

GRADUATE STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday 3 November 2011

9.00-11.00 a.m. in A204

- Present:** Dr Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Gillian Barry, Dr Dermot Brabazon, Dr Pat Brereton, Ms Jennifer Bruton, Professor John Costello, Ms Goretti Daughton, Dr Tracy Dixon, Dr Bernadette Flanagan, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Ms Patricia Moore, Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Dr Anne Morrissey, Ms Caitríona Rowsome, Dr Ana Terres
- Apologies:** Dr Gabriel Flynn, Dr Christine Loscher, Professor Colm O’Gorman
- In attendance:** Dr Teresa Hogan

Dr Lisa Looney, chairing her first meeting of the Graduate Studies Board in her capacity as Dean of Graduate Studies, welcomed all the members including the following: Ms Jennifer Bruton, new representative on the GSB of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education; Professor John Costello, representative of the Associate Dean for Research function in the Faculty of Science and Health; Ms Goretti Daughton, new representative of the Faculty Administration Peer Group; Dr Teresa Hogan, representing Professor Colm O’Gorman; Ms Caitríona Rowsome, Assistant Awards Officer in the Registry. She thanked the following, who are not members of the GSB at present, for their very significant contribution to its work during their membership: Dr Françoise Blin, Ms Claudine Devereux and Ms Hannah Dyas.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of one submission under Item 5 and two submissions under Item 12.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 8 September 2011

The minutes were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that discussions were in progress about the most appropriate mechanism for facilitating the joint research work planned by the University, St Patrick's College and Dundalk Institute of Technology. (Item 3.3)
- 3.2** Noted that the PGR2 (annual progress report) form would be reviewed in the context of the review of postgraduate research administration forms generally and that the inclusion of provision for the listing of members of supervisory panels would be addressed as part of the review. (Item 3.5)
- 3.3** Noted, with respect to the Daniel O'Hare scholarships, that a letter would be sent to both this year's and last year's recipients outlining the terms and conditions. Noted too that a review of the scholarships would be undertaken and that the outcome of this would be reported to the 12 January 2012 meeting of the GSB along with updated information on other support systems administered by the Graduate Studies Office, including accommodation scholarships and travel grants. (Item 3.7)
- 3.4** Noted that discussion about a possible transfer student had been terminated in a School, as the individual had withdrawn the request to transfer. (Item 3.8)
- 3.5** Noted, with respect to the issue of recording oral examinations for transfer to/confirmation on the PhD register, that the Chair had on the advice of the Deputy President/Registrar discussed the matter with the relevant academic staff and that, following earlier GSB comment, the process to be used had been modified. It is expected that any further discussion that may be required about the issue will take place within the Faculty. (Item 3.20)
- 3.6** Noted, in respect of a complaint considered by the Complaints Review Committee, that it had not been upheld and that the student concerned had been informed of the outcome. (Item 3.21)
- 3.7** Noted that references to a student's name on a form had been corrected. (Item 4.9)
- 3.8** Agreed that the words 'to completion' would be added after 'supervision of research candidates' and 'co-supervisions of research candidates' in the last section of the PGR4 (notification of intention to submit) form. Noted, however, that this section does not elicit information as to whether the nominee's examining experience involves internal examining or external examining or both. Noted that a

question would be added to the form to allow the Head of School an opportunity to verify the robustness of the independence of the proposed external examiner - on the basis, for example, of the nominee's professional relationship with the supervisor. The letter of invitation will need to be modified to reflect this. (Item 5)

- 3.9** Noted that a mechanism was under consideration in the Registry for ensuring that the same external examiner was not nominated by different Schools in the University, or by one or more of the linked colleges, in such a way as to lead to the risk that the nomination might be in contravention of the regulations on frequency of nomination. (Item 5)
- 3.10** Noted that confirmation had been obtained that a nominated external examiner would not exceed the appropriate number of appointments, and the nomination had therefore been approved. (Item 5.15)
- 3.11** Noted that Professor Dermot Diamond's name had been included on a PGR4 form. (Item 5.16)
- 3.12** Noted that the word 'lecturer' had been removed from a PGR4 form. (Item 5.17)
- 3.13** Noted that an alternative external examiner was being sought by a School. (Item 5.29)
- 3.14** Noted that the stated word count on a PGR4 form had been corrected. (Item 5.32)
- 3.15** Noted that the stated word count on a PGR4 form had been indicated by a School to have been an error. Agreed that the actual word count would be sought. (Item 5.33)
- 3.16** Agreed that the Chair would discuss with a School Research Convenor the reason for a request for early submission by a student. (Item 5.34)
- 3.17** Noted that an alternative external examiner would be nominated by St Patrick's College at the 12 January 2012 meeting of the GSB. (Item 5.36)
- 3.18** Noted that the word '(Education)' had been removed from a PGR4 form. (Item 5.45)
- 3.19** Noted that the words 'in Irish Studies' had been removed from a PGR4 form and that the word count of the thesis had been reduced. (Item 5.46)

