



GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held in College Boardroom in Trinity Business School
at 10am on Thursday 25 April 2024

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 Wladislaw Rivkin, Trinity Business School

Professor Stephen Connon, School of Chemistry

Professor Ivana Dusparic, School of Computer Science and Statistics

Professor Paula Quigley, School of Creative Arts

Professor Ioannis Polyzois, School of Dental Science

Professor Noel Ó Murchadha, School of Education

Professor Sarah McCormack, School of Engineering

Professor 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 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 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

Ms Patricia Callaghan, Academic Secretary (TT&L)

Mr Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office

Ms Breda Walls, Director of Student Services

Ms Ewa Sadowska, Administrative Officer (Academic Affairs, TT&L)

In attendance for all items:

Ms Leona Coady, Programme Director, Postgraduate Renewal Programme

Ms Frances Leogue, IT support Administrative Officer, Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

Prof. Immo Warntjes, Associate Dean of Research on behalf of Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research

In attendance for Postgraduate Renewal Items:

Ewa Adach, Programme Analyst and Coordinator (PG Renewal)
Aoife Kelly, Programme Administrator (PG Renewal)

Postgraduate representatives – attendance for all items:
Mr Rory O'Sullivan, Postgraduate representative

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

Apologies:
Prof. Sinéad Ryan, Dean of Research
Prof. Cathal Cadogan, School of Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr Geoffrey Bradley, Information Technology Services
Dr Cormac Doran, Assistant Academic Secretary, Graduate Education (TT&L)
Ms Almudena Moreno Borrallo, Postgraduate representative

In attendance for individual items:
Prof. Deirdre Nic Chárthaigh (School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies) for item GS/23-24/133
Ms Fedelma Mc Namara, Executive Director-ASD (Office of Chief Academic Officer) for item GS/23-24/134
Ms Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) for item GS/23-24/136

The Dean of Graduate Studies noted the return of Prof. Paula Quigley to the committee as the School of Creative Arts DTLP and thanked Prof. Jennifer O'Meara, the exiting DTLP, for her contributions to the attended meetings.

XX Section A

XX GS/23-24/131 Minutes of GSC of 21 March 2024

The minutes were approved as circulated with a minor change on page 4 (GS/23-24/114) replacing the reference to MEd by "the School's PME programme faced a similar timeframe accreditation synchronisation with the Teaching Council."

XX GS/23-24/132 Matters Arising

The Dean advised members that all Actions from the March 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 10th April. Most Matters Arising were closed off and covered in the Dean's memorandum circulated in advance of the meeting.

Re GS/23-24/117: The Dean reported on the "Briefing note on student status of PhD researchers" considered by Council at its April meeting. She noted that a range of views from staff and students were represented at Council. She further noted that the decision on the status of PhD researchers as student/employee was outside the remit of any one university as it is a sectoral issue. No Actions were asked of Council and no Actions were mandated or approved. Discussions around the issues will continue.

XX GS/23-24/133 New course proposal: Postgraduate Diploma in Irish for Teachers – Prof. Deirdre Nic Chárthaigh (School of Languages, Literatures & Cultural Studies) to present

The Dean welcomed Prof. Deirdre Nic Chárthaigh, a prospective course director who noted that the course proposal resulted from a successful tender from the Department of Education (DoE). The new course will be a framework-based part-time Postgraduate Certificate followed by Postgraduate Diploma (Top up) over two years. An additional 10 ETCS is added to the usual 60 ETCS Postgraduate Diploma to comply with Teaching Council Subject Requirements. The proposed course is a collaboration between two Schools (LLCS and Education) and the Marino Institute of Education. The programme is fully funded by the DoE on a per-participant basis, with a guaranteed per-participant payment to be made in respect of a minimum of 40 students per intake. Students will not be liable for any fees. In addition, the DoE will fund a new full-time Assistant Professor in the Department of Irish and Celtic Studies, a new part-time Assistant Professor (0.5) in the School of Education, and a new part-time lecturer (0.5) in the Marino Institute of Education. The aim of the programme is to upskill post-primary teachers to teach Irish as a subject, in order to meet the market demand in teacher supply, as Irish has been identified as the second most challenging subject in terms of teacher recruitment.

