research journey, ensuring a quality of academic rigour, practical application, and supporting the student’s overall progress towards achieving their academic goals.
3. External supervisors play a vital role in connecting students to wider networks and professional opportunities while enhancing Trinity’s collaborative engagement in research with enterprise, public and third sectors.
4. External supervisors, whether or not they are also adjunct staff attached to Trinity, appear to regard supervision as an esteem indicator and value their connection with students in Trinity’s postgraduate courses, as well as with Trinity itself as the premier research university in Ireland.

The proposal contains a total of 7 recommendations. A fundamental one is that every PGT student who undertakes a research project must be allocated a primary academic supervisor, who is an academic staff member in the university. Prof. Reilly called out the recommendations for members’ consideration:



1. A record confirming supervision arrangements for each student should be created and maintained by Course Directors.
2. An online method of recording supervision referred to above should be introduced. Scoping work for supervision record-keeping could be conducted as part of the remit of WP1 in 2024/25.
3. All students should be allocated a Primary Academic Supervisor who will be an academic staff member in Trinity.
4. It is not necessary for other categories of supervisors to hold any specific academic qualification, although it would be preferable that any supervisor appointed to oversee a PGT research project will have at least a Masters level qualification.
5. External supervisors should be fully informed about the roles and responsibilities of supervision and the nature of their engagement with Trinity.
6. Schools should apply measures to ensure transparency about remuneration or payment in kind, if applicable, to postdoctoral researchers, the External Support Supervisor, the Subject Matter expert, the Supervising Academic from another university, and PhD students.
7. Based on the insights gathered during this exercise, Work Package 1 has produced a framework recommended for implementation that formally acknowledges the categories of supervision employed for PGT research and delineates the roles and responsibilities of different supervisor-stakeholders involved in the supervision of PGT research. Recognising the diverse supervisory practices in operation across all disciplines in Trinity; the category (or combination of categories) of supervision used may vary according to the needs of each PGT programme.

The last three recommendations recognize that supervision increasingly draws on expertise and support from a range of stakeholders, both internal and external. It is thus essential that a supervisory system is set up that supports the diversity that nurtures active research, while ensuring that there is consistency for students in terms of support. The proposed framework covers the roles and responsibilities associated with a range of different supervision contributors.

In conclusion, Prof. Reilly spoke to the last slide outlining the proposed Framework for Postgraduate Taught Supervision headed by the Primary Academic Supervisor and supported (depending on the project) by a co-supervisor or a secondary academic supervisor, subject matter experts, external support supervisors, supervising academics from another university, Postdoctoral researchers and PhD students.

In a discussion which ensued the following views were shared:

- i) TBS DTLP, by way of an email to the Dean in advance of the meeting, requested additional clarity on the roles of the primary academic supervisor and the co-supervisor or secondary academic supervisor. He asked whether the primary academic supervisor is also the module leader for the dissertation module who at TBS is normally the programme director. The co-supervisor or secondary academic supervisor is the person who meets the student and works with them on their respective research topic. Prof. Reilly clarified that the role of a module coordinator can vary by discipline (and by project focus) and that a module coordinator may be or may not be the primary supervisor.
- ii) In response to a query seeking a rationale that postdoctoral researchers cannot be primary supervisors, the Dean clarified that there are specific HR constraints on the teaching activities that are permitted for post-doctorate employees, as they are primarily employed on research projects. She advised that the query should be raised with HR and potentially at the Research Committee. It was also noted that some funding agencies specifically prohibit postdoctoral researchers' engagement in teaching activities.
- iii) Allowing postdoctoral researchers to be engaged in teaching activities at the PGT level should be permitted if there are no HR and funding constraints.

**Action GS/23-24/121 (i):** Wording should be changed to “Postdoctoral researchers may act as primary supervisors when contract permits”.

iv) Clarification was sought as to the formality of the PhD student’s role in PGT supervision and remuneration. Additional pay might however affect the tax-free stipend threshold.

v) The PG Representative stated that the PhD student’s role in PGT supervision is different to and more demanding than that of Teaching Assistant and Demonstrator. SS undergraduate and Masters students may be the “full” responsibility of the supervising PhD student.

vi) Frequently, PhD student’s role in PGT supervision is limited with low effort but still beneficial to the student experience and students can take that role without payment if they want to.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion. She stated that PhD candidates can be part of the supervision process and provide informal feedback, some guidance on research analysis but they should not carry exclusive supervising responsibilities on research dissertations. She concluded that more work needs to be carried out to fully capture that role and an additional analysis will be submitted to the committee for further consultation. The reference to “Support from PhD students” in the Framework document for Postgraduate Taught Supervision will therefore be deleted from the document to allow the Framework to proceed to Council.

**Action GS/23-24/121 (ii):** More work to be carried out to fully capture the role(s) of the PhD student in the PGT dissertation supervision, and an additional analysis to be submitted to the committee for further consultation at a future meeting.