- 3.20** Noted that references to ‘part-time’ had replaced references to ‘full-time’ on a PGR3 form. (Item 7.1)
- 3.21** Noted that there is currently no standard procedure for transfer from Professional Doctorate to PhD. (Item 7.2)
- 3.22** Noted that a School would be notified that a decision had been made on the basis of the specific circumstances pertaining to the candidate’s case rather than on the basis of any matter related to NARIC. (Item 7.3)
- 3.23** Noted that a request for transfer of a student to the University from another institution had, following the submission of additional information, been approved by means of Chair’s action (by the outgoing Chair, Professor Gary Murphy). (Item 7.4)
- 3.24** The draft procedure for notifying Registry of changes to supervisory arrangements – now, since the implementation of the new *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, the responsibility of Faculties rather than the GSB – was noted. It was agreed that the word ‘noted’ in step number two of the procedure should be changed to ‘approved’. The draft procedure was approved for use in 2011/12, as was the associated template. The following were noted: in the context of the review of the new *Academic Regulations* in their entirety, with a view to determining their fitness for purpose, the extent to which the procedure worked well could be determined; the R103 (change of supervisory arrangements) form would itself also be reviewed in the context of the planned review of all postgraduate research administration forms. (Item 9)
- 3.17** Noted, with respect to the request by an overseas publishing company to publish a thesis, that the Director of Library Services had confirmed that the availability of theses on DORAS raises no copyright issues since this is done under licence from the University. The Chair stressed that it would nonetheless be important to ensure a clear understanding on the part of students and supervisors of the implications of placing a thesis on DORAS, or choosing a particular publisher if a book, based on the thesis, is planned. There do not appear to be detailed policies on this type of issue in other Irish universities. The Chair intends to discuss the issues further with relevant colleagues. (Item 10)
- 3.18** Noted that postgraduate student representation on Academic Council would henceforth consist of two people rather than one as had previously been the case. The research student community will be represented by the student representative on the GSB; therefore Ms Moore will henceforth be a member of Council. The postgraduate taught student community will be represented by an individual to be identified by the Students’ Union; the role is currently vacant. The change from

one to two representatives will entail a change to the Council's terms of reference, and this will be organised. At a future date, consideration will be given to the procedures for nominating and electing the student representative to the GSB. Additionally, The Chair undertook to investigate with other universities whether or not their Graduate Studies Boards (or equivalent committees) included membership of a member of the postgraduate taught student community. (Item 11.2)

SECTION B: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES

4. Applications for transfer to the PhD register or confirmation on the PhD register

- 4.1 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.1, School of Biotechnology
Approved.
- 4.2 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.2, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 4.3 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.3, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 4.4 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.4, School of Computing
Decision deferred pending clarification as to the language used in the report of the examination. Agreed that, in the event of satisfactory clarification, the decision to approve the confirmation request could be taken by means of Chair's action.
- 4.5 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.5, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 4.6 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.6, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved subject to the provision of satisfactory information as to whether the student is on the full-time or the part-time register and also the date of initial registration.
- 4.7 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.7, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved. However, clarification is required as to whether, provided the student follows the recommendation to undertake two specified modules, he should be registered in terms of Graduate Training Elements or single module.
- 4.8 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.8, School of Health and Human Performance
Approved.
- 4.9 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.9, School of Law and Government
Approved subject to the inclusion of the name of Dr John Doyle, as co-supervisor on page 1 of the form and to the indication on the form that the student is currently registered on the PhD track.