It was noted that the course proposal was put together in record time as the result of the tender was only made public in mid-March. Additionally, the Department of Education requires that the first cohort of students must register in 2024/25. However, given that staffing resources will not be in place until January 2025, the course cannot commence in September 2024. The admission cycle will therefore not match Trinity's usual September start, as the first two years of intake will have to register in January (i.e., January 2025, January 2026 for Year 1, and January 2026 and 2027 for Year 2 for the first two cohorts). The risks associated with the January arrangement have been fully discussed with the AR. Should the programme be successful in securing further funding, from the third cohort intake (2027 new entrants), registration will revert to the September schedule.

In a short discussion which followed, Prof. Nic Chárthaigh clarified that administrative support for the proposed course, inbuilt in the funding, will be provided by the Department of Irish and Celtic Studies. The workload of 30ECTS/40ECTS allocation over two years (respectively) should be a manageable challenge as there are similar part-time courses in the Faculty with successful completion rates. The fact that the proposed course was put together in response to the Department of Education tender has eliminated the need to seek approval from the Teaching Council. Discussions are in progress with the Connemara provider of the 4-week Gaeltacht residential placement to explore the feasibility of spreading the placement over two periods of two weeks over two years.

The Dean thanked Prof. Nic Chárthaigh for her presentation and members for their feedback. The committee agreed to recommend the proposal to Council.

Decision GS/23-24/133: The committee endorsed the current proposal for submission to Council subject to a favourable external review.

XX GS/23-24/134 Consultation on Strategic Plan 2025-2030 – Ms Fedelma Mc Namara, Executive Director-ASD (Office of Chief Academic Officer) to present

The Dean invited Ms Fedelma Mc Namara, Executive Director-ASD (Office of Chief Academic Officer). The Executive Director noted that the development of Trinity's next five-year strategic plan for 2025-2030 has started, and in line with new HEA requirements the first round of consultations is commencing with designated groups of stakeholders.

Action GS/23-24/134(i): Members were asked to participate in an online anonymous survey open until 7 June to provide feedback on priorities for the strategic plan.

A new strategic development plan should be published not later than within 3 months after the expiration of the current plan – Trinity's targeted date is July 2025. The last strategic plan positioned

Graduate Education as a key priority and set the foundation for the work that has been undertaken under the PG Renewal Programme. The new plan aims to enhance Trinity's profile as a leading university at a global level, to promote its unique strengths and to navigate increasingly challenging domestic and international higher education landscapes characterised by limited funding. The Executive Director was seeking members' feedback in the first round of consultations on three questions:

1. What one strategic action could we take that would transform the way we operate during the next five years (2025-30)?
2. Why do you consider this important for our institution?
3. What needs to change or be in place to achieve this?

Due to time constraints, comments referred only to the first question and focused on systems and processes, clarity of information, and establishing the single source of "truth" for online documentation. Members suggested a review of administrative practices and processes to eliminate inefficiencies and improve communication and IT infrastructure. New School strategic programmes should be clearly aligned with the new College strategy which should have clear connectivity with the directions Schools wish to pursue. More should be invested in support of staff in early career stages and PhD students. Specific teaching needs of professional Schools should be addressed in practice-based education. The College financial situation should be overhauled to ensure stability of future growth. In relation to non-strategic but more operational issues, it was suggested that the current four types of research scholarships be more distinctly named and the garda vetting system be simplified. A hybrid type of programme delivery was suggested to facilitate students' remote attendance bypassing the need to reside in Dublin given the high cost of living. Local online sites should be cleaned up of defunct pages and links so that one source of "truth" be established for all essential online documentation.

The Dean thanked the Executive Director-ASD for her presentation and invited members to share additional feedback directly with Ms Mc Namara.

Action GS/23-24/134(ii): Members to email the Dean broken links/outdated forms on the Graduate Studies website.

Action GS/23-24/134(iii): Members to email the Executive Director-ASD further feedback.

XX GS/23-24/135 Dean of Graduate Studies' Annual Report for 2022/23 - Dean of Graduate Studies to present

The Dean introduced the 2022/23 report as a draft under development. She noted that the annual report provides an opportunity to look back at the achievements of the previous year, and to capture considerable challenges such as the lifting of Covid restrictions and a return to the "usual" in person business around January 2023. Collating the report has been a collaborative effort, with support and input from Ewa Sadowska, Leona Coady, Frances Leogue and Schools.

