RESEARCH DEGREES PROGRAMMES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at 2:00pm on Thursday 19 November 2015 in Founders East 139 (FE139).

MINUTES

Present: Professor R Deem (Chair), Professor P Hogg, Prof B Langford, Ms A Borrett, Dr L Christie, Mr A Clarke, Professor M Collinson, Miss Y Liu, Dr S Wright

With: Mr M Harries (Secretary), Mrs L Watson (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies: Professor J Powell, Ms A Sendall, Dr R Dietman, Professor G Symon, Mr M Bazargan

1. CHAIR’S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and apologies received were also noted. 15/74

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2015 (M 15/031 - M 15/073) (RDPC/15/24) were confirmed as an accurate record. 15/75

2.2 Action Points

MIN15/63 It was concluded that the Directors were responsible for equality issues in Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) and Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs). Training needed to be given to these individuals if required. 15/76

For details of actions completed or for further progress on all other outstanding action points, please see Status Column on Action Point schedule at the end of these Minutes. All complete Actions are to be removed 15/77

3. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair requested that Jane Gawthrope is added to the membership list for RDPC, in light of her new role within the College working on studentships and DTCs/DTPs 15/78

A substitute for Jonathan Powell is to be sought to act for a period of one year due to his prolonged absence due to illness. 15/79

It was noted that it was inappropriate for co-opted postgraduate research student representatives to send substitutes if they were unable to attend as they are there only in a personal capacity, but that if the SU Postgraduate Research Student representative was unable to attend they should send a substitute wherever possible. 15/80
4. **PRES 2015 RESULTS**

The Chair provided members with a verbal summary to accompany the MS PowerPoint slides provided by Strategic Planning.

It was suggested that comparatively low number of responses to the survey may be because no reminders were sent after the link provided had been followed once. If the survey is not completed on the first visit to the site no reminders are sent to encourage students to complete the survey leading to uncompleted surveys. The Chair noted that responsibility for promoting PRES had been transferred to another area for the 2015 round of the survey. Following discussion with members, it was agreed that it might be advisable to review this situation and consider whether or not the survey would be better placed with its previous owners in Educational Development.

The Committee noted that the general trend in results were positive across almost all categories compared to the sector average. Where the results appear to be lagging behind the sector this may not be so problematic as it seems as it was a year that saw improvement across the whole sector.

There are meaningful gains in the results and it is possible to see that there will be further improvements in the future, especially as we look forward to opening the new library complex.

Members were in agreement that the positive trends when compared with sector averages belied a lack of detail in the figures. The Committee noted that this made reliable observations on improvement from year on year somewhat problematic, thus making it difficult to set targets to aim to improve beyond the sector average.

While the College may lack resources compared to much larger institutions, members agreed that staff must work hard to manage student expectations accordingly, highlighting the positives of having access to facilities in London such as the British Library and Senate House. Some of the requests that are received are unreasonable (personal computers) other requests will be resolved on the completion of the new library complex (dedicated PGR study space).

5. **INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES FOR SIGNING OFF VIVA REPORTS**

The Committee agreed that the outcome of doctoral vivas should require formal ratification via two signatories as opposed to just one. Members felt that the Director of Graduate Studies and the Dean should normally act as signatories, with the former signing first and then notifying the latter. In cases where the Director of Graduate Studies is away from the College, such as in cases of sabbatical, or acting as supervisor for the student in question, then the Head of Department would act as signatory.

6. **SUBMITTING THESES THROUGH TURNITIN**

Subsequent to discussion, members concluded it would be unrealistic and unnecessary to submit each thesis through Turnitin. The School of Management currently have a set of guidelines for the use of Moodle and some preparatory work is submitted this way. The Committee concluded that the option would be left for those that wanted to use Turnitin but that it would not become compulsory practice. The Chair requested that the Secretary arrange for the representative from the School of Management to explain their process to the board.
7. **MASTERS BY RESEARCH SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

The deadline is fixed according to the date of commencement and extensions should only be granted in accordance with current regulations. 15/89

8. **PHD EXAMINER APPOINTMENTS**

The report on PhD recruitment data for 2015-16 was received by the committee. 15/91

9. **PHD SUBMISSION RATES**

The report on PhD submissions rates for 2014-15 was received by the committee. It was noted that the rates had improved. 15/92

10. **PHD RECRUITMENT DATA**

The Committee received a report on PhD recruitment data for 2015-16, which noted that the recruitment rate for research degrees had fallen significantly. Members felt that it would be useful to keep a record of why students were not recruited as it may be that the applicant was not yet at the required standard or that the student did not choose to study at Royal Holloway. In light of this, members asked if this could be recorded on the decliners’ survey if/when Admissions and Recruitment conduct such a study. Similarly, the Committee were in agreement that it would also be useful to know how many offers were rejected. 15/93