- 4.10 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.10, School of Law and Government
Approved subject to the inclusion of the name of the internal examiner,
Dr Eoin O'Malley, on the form.
- 4.11 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/4.11, School of Physical Sciences
Approved. Noted that, when the time comes for the student to submit for
examination, a different internal examiner will be required.

Noted that there can be instances in which a PGR3 and a PGR4 form are submitted to the GSB at the same time, indicating that the student has spent an unusually long period on the Master's or PhD-track register. Agreed that this matter would be dealt with in the context of the implementation of the new *Academic Regulations* although it would be more likely to be new students rather than those registered for some years to whom the regulation about length of time prior to transfer/confirmation could most easily be applied. Noted that lateness of transfer/confirmation had the potential to preclude examiners from recommending that a student take specified modules, where appropriate, noted also, however, that the most effective way of ensuring that such modules were taken, because follow-through could be monitored, was by means of the PGR2 (annual progress report) form.

As a related issue, it was noted that there are currently no Level 8 Graduate Training Elements in the University and that this contrasts with the situation in other universities. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to this matter in due course.

Noted that there was scope for enhanced clarity in the language used in the completion of some of the PGR3 forms.

5. Appointment of external examiners

- 5.1 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.1, PhD, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Professor Maureen Ehrensberger-Dow, Zürcher Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften
Approved.
- 5.2 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.2, PhD, School of Biotechnology
Dr Bernard Mahon, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Approved.
- 5.3 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.3, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Dr Ben Buckley, Loughborough University
Approved.

- 5.4 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.4, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Professor James Clark, University of York
Approved.
- 5.5 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.5, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Dr Claire Hellio, University of Portsmouth
Approved.
- 5.6 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.6, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Dr Jason Lynam, University of York
Approved.
- 5.7 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.7, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Professor E Hywel Evans, University of Plymouth
Approved.
- 5.8 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.8, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Professor Ioannis Konstantinou, University of Ioannina, Greece
Approved.
- 5.9 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.9, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Dr Norman Smith, King's College London
Approved.
- 5.10 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.10, PhD, Biomedical Diagnostics
Institute/School of Chemical Sciences
Professor Norman Ratcliffe, University of the West of England
Decision deferred pending clarification as to a possible conflict of interest
issue.
- 5.11 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.11, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Professor Roger M Smith, Loughborough University
Approved subject to satisfactory information about the nature and extent of
the nominee's supervising and examining experience.
- 5.12 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.12, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Dr Donal Leech, National University of Ireland, Galway
Approved.
- 5.13 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.13, PhD, School of Communications
Dr Roza Tsagarousianou, University of Westminster
Approved.
- 5.14 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.14, PhD, School of Communications
Professor Marie Gillespie, The Open University
Approved subject to satisfactory information about the nature and extent of
the nominee's supervising and examining experience.
- 5.15 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.15, MA, Fiontar
Dr Cornelius Buttimer, University College Cork
Dr Regina Uí Chollatáin, University College Dublin
Approved.

- 5.16 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.16, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Dr Roussi Minev, London South Bank University
Decision deferred pending clarification as to a possible conflict of interest issue.
- 5.17 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.17, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Professor Stefano Cordiner, University of Rome Tor Vergata
Approved.
- 5.18 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.18, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Professor Stefano Cordiner, University of Rome Tor Vergata
Approved.
- 5.19 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.19, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Dr Syed Hasan, Sheffield Hallam University
Approved.
- 5.20 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.20, EdD, Education Department, St Patrick's College
Dr Rose Malone, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
Approved.
- 5.21 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.21, EdD, Education Department, St Patrick's College
Dr Charmian Kenner, Goldsmiths, University of London
Approved subject to satisfactory information about the nature and extent of the nominee's supervising and examining experience.
- 5.22 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.22, EdD, Education Department, St Patrick's College
Dr Paul Conway, University College Cork
Approved.
- 5.23 Student ref. GSB/2011/A6/5.23, PhD, School of Computing
Professor Wilhelm Hasselbring, Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel
Approved.

Noted that there is currently no stipulation as to whether or not the nominated external examiner's publications are peer reviewed.

Noted that, depending on the time of year at which a PGR4 form is submitted, there can sometimes be a difficulty for a School in deciding whether to date the form in terms of the previous academic year or the current one.

Noted that the PGR4 form, as currently structured, involves asking for the nominated external examiner's qualifications to be noted twice.