Following the previous practice, the report has been set out in three main sections. Section A is a commentary on the AR Annual Report data. The number of postgraduate students increased (70%-30% PGT/PGR respectively), most students registered full-time and on taught Masters programmes, a quarter on the PhD track. Registrations went up overall especially of Non-EU applicants. India and China are the biggest recruitment markets. Research applications went up significantly but did not translate fully into registrations especially in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities where only 25% of successful applicants registered. However, this was offset by the conversion rate of 80%/90% in the other two Faculties.

The much longer Section B captures activities of the Graduate Studies Committee, in the Office of the Dean, reports on School highlights and contacts with external partnerships. It provides a summary of the key topics discussed at LERU meetings, and those at the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies group. Section C focuses on the current state of play and possible future directions and considerations; much of this content is linked to the PG Renewal Programme whose deliverables were regularly considered by the committee throughout the whole year. A comment was made from the floor that the increased number of postgraduate students, with the Non-EU cohort on the rise, should be matched by an increased investment in student support services, improved systems and processes, and diversified target recruitment markets. The Dean commented that there are proportionately far more PG student cases than UG ones. Of particular concern is that nearly half of Non-EU PGR students brought a student case in 2022/23, and every case no matter how insignificant requires staff resources from various services and offices to resolve.

Looking into the future, the Dean referred to Horizon 2 goals of the PG Renewal Programme and some challenges that need to be monitored such as the discrepancy between high application rates and low registration numbers in some disciplines, the balance between the Non-EU and EU students, and College financial vulnerability due to heavy reliance in some programmes on particular global recruitment markets – College financial resources are intimately linked to successful recruitment.

In conclusion, the Dean underlined that she has tried to recognise the very large number of people who contribute to the activities of the Graduate Studies mission of the university. She invited members to email her their feedback before the final report is submitted to Council. The Dean undertook to bring her report for 2023/24 to the committee much earlier the following year, given the improved reporting functionality now available through Power BI analytics.

Action GS/23-24/135: Members to submit their additional feedback to the Dean to be included in the version for Council.

Decision GS/23-24/135: The Dean to incorporate members' feedback into the revised 2022/23 Annual Report for Council.

XX GS/23-24/136 Academic Integrity: Policy, Procedure, Curriculum Glossary, and Calendar Regulations -Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies, and Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) to attend

The Dean welcomed Ms Lizzie Whitcher, Education Policy Developer (Academic Affairs, TT&L) to talk members through changes affecting four key documents related to Academic Integrity – the revised policy, procedures to be followed, the Curriculum Glossary as they relate to academic integrity and the Calendar regulation changes that need members' approval. The Education Policy Developer reminded members that in June 2023, Council approved new Calendar regulations relating to academic integrity, including a revision to the procedure in cases of suspected academic misconduct. As a result of feedback provided in January 2024 by the academic community on a pilot of the revised procedure, a number of changes to the procedure and regulations have been made as follows: recalibration of indicative scores, particularly for upper year students and repeat instances of concern; clarification as to who makes decisions on capping/reducing marks; offering students the option of a referencing penalty at level 1; provision of options of mandatory academic training in collaboration with Student Learning Development; clarification of the wording in the consequences; clarification of whether a record of academic misconduct will appear on a student's transcript; an introduction of a separate procedure for PGR students to send cases to the Dean of Graduate Studies who will then triage those either to the Research Integrity Officer, the Junior Dean or back to the School to be dealt with under the normal procedure. In addition, as the existing Plagiarism Policy was scheduled for review this year and in accordance with the Policy Management Framework Policy, a procedure document has been developed alongside the updated policy. The updated policy

also refers to the revised Curriculum Glossary. A slight improvement in the recording of cases in SITS has been noted in 2023/24 but only eighty one cases were captured under-representing the presumed real number of cases occurring across College. Record keeping is essential to ensure that previous instances have been captured and the process functions fairly for every student.