**Action GS/23-24/121 (iii):** To delete the reference to “Support from PhD students” in the Framework document for Postgraduate Taught Supervision

**Decision GS/23-24/121:** To submit for Council consideration a revised Framework for Postgraduate Taught Supervision with deleted reference to “Support from PhD students” in the PGT Supervision

**XX GS/23-24/122 PGR: HORIZON 2 – Curriculum Cyclical Reviews: Way of Working Dashboard: Stage Gate Approval for Define, Measure & Analyse Phases - Memorandum and dashboards from Profs Richard Reilly, Ashley Clements and Dr R. Sheridan, Programme Coordinator and Analyst (Work Package#1 PG Taught); Dr R. Sheridan to present**

The Dean invited Dr Rionnagh Sheridan, PG Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator, to speak to the circulated memorandum outlining a development, as part of Work Package 1, of a new cyclical quality review process for major postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes. Dr Sheridan’s presentation followed on her previous slide demonstration at the January meeting (GS/23-24/088). It has provided both an update on progress to date on understanding how programmes are currently reviewed internally and externally and suggestions on the issues to be considered in designing any system of cyclical reviews to operate across the university. Members were asked to confirm that the Work Package 1 (a) has identified the key issues that need to be considered in designing a cyclical review process, (b) has talked to the right groups of stakeholders, (c) has ensured that there are no gaps or errors to be addressed before starting a design phase, and if so (d) that members are satisfied to give a “go ahead” for designing a cyclical review process to come back to a future GSC for further input.

Reiterating the message from her January presentation, Dr Sheridan stated that there is no process currently in Trinity to review PGT programmes other than the School Quality Reviews. In addition, PG Committee structures are under-utilised and ineffective as forums for reviews, academic staff complain from high administrative workload of, digital infrastructure is lacking to support easy

reporting of key data points, budgets are insufficient and budget models are poorly understood by staff to ensure financial viability of programmes. These inadequacies should be addressed as a priority as otherwise Schools would have no capacity to absorb any increase in workload arising from implementation of a new cyclical review framework. The overall objective will aim to deliver self-service automated IT reporting system to support the proposed cyclical reviews so that the focus of a review is on data analysis rather than their compilation. New Cyclical Review viability checkpoints/reviews for PGT Programmes are proposed to be taking place in three stages:

1. Annually via self-reporting;
2. After the 3<sup>rd</sup> intake following approval of a new PGT Masters programme, to assess its initial performance and overall viability;
3. Every 5 years for existing programmes, and new programmes which have passed the three-year viability checkpoint.

As “doing nothing” does not seem to be an option, a recommendation put to the committee is to support the stated objective. It is anticipated that benefits should result in

- (i) the increased transparency in the ongoing management of PGT programmes;
- (ii) ensuring financial viability of PGT Programmes;
- (iii) ensuring that Programme change is properly managed, with clear oversight and governance structures in place;
- (iv) embedding a culture of continuous enhancement with guided supports and streamlined reporting mechanisms (via improved digital infrastructure) which will improve the student experience and enable academic staff to practice best-in-class quality assurance of programmes and share good practice across Trinity.

In a discussion which ensued the following views were expressed:

- 1) A consistent College-wide review will be especially beneficial for degrees delivered by multiple Schools with many shared modules with the expectation that the workload in each partner School will be proportionately reduced.
- 2) It is not clear how the “efficiency” of the new cyclical reviews will actually translate into concrete improvement actions on the ground to enhance the course profile and its recruitment.
- 3) The new cyclical reviews should be impactful, efficient and measurable, deliver actionable improvements and result in value-added actions.
- 4) Normally, Schools would currently review routinely their under-performing courses to set up an improvement plan. Any new cyclical reviews should be “light touch” as members are concerned about substantially increased workload.

The Dean thanked members for their contribution to the discussion. She concluded by noting that when a draft will be submitted to the GSC, members will have another opportunity to review that draft and determine whether there is sufficient added value in the proposal to merit further progressing it. She thanked the PG Renewal Programme Analyst and Coordinator for her presentation.

**Decision GS/23-24/122:** WP1 to produce a first draft outline of the design for a proposed new cyclical review process for PGT programmes for consideration at a future meeting.

**XX GS/23-24/123 Any Other Business – Dean of Graduate Studies to update**

**(i) Submission of Calendar III changes for 2024/25: reminder**

The reminder was circulated on foot of the email sent out to DTLPs and School Managers on 16<sup>th</sup> February that Calendar entries need to be updated on an annual basis and Schools are responsible for ensuring that their entries are current and accurate. Any changes to the Calendar must be approved at several levels: (Discipline) School, GSC, and Council. Managing the information flow to

ensure that processes align is key to ensuring that updates are correctly recorded and reflected in the published Calendar, in an appropriate timeframe. The Calendar changes need to be submitted by DTLPs by 1<sup>st</sup> April with a view to being considered by the GSC on 25<sup>th</sup> April.