Noted that an issue arises where the internal examiner indicated on the PGR4 form is a staff member on the point of retirement and that clarification was required as to the eligibility and availability, or otherwise, of such an individual to examine the student.

Noted that where, in addition to a DCU supervisor, there is a co-supervisor from another institution, this is sometime mentioned on the PGR3 form and sometimes not. Agreed that this matter would be given consideration with a view to arriving at consistency of practice.

6. Other student issues

None.

SECTION C: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

7. Review of the implementation to date of Graduate Training Elements

7.1 The Chair noted that significant developments had taken place over a short period of time in the provision of GTEs for research students. However, currently no information is available on the uptake of inter-institutional GTEs and no national register of such GTEs or system for registration for them exists. Their operationalisation is also problematic. These matters are being discussed by the IUA Fourth Level Network, and also internally in DCU, with a view to resolution.

7.2 The Chair noted that a clear statement of University policy with respect to GTEs would be appropriate at this stage and that the standard operating procedure relating to GTEs would need to be expanded to cover issues which had arisen since their inception. Other issues for scrutiny will be the uptake of DCU-specific GTEs to date, their sustainability into the future, and their management from the perspective of FTEs. Noted also that it can be difficult to gauge actual uptake of GTEs from registration figures because students do not necessarily always attend modules for which they have registered.

7.3 It was suggested that it would be helpful to distinguish between modules which would run in any event and modules designed specifically as GTEs.

7.4 Thanks were expressed to Dr Dixon for her work in preparing the review.

8. Proposed Graduate Training Elements

8.1 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

The six modules were approved subject to the following, where necessary: the correction of workload figures; the provision of further detail about the activities associated with the independent learning time; the revision of the wording of learning outcomes.

8.2 Faculty of Science and Health

The two DCU-specific modules were approved subject to the following: in the case of Bioinnovate 2A, the provision of a more descriptive module title, the revision of the wording of the first learning outcome and the inclusion of indicative content; in the case of Bioinnovate 1A, the provision of a more descriptive module title and a closer alignment between indicative content and module description. It was agreed that, in the case of the remaining two modules, no decision on approval could be taken pending clarification of their ownership (whether DCU or the National University of Ireland, Galway). The Chair undertook to discuss this matter with the Programme management and also to request clarification as to the credit weighting of the thesis.

9. Implementation of new *Academic Regulations* from September 2011 onwards

9.1 The Chair noted that she was in the process of discussing the implementation of the regulations, including the issue of supervisory panels, with relevant Faculty committees. With respect to supervisory panels, it was agreed that a footnote should be included in the regulations to the effect that these are mandatory only in the case of students first registered in 2011/12, though they may be used for other students if that is School practice. A wording for this footnote will be circulated to the GSB with a request for approval on an electronic basis. On the issue of whether or not a staff member without a doctoral degree may act as a member of a panel, it was noted that there is no specific reference in the regulations and agreed that this matter would be discussed in the context of the ongoing review of the fitness for purpose of the regulations in 2011/12.

9.2 The Chair noted that an analysis of the training needs of supervisors and independent chairs of oral examinations would be carried out.

9.3 It was noted that the previous regulations, which had had to remain on line pending the completion of appeals processes based on them, should be removed shortly.

10. English-language requirements

Feedback from Faculties as to whether or not these requirements should remain as they are or be relaxed indicates that there is a variety of opinions, with two Faculties preferring the *status quo* (though open to the possibility that other Faculties might have different requirements) and two Faculties preferring a relaxation under limited conditions. It was noted that it can be difficult for those unfamiliar with English-language testing systems to appreciate what levels of competence are reflected by the various minimum grades. It was agreed to refer the issue back to the University Standards Committee for further discussion.

11. Proposal on title change in respect of Fiontar programme

Approved.

12. Any other business

12.1 The Chair noted that, in response to requests by both the IUA and the HEA, exit surveys of research students would be conducted, starting with the group of students due to graduate on 7 and 8 November 2011. The survey will include both generic and DCU-specific elements.

12.2 The Chair noted that she is a member of the Graduate Studies Board and the Research Committee in St Patrick's College and also of the DCU/SPD Joint Management Group.

Date of next meeting:

**Thursday 12 January 2012
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____