A short discussion followed. As a result of the recent simplification of the process it appears that email communications on AI breaches may not be taken as seriously by the student as the former mandatory hearing in person. A suggestion was made to keep a warning as a deterrent that a reference to an AI infringement might appear on the student's transcript. The School of Education DTLP has found effective an optional meeting by the student with the module coordinator rather than with the DTLP in relation to the student's AI breach. The Dean underlined that the indicative score does not "make" a decision which in all instances rests with a designated academic considering the case. She also clarified that the new procedure for PGR students only applies to their research including all assessments such as an annual review, the confirmation report, and the final thesis but not to the taught component (10-30 ECTS associated with taught modules).

The Education Policy Developer clarified that with members' feedback from today's meeting the documents will go back to the Steering Group for a further consideration before returning to GSC in May for a final approval.

Action GS/23-24/136: With feedback from the meeting the documents will go back to the Steering Group for a further consideration before returning to GSC in May for a final approval.

XX GS/23-24/137 Discussion on "Industrial" PhD proposal - Memorandum from Prof. Sarah McCormack (School of Engineering DTLP)

Prof. Sarah McCormack has been coordinating the initiative on an industry-focused PhD pathway over the past couple of months with a number of collaborators. She reminded members that at the GSC meeting in December 2023, she had proposed setting up an industry-focused PhD in the School of Engineering. The Dean deemed it to be of broader interest within College and requested that a subgroup be set up to assess interest in other Schools. In addition to Prof. McCormack, members of the sub-group comprised Prof. Cathal Cadogan of the School of Pharmacy, Prof. Catherine Darker and Ms Dara O'Mahony of the School of Medicine, Prof. Erna O'Connor of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, Prof. Ivana Dusparic of the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Prof. John Dinsmore of the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Prof. Wladislaw Rivkin of the Trinity Business School, Ms Sarah O'Brien (Internship Coordinator and Industry Liaison) and Mr Daniel Wearen (HCI Postgraduate Officer) from the School of Engineering, and Ms Deirbhle O'Reilly representing the E3.

The sub-group seeks to introduce an industry/profession-focused PhD option not by creating a new pathway but rather strategically rebranding opportunities within the existing part-time PhD offering as a front-facing opportunity for the industry to explicitly align PhD research opportunities with the evolving needs of external stakeholders as relevant to individual disciplines, and ultimately to enhance the employability and practical skills of Trinity's research graduates. The memorandum sets out the thinking that has emerged. As there are still details to be addressed, a broader input from members would be helpful to establish whether there are additional considerations or opportunities that should still be incorporated. This model is offered on the understanding that it might not be useful in all Schools.

The starting point for Schools is to identify external stakeholders interested to register their employees on the part-time PhD in Trinity. The employee is to work with the employer to determine a research area and an agreement on payment of the fees and salary is set up.

The industry-branded offering aims to involve companies in supporting PhD research in Trinity. No new PhD programmes are intended to be set up. Certain issues will have to be addressed between the employer and the PhD candidate who secures an agreement with the employer for their time and financial commitment and identifies a local mentor in the company. The next step is to identify a supervisor in Trinity, agree a research proposal and address any emerging IP issues before a PhD project is initiated. The IP templates already in operation in Trinity will be used. On the understanding that every PhD is different, these industry-facing agreements will be individually worked out for each candidate between Trinity, the candidate and their employer. There will be no additional costs for Trinity, and the research will be employer-based. A hybrid model of engagement research carried out between Trinity and the employer already exists in some Schools as does the full-time Trinity-based model where students work entirely in Trinity supported by the company and the supervisor. The supervisory structure is also already established. A provision for a taught component is in place and will be tailored to the new needs of the industry-facing arrangements. The proposal formalises some of the relationships already established by creating a newly branded pathway for external stakeholders to engage with Trinity through PhD research.

In a discussion which ensued the following comments were made:

- i) The Law Reform Commission and the Irish Human Rights Commission and Not for Profit NGOs do not fit the label of “industry-facing PhD” so a broader title would have greater impact. The new pathway looks like a form of “sponsored” PhD. It would be necessary to clearly convey to the “sponsor” that in spite of their “sponsoring”, they will not have a stake in deciding the outcome of their sponsored PhD student as they are not purchasing the research outcome. The academic freedom of discovering new knowledge has to be preserved. There will be some advanced learning in terms of managing expectations for some potential sponsors. For example, the Human Rights Commission normally sources “reports” with practical suggestions, but the PhD outcome might not have any immediate practical applications and may be normatively inert.