- (ii) **3 minute thesis:** The Dean invited members to attend an event in Trinity to identify winners of the competition.
- (iii) **Industrial PhD update:** The School of Engineering DTLP noted that around six Schools have expressed interest in setting up the new PhD type. The aim is to develop a visible relationship with targeted industry partners with a view to enhancing funding for PGR students and scale up industry-related projects in Trinity. The new type of Industrial PhD would be 6 year part-time or 4 year full-time and will contain the current taught component plus one more additional industry-specific module to be designed and a thesis as a final deliverable. The PhD student will stay either within the employer's base or in Trinity.

**Action GS/23-24/123:** The School of Engineering DTLP to submit a draft outline on the proposed Industrial PhD to a future GSC.

## **XX Section B for Noting and Approval**

### **XX GS/23-24/124 Request to discontinue two-year part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise (Online) [PDMD CEXE-20] from 2024/25 from the School of Medicine**

The committee noted and endorsed the School's request to discontinue two-year part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise (Online) from 2024/25. The online MSc in Clinical Exercise has recently been approved. The MSc has a framework approach whereby students can choose to complete only the Postgraduate Certificate (year 1), only the Postgraduate Diploma (years 1 and 2) or the MSc (years 1, 2 and 3). As it is possible to complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise part-time using the new framework, there is now no need to have a different entry route for those who wish to complete the Postgraduate Diploma part-time. Removal of entry to the part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise Online will remove duplication and prevent a future administrative overlap.

**Decision GS/23-24/124:** The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed discontinuation of two-year part-time Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Exercise (Online) [PDMD CEXE-20] from 2024/25.

### **XX GS/23-24/125 Request to suspend MC in "Domestic Violence Child Protection: Training for Child Protection & Welfare Practitioners" for 2024/25 from the School of Social Work and Social Policy**

The committee noted and endorsed the School's request to suspend the intake on the micro-credential entitled "Domestic Violence Child Protection: Training for Child Protection & Welfare Practitioners" for 2024/25. The staff member who delivers the micro-credential will be on sabbatical for the year and unavailable to deliver it.

**Decision GS/23-24/125:** The committee recommended for Council approval the request to suspend the intake on the micro-credential entitled "Domestic Violence Child Protection: Training for Child Protection & Welfare Practitioners" for 2024/25.

### **XX GS/23-24/126 Request to change delivery of MC in "Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: Policy and People" (SS7MC4) from Hilary to Michaelmas Term 2024 from the School of Social Work Social Policy**

The committee noted and endorsed the School's request for a change of the term of delivery for micro-credential SS7MC4 "Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: Policy and People" in 2024/25 to

Michaelmas Term 2024. The micro-credential is currently delivered in Hilary term. The change is required to align the PG Diploma in Social Policy and Practice module delivery with the MC delivery and to facilitate staff research sabbatical leave.

**Decision GS/23-24/126:** The committee recommended for Council approval the request for a change of the term of delivery for SS7MC4 “Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: Policy and People” in 2024/25 to Michaelmas Term 2024.

## **XX Section C for Noting**

### **GS/23-24/127 HORIZON 2: Completion of Delivery Closing Report from WP#1 (PT Taught): Exit Award Framework for PGT Programmes**

Members were presented with a delivery closing report on Exit Award in Trinity. There is only one exit award in Trinity i.e., that of the postgraduate diploma (at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications) from a stand-alone taught Masters, either part-time or full-time, upon completion of 60ECTS of taught modules. The exit award title reflects that of the parent course. A Postgraduate Diploma Exit Award is conferred on students leaving the Masters programme in cases where they either voluntarily withdraw from the Masters programme or do not successfully pass its research element, including any resits or resubmissions of research.

### **GS/23-24/128 Draft Minutes of the Royal Irish Academy of Music Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

The RIAM ACDC draft minutes of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were circulated to members.

### **GS/23-24/129 Draft Minutes of the Marino Institute of Education Associated College Degrees Committee (RIAM ACDC) of 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

The MIE ACDC draft minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were circulated to members.

### **GS/23-24/130 Approval of PGT Course Proposals in 2024/25 – advance notice on the submission of Expression of Interest form – Memorandum from Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) and Aoife Kelly, Programme Administrator (PG Renewal)**

Members were reminded that new PGT course proposals will have to go through the new 2 stage approval process and will be considered at designated Graduate Studies Committee meetings in the academic year 2024/25. Bespoke GSC dates for course proposals will be announced at the May meeting as they are linked to Council dates still to be approved for 2024/25. A completed Expression of Interest form for proposed new programmes for consideration by GSC in 2024/25 will need to be submitted to Academic Affairs and PG Renewal by 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024. The form will go live on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024.

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

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 21 March 2024