11. **MATERNITY LEAVE AND PHD STUDENTS**

Following a recent case it was noted that maternity/adoption leave should be offered where appropriate as is recorded in the Code of Practice. A reminder to this effect is to be sent to the Directors of Graduate Studies reminding them of this. It was suggested that where maternity leave is offered but not taken (for part time students, full time students must interrupt), then the student should sign a form acknowledging that they had refused an offer of maternity/adoption leave. 15/94

12. **ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF THESIS PRE VIVA**

12.1 It was decided that students should submit their initial pre-examination thesis electronically along with a hard copy so examiners can choose either a hard copy or E-copy. 15/95

12.2 Where the contents are commercially sensitive or confidential and the thesis cannot be submitted electronically this must be signed off by a Faculty Dean

It was agreed that this would be added to the Regulations. 15/96

13. **STANDING ITEMS**

13. **DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM**

The Committee received the notes of the meeting of the DOGs Forum held on 15th October 2015. (RDPC/15/30)

It was noted that Bedford Square is now available again following its refurbishment and has smaller rooms suitable for vivas and Supervisor meetings. 15/99
14. STUDENT ISSUES

Members noted feedback from the Student Representative of cases where some part-time students felt somewhat isolated from their fulltime cohort, and had experienced difficulty in accessing some training courses. The Chair advised these students to approach their respective Director of Graduate Studies in the first instance, as this would need to be dealt with at departmental level.

It was decided that ensuring equal access to training courses for part time student should be put into the code.

A question was raised as to whether a student could change status from part-time to full-time. The student representative was told that this was already set out in the regulations and could be done but is not normally allowed in the third year of study with permission given only for severe extenuating circumstances.

The problem of raising funding was discussed as a large proportion of a research students time is spent applying for funding due to the lack of scholarships.

The perceived lack of access to teaching experience was raised. The student representatives were reminded that for college studentships, teaching support work was laid out in their appointment letter but that the range of teaching duties could be discussed with the departments, and where there were problems they should in the first instance approach the Director of Graduate Studies.

15. TRAINING

No issues were raised.

16. DOCTORAL SCHOOL

No issues were raised.

17. FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES

No issues were raised.

18. DOCTORAL SCHOOL

No issues were raised.

19. FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES

The Committee received the minutes from the meetings of the Research Committee and Faculty Research Committees held in the spring term (RDPC/15/31 a,b,c,d,e).

20. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

To note the dates of meetings for the remainder of the 2015-16 academic year:
Tuesday 16 February 2016 at 2pm in Room FE139;
Thursday 12 May 2016 at 2pm in Room FE139.
Louise Watson, Academic Quality Officer
Merlin Harries, Assistant Registrar
December 2016

see also Schedule of Action points on pages below
### Actions from meeting on 19 November 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agenda Item</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Request that the representative from the School of Management explain their process for Turnitin submission to the Committee.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Seek clarification from Student Recruitment &amp; Partnerships over whether it is possible to track rejection due to unsuitability on a decliners 'survey and if figures could be provided for how many offers were rejected.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>A reminder to this effect is to be sent to the Directors of Graduate study reminding them of this</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>It was agreed that the electronic first submission of the PhD thesis would be added to the Regulations.</td>
<td>Student admin Manager</td>
<td></td>
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### Actions from meeting on 13 May 2015

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>15/050</td>
<td>Secretary to submit the revision to Appendix 1 of the Research Degree Regulations to include the resubmission option for theses submitted toward the award of Master's by Research.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>15/052</td>
<td>Academic Registrar to feedback the required amendments to the MD degree proposal to the paper's author and arrange for the revised version to be circulated to Committee members.</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>15/053</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to submit the final version of the 'Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Students' to the Chair. These changes (and their context) are to be emailed to the committee members.</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School)</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>15/063</td>
<td>Data on equality issues and research students is to be compiled</td>
<td>Student admin Manager</td>
<td>Data from where?</td>
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### Actions from meeting on 29 January 2015
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15/014</td>
<td>Student Administration Representative to liaise with SDU to provide the December count figures to include students in their writing up year.</td>
<td>Student Administration Representative</td>
<td>Ongoing. The criteria of the December count is set externally but the Student Administration manager is liaising with Data Management so that a report can be created to include the details of the December count plus writing up students.</td>
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**Actions from meeting on 16 January 2013**

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<th>Minute</th>
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<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>12/47</td>
<td>Academic Registrar will report back on the discussions taking place on how reporting of upgrade outcomes to the centre can be established, to enable an accurate central record of student progress to be maintained and so that students who fail are informed of the process for appeal.</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Ongoing. The Academic Registrar is working with the Academic Administration Support Manager to address this.</td>
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