Action GS/23-24/137(i): A new broader title other than “industry-facing PhD” to be identified for the “sponsored” PhD pathway.

- ii) Current stats will need to be provided on how many similarly sponsored PhD projects have been taking place in Trinity and in which disciplines.

Action GS/23-24/137(ii): Prof. McCormack to seek to provide data on similarly sponsored PhD projects in Trinity and their disciplines.

- iii) The Dean advised that the closest current model to what is being proposed is the Irish Research Council's Employment-Based Postgraduate Programme linking researchers in all disciplines with workplace experience in an employment partner. Data on this model should be available.
- iv) In addition, in the School of Engineering, there are part-time PhD students currently employed who come in a few days a week and this arrangement could be used as a model to be re-branded for the proposed industry-faced PhD pathway.
- v) The Dean noted that employment-based research schemes may be used in many Schools. Issues can arise however that need careful guardrails such as the employment agency ceasing operation or students leaving their employers without completing their research. Benefits of the proposed new pathway could be considerable, but challenges need to be carefully managed.
- vi) Prof. McCormack confirmed that the proposed industry-facing PhD pathway is intended to be predominantly part-time over 6 years, although full-time registration over 4 years might also be accommodated. More clarity would need to be identified to specify the new pathway as different vis-à-vis currently sponsored employment-based part-time PhD to get the buy in. Six years on the part-time register would be a long requirement for the employer to sustain. To protect the PhD project within the timeframe of that length with an outside company would require a more formalised arrangement.

Action GS/23-24/137(iii): Prof. McCormack to provide clear parameters to differentiate the proposed industry-facing/sponsored PhD pathway from the current research funding PhD schemes in Trinity.

vii) In medicine, the twin-track commitment is already in place, and the School of Medicine DTLP has been participating in the WG. Clinical responsibilities are undertaken alongside the PhD track requiring the determined protection of time in terms of the student's "study leave" for the latter while discharging clinical duties which normally get prioritised. Stats from the School will be forwarded to Prof. McCormack.

Action GS/23-24/137(iv): The School of Medicine DTLP to forward stats from her School to Prof. McCormack.

viii) The Postgraduate Student Support Officer shared his experience of dealing with PhD students sponsored by employers: employers not holding up to the agreed arrangements, a new management structure de-prioritising the earlier agreed support for the employee-student. PhD progression records should capture the arrangements agreed with the employer. A particular difficulty arises for the student if an employer's representative sits on the thesis committee when the employer does not respect the agreed entitlement to the student's study leave. Such issues should be addressed in the design phase of the proposed PhD pathway.

ix) In the Schools of Physics and Mathematics there are full-time PhD students on salary/stipend funded by the IBM. They spend 3 days in the IBM research and the other 2 days on campus. The scheme has been running smoothly and no issues have been reported.

x) Prof. McCormack has consulted Trinity Innovation and was appraised of the IBM-bespoke PhD arrangements. Her aim is to ensure that the proposed new pathway clearly maps out a sufficiently broad and flexible route of support for PhD students with secured sponsorship from medium and small enterprises.

Action GS/23-24/137(v): Members with experience of industry-sponsored PhD students to share issues directly with Prof. McCormack.

Action GS/23-24/137(vi): A revised proposal to come back to the GSC.

XX GS/23-24/138 Calendar III changes for 2024/25: revised Appeals entry – Memorandum from Dean of Graduate Studies and Martin McAndrew, Postgraduate Student Support Officer, Senior Tutor's Office

The Dean noted that the Calendar sets out the circumstances and processes under which a student can bring an Academic Appeal. As the current entry neither allows nor disallows a student to bring an appeal against the outcome of the same assessment component multiple times, the consequence of this lack of clarity is that some students understand the process as iterative. This may potentially delay them taking necessary actions to address recognised issues that compromise their ability to engage with and to demonstrate the outcome of that learning. The Dean invited members to review a proposed new Calendar entry which seeks to limit the number of times a student can appeal against an outcome of assessment on the same module, but also to ensure that sufficient flexibility is retained to address those exceptional situations that emerge from time to time:

67: Students who are permitted to repeat an assessment as an outcome of an appeal process are not normally permitted to appeal to repeat the same assessment again.

68 In exceptional cases, a student may be permitted to submit a further appeal, where the subsequent appeal is made on different grounds (i-iii, above). It is not normally possible to base such an exceptional appeal on the same ad misericordiam grounds.

