



## Postgraduate Working Group

Location: DCU and Zoom

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Time: 14:00-15:00

### *Miontuairiscí/ Minutes*

#### **Present: -**

Waqar Ahmed (Chair, USI), Ross Boyd (USI), Orlagh Ní Choistealbha (USI) Shahboz Babaev (TUSSU), Jenna Barry (TUS), Stephen O'Riordan (UCCSU), Saoirse Daly (TUDSU), Raimey O'Boyle (CMLOG), Colette Murphy (DCUSU), Barry Ó Siochrú (CMLOG), Glen Scanlon Tims (DCUSU), Blaitin Sheehy (UCCSU), Mair Kelly (UCCSU)

#### **1. Minutes of Meeting: -**

The minutes of February and March meetings were approved.

#### **2. Matters Arising from Minutes:-**

No matter arising from the minutes.

#### **3. Items for Discussion**

##### ***Terms of Reference of Postgraduate Working Group***

VPPGA notes no ToR for this group – While other groups have this issue, this is unique to postgrads.

Barry responds to feedback saying it is good to be defined, especially having postgrad and thought being different groups. Stephen agrees, however cautions too much of a split and how they are organised, especially looking at CSC/Campaigns WG. VPPGA agrees, saying clear goals are needed and what the purpose is. Colette says who should take the lead, but Barry says if students can take the lead to engage, it can be more effective. Stephen says the term “who takes the lead” could be interpreted differently.

Colette notes that these students from postgrads are very engaged, however for implementation it should be officers, given it is our job. VPPGA agrees, and says a balance

needs to be achieved, given some postgrad officers are full time, other part and some not even present.

Jenna asks three questions – If postgrad role would be part time, hearing the meeting and for taught postgrads in similar issues to stuff academic affairs. Stephen acknowledges this but says PWG needs to represent all students. Jenna notes but says that given the Postgrad role is overworked, it should be full time or split between taught postgrad and postgrad researchers.

Shahboz agrees with this, saying it was hard to represent part-time postgrads, especially as their time is limited to represent them and there are a lot of barriers to represent so many students with little time to work. Jennas comes in and says it is hard enough to engage postgraduates in the first place, let alone a ToR and should be represented by academic affairs in some way.

Stephen doesn't disagree, however says he isn't sure if a ToR can achieve the concerns raised by Jenna when it comes to constitutional changes. Saoirse says if there are specific issues, it should not just be a specific remit. Colette says it can get messy when more than one group work in postgrads and asks what the goal of the separate group is.

VPPGA says the role is being reformed in any case via constitutional review and says the concern he has with this group is that engagement decreases. Also says feedback is useful to put into crossover for next VP Postgrad. VPPGA says should ToR discussion be deferred until Constitutional review decides about the possible split of postgrad roles. Saoirse notes that the workload if this happened would be uneven, given how much there is in research.

Colette notes how many people are not sure what VP Postgrad role is bar Coiste Gnó and officers. Fundamental question of should thought and research split to be asked generally and to get feedback from execs. Also to promote his role in what he does as VP Postgrad in more than just officer reports. Saoirse notes a short timeframe, but VPPGA assures agreement isn't needed at next WG although getting feedback from thought masters would be hard for her given exams on.

#### **4. Local Issues**

UCCSU – More townhalls with research students, now with students in research units which has been very beneficial but not able to do much given consequences if students speak out for their career.

VPPGA is aware of the stipend gap, got an email from ATU post-merger that stipends are different per campus. TUSSU issue is now solved across all campuses.

TUSSU – Advocated on governing body to ensure stipend is paid the same on all campuses, President's decision last year in November. Still ongoing issue of postgraduates in midwest receive €500 less due to timing announcement effective 1<sup>st</sup> December. Limerick used to receive half of what Athlone got before change, and is only €12,000. Stephen asks if funding pool has increased for less postgraduate researchers, which in theory seems to be happening but limited due to government funding. With PhD review, if stipends are increased, it can suddenly reduce the number of places available.

## 5. Items for Information / Pointí Eolais

VPPGA informed about PhD Stipend review and that update to the website section related to postgraduate affairs charter has been made. Further updates will be made in future. VPPGA informed about crossover as well.

## 6. A.O.B

VPPGA intends to submit 7/8 amendments following the appearance at the Innovation and Research committee on pre-legislative scrutiny, including copies from IUA and other stakeholders on this. Can prepare responses given this is only at the first stage of the bill.

Saoirse notes that researchers are not even on the proposed research committee and is under the discretion of the Minister, saying that direct action and letters are needed to address these concerns.

Jenna agrees with other points and notes the issues between SFI/IRC stipends and other stipends available, especially bringing up funding while then directly increasing lecturing hours.

Jenna simply says shouldn't be agreeing for twice the hours for only a third of the pay increase, the hours worked should be the living wage.

VP PGA thanked everyone for their attendance and participation before closing the meeting. The next meeting is to be held in June.

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