The aim is to ensure that flexibility is protected but within some broad parameters that constrain the extent to which students can return to the appeals procedure.

In a discussion which followed the following feedback was shared:

- i) To remove “again” from provision 67.
- ii) “Normally” should be retained both in 67 and 68 provisions as the word allows for all life circumstances to be covered thus ensuring maximum flexibility in the interpretation of appeals regulations.
- iii) Cutting “Normally” in 67 while keeping it in 68 works in prescribing the rule while also giving guidance to ensure that students and tutors etc know “where they stand”.
- iv) The Postgraduate Student Support Officer clarified that the intention behind the proposed regulatory change is to convey to the student that there is a limit on their attempts to bring an appeal on the same issue, and any obstacle that might inhibit their performance should be flagged in advance.
- v) It is not that the “same grounds” should be ruled out but the same “case circumstances” which can be within the same grounds for example on health *ad mis* initially and subsequently on the bereavement *ad mis*.
- vi) The Dean suggested that combining 67 and 68 could be considered.

Action GS/23-24/138: The Dean and the Postgraduate Student Support Officer to liaise with the School of Law DTLP directly to finalise the wording of the proposed Appeals entry.

The Dean concluded the discussion by thanking members for their contribution and noted that the sentiment of the meeting was in support of the proposed Appeals entry.

Decision GS/23-24/138: The proposed Appeals entry to be approved subject to final editing in consultation with the School of Law DTLP.

XX GS/23-24/139 PGR monthly update (April) – 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 April: deadline for Sanctuary applications falls on the 1st May, templates are circulated for the School-based research awards for 2024/25 PhD, and PI-based scheme evaluations panels for STEM and Health Sciences are being scheduled. An email invitation is out to a survey to assess the impact of the pilot Non-EU fee differential write down, both financially and within Schools for an interim report to be brought to the Finance Committee and on to Board in May. At that meeting Board will be asked to continue with the pilot for another year of student intake (i.e., September 2024) in spite of the significant financial cost to the University. The fee write-down for students already in the system is protected through to completion (or to 48 months after the point of registration). A number of deliverables will come to the committee’s last meeting in May.

XX GS/23-24/140 PGR HORIZON 2: Structured PhD and Doctoral Programmes (Development of students’ multi-dimensional skillsets): Proposal for a standardized template for professional development planning (PDP) for Postgraduate Research Students – Memorandum from Prof. Rachel McLoughlin (Lead, Work Package#2 Research) to present

Prof. McLoughlin set out the work accomplished by the Work Package#2 on PDPs. Currently two main PDP audit templates are available to research students i.e., one from the Careers and the other from the Postgraduate Advisory Service. Over the past months, WP#2 has reviewed the templates and explored potential synergies. The work package has concluded that they are useful at different stages of the PhD and should be retained as helpful tools. In addition, the WP#2 has put in place a new integrated PDP form for students to fill out annually for discussion at the annual meeting with the Thesis Committee. The new PDP will align with the IUA Doctoral Skills Statement to enhance the supports for students’ professional development planning. The proposed form has been positively reviewed by PhD students. For the PDP template to be useful and support students effectively,

training on the use of the resource will be required for PhD students, supervisors, and Thesis Committee members.

In a discussion which followed the following feedback was shared:

- i) The School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies DTLP has found the new Thesis Committee meeting format in year 1 too onerous for the initial stage of the PhD student when the committee attempts to evaluate whether the student is academically able to complete a PhD and therefore the skills audit should be inbuilt from year 2.
- ii) The proposed form is a self-reflection tool. Students do not have to engage with all the skills areas at all stages of their PhD and no section on the form is compulsory – students select what sections they want to fill in and what skills they want to develop and will discuss their plans and strategies with their supervisor and the Thesis Committee. Articulation of transversal and transferable skills is very useful for the University to acknowledge and for employers to identify students' strengths.
- iii) Time and personal management and project planning skills are important to reflect on by students in year 1 on the PhD register.
- iv) The PDP is a student-driven project and supervisors do not expect to guide students on it and therefore training for supervisors would be very useful.
- v) Many new PG Renewal initiatives approved by Council are still to be adequately socialised.
- vi) Referring to recent informal feedback from his fellow PhD students, the student representative shared his concern about the structure of the proposed PDP form as abstract, time consuming to fill in and the language not constructive to students to help them in their PhD work; students should be able to state in plain language what they did and what they are planning to do.
- vii) Some students are better than others in articulating their skills while others might not reflect on them until they are asked to do so. The PDP form might not be equally valuable to all students as it can be seen as “more work for the sake of work” by increasing the onerous burden on students distracting them away from their research.
- viii) The proposed PDP form appears to give an impression that PhD is a training for a job even though it is exactly the opposite. There should be freedom to engage in a focused way with a research project without being distracted by the box ticking exercise. It is a wrong direction for the student to follow.
- ix) By embedding the form as part of the annual progression process, it can be seen not as an extra add on but as an integral component of the student development. The supervisor will be key to enhance the value of the PDP for the student as a constructive reflection exercise. The success of the PDP form depends on getting supervisors on board.
- x) The WP#2 would need to reflect how to support supervisors to support students in the use of the PDP before the form gets launched. A resource should be developed for supervisors and a group of volunteer supervisors be identified to try out the form.
- xi) The PDP exercise might align with some disciplines better than with others, and it would be useful to identify those suitable disciplines in advance of the College-wide launch as the goal is to enhance the visibility of the skills of a Trinity PhD graduate. Some supervisors might not be persuaded that it adds value in the context of their disciplines, and that would need to be acknowledged, but there is a real merit to identify the disciplines where that value can be apparent and take the learning from it. It was agreed to pilot the form with willing supervisors and their students.

The committee supported the PDP form to go to Council on the understanding that it will be piloted to assess the process value before any decision is made to roll it out across College and to assess what additional resources for supervisors might need to be developed. The feedback has been specific not in relation to the form but to the concept and the merits of the PDP process.

Decision GS/23-24/140: The introduction of PDP form is to be submitted for Council approval as a pilot whose results will determine whether there is sufficient value in the process to be rolled out College-wide.

XX GS/23-24/141 Any Other Business

i) Resources in TBS: Process document for preparation of External Examiner's visit - Prof. Wladislaw Rivkin (TBS DTLP) to present

The Business School has developed a range of resources to help external examiners to navigate some of Trinity systems and to clarify how to access online materials. As there are continuing technical challenges for external examiners to access documentation on Trinity site, having reviewed the TBS materials, the Dean considered that committee members would find them helpful. The TBS DTLP spoke to the resources at the meeting. He mentioned the designated OneDrive folder where all required materials are shared with external examiners by the administrative director, and presented a process put in place as part of the MBA programmes "External Examiner's Moderation Process". A video guiding external examiners through the "Exemplary Tutorial for Externals of the Flexible Executive MBA" with a link in the circulated document was also referred to.

In conclusion, the Dean mentioned that a new 2-step authentication soon will be required by all external examiners as a way of mitigating potential cyber-security risks, but she recognised that this change will increase access difficulty for external examiners.

Action GS/23-24/141(i): Members willing to share their best practice of making materials available to external examiners to contact TBS DTLP.

A suggestion was made that in order to further improve efficiency a process might be put in place whereby the approval of the nomination form triggers a sign up to the VLE and a subsequent set up of the external examiner in the HR for the pay – the three processes are not currently automated.

Action GS/23-24/141(ii): The Dean to explore the proposed "connected back of house trigger system" for external examiners' set up.

ii) Annual Reviews/Confirmation and Progression – Dean of Graduate Studies to update

The Dean reminded DTLPs that March registrants should have completed their confirmation process by now. Power BI reports can show where respective Schools are at in the process. September registrants are also approaching their deadline for completion of their confirmation process. The new "Confirmation and thesis committee annual review" form is to be used prospectively by students who are due to go through their confirmations next year.

iii) GSC meeting dates in 2024/25

Eight GSC meeting dates were circulated for 2024/25. It was noted that three meetings i.e., on 14 November 2024, 12 December 2024 and 23 January 2025 will be reporting to one Council meeting on 5 February 2025 whose circulation date is 28 January 2025.

The Dean reminded members that new course proposals must be approved by Council before they can be marketed. A new course marketing for Non-EU applicants must be approved 12 months in advance of its commencement date. In order to commence in September, the course targeting predominantly the EU market must be approved by the preceding February.

XX Section B for Noting and Approval

XX GS/23-24/142 GSC Sub-committee on Micro-credentials: Draft Minutes of 16 April 2024 and Memorandum from Prof. Owen Conlan, Chair of GSC Sub-committee on Micro- credentials

The Micro-credentials Sub-committee met on the 16th April 2024 with Prof. Siobhán Corrigan as Acting Chair. The Draft Minutes of that meeting refer to two proposals for HCI Pillar 3 micro-credentials were reviewed, although none were approved at this time. The Sub-committee also reviewed and approved a number of change requests in the Schools of Engineering, Psychology, Nursing and Midwifery and Trinity Business Schools. The Graduate Studies Committee noted and endorsed the Draft Minutes of the Micro-credentials Sub-committee.

The Dean has also formally extended her thanks to Prof. Owen Conlan who chaired the sub-committee since its inception and also thanked Prof. Siobhan Corrigan who has taken over the chair role.

Decision GS/23-24/142: The committee recommended for Council approval the Draft Minutes of the Micro-credentials Sub-committee of the 16th April 2024.

XX GS/23-24/143 Request from School of Dental Science for suspension of DChDent (Paediatric Dentistry) in 2024/25 for new admissions

The committee noted and endorsed the proposed suspension of DChDent (Paediatric Dentistry) for 2024/25 for new admissions as a result of staff shortages on the doctoral programme in the School of Dental Science.

Decision GS/23-24/143: The committee recommended for Council approval the proposed suspension of DChDent (Paediatric Dentistry) in 2024/25 for new admissions.

XX GS/23-24/144 Proposed Calendar III changes for 2024/25 from Dean of Graduate Studies

i) New entry: Eligibility to supervise research components of taught Masters programmes

A new Calendar III entry for 2024/25 was drafted following the approval from the GSC in March and the University Council in April 2024 for the proposed Framework for Postgraduate Taught Research Supervision. The Dean of Graduate Studies has requested members' feedback on the proposed draft entry.

Decision GS/23-24/144(i): Proposed new entry on eligibility to supervise research components of taught Masters programmes was recommended to Council.

ii) New entry: Exit awards for PG Taught Programmes

The approval from GSC in November 2023 and University Council in January 2024 for the proposed Exit Award Framework for Postgraduate Taught Programmes provided for the introduction of new language to the Calendar to define the purpose of the exit award, and additional criteria associated with the award, aligned to the approved framework. A new entry has been drafted highlighting the proposed changes.

Decision GS/23-24/144(ii): Proposed new entry on Exit awards for PG Taught Programmes was recommended to Council.

iii) Revised general regulations for taught graduate programmes

GSC in October and Council in November 2023 approved the progression transfer between the traditional and the framework pathways on the Masters programmes which run both pathways in parallel. Since then, the regulation pertaining to the completion timeframe of framework programmes in Calendar III has been reviewed as it appeared to be unclear. To address the ambiguity, a new time limit for completion of full credit volume of the framework pathway (P.Grad.Cert. to Masters) is proposed to be 8 years from the date of initial registration on the pathway.

Decision GS/23-24/144(iii): The proposed time limit of 8 years on the framework pathway from the date of initial registration was recommended to Council.

GS/23-24/145 HORIZON 2: Structured PhD & Doctoral Programmes (Supervision) – Conflict Management and Resolution Flowchart – Memorandum from Prof. Mary Hughes (Lead, WP#6 Staff Experience)

A conflict resolution flowchart was drafted as a visual tool in the package of supports to be put in place in relation to the development of best practice for conflict resolution in relationships between supervisors and postgraduate students. The flowchart outlines a series of steps and decision points that help in identifying the nature of the conflict, determining appropriate strategies for resolution, and implementing solutions to resolve issues.

Decision GS/23-24/145: The proposed Conflict Management and Resolution flowchart was recommended to Council.

XX Section C for Noting

GS/23-24/146 HORIZON 2: WP#1 (PT Taught): PGT Research Supervision Framework Closing Report

Members were presented with a delivery closing report on PGT Research Supervision Framework from WP#1 (PT Taught) approved by Council in April.

The Dean thanked all the committee members. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12.45pm.

Prof. Martine Smith

Date: 25 April 2024