Research Degrees Programmes Committee

M18/01-M18/41

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20 February 2018 in the Principal's Meeting Room

Present: Professor Rosemary Deem (Chair), Professor Barry Langford, Miss Francesca Baylis, Ms Alex Borrett, Professor Margaret Collinson, Dr Mark Crompton, Dr Julia Gallagher, Ms Jane Gawthrope, Professor Francisca Mota-Furtado, Dr Danielle Sands, Professor Laura Spence, Miss Kuziwakwashe Zigomo

With: Ms Gillian Almond (Director of Commercial Services) for item 3 only

Secretary: Ms Noreen Naughton (Secretary), Mrs Debby Salsbury (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies: Professor Pat O'Mahony

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
   The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were noted. Professor Francisca Mota-Furtado attended on behalf of Professor Pat O'Mahony.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING
   2.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2017 (M17/55-M17/90) (RDPC/18/01).

   2.2 There were no matters arising from the minutes not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

3. CATERING
   The Committee received the 2017-18 outlet opening times (RDPC/18/02), and the Director of Commercial Services attended to discuss the availability of catering out of term time. The Committee reported that there was poor provision of catering on campus for PGR students outside of term time. Some venues were closed or had restricted opening times during vacations, there was poor availability of stock, no hot evening meals, and limited choice. There was also concern about the lack of choice for special dietary needs and that some staff in catering venues were unable to advise on allergens and ingredients in their products. It was also noted that occasionally out of date products were still on sale.

   The Director of Commercial Services noted concerns about staff's lack of ingredients knowledge and out of date products being sold. With regards to the reduced availability of catering out of term time, she reported that Commercial Services aims to respond to the academic population; during the summer vacation the population reduces to about 10% and outlet opening hours are reduced by 30%. The Café on the Square will remain open throughout vacation time from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week. It is harder to provide hot evening meals out of term time as catered halls only operate during term time, however, the Director of Commercial Services reported that this is something that could be explored further if there is sufficient demand and it is financially viable. She recommended that a student survey is carried out to ascertain demand and wants, and to establish information such as when PGR students are on campus and what times they are likely to be studying until on campus.

   ACTION: All Committee members to send suggestions for questions to include in a student survey on campus catering to the Secretary.

   ACTION: Secretary to add the draft student catering survey to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion and approval.
4. **PHD EXAMINER APPOINTMENTS REPORT**  
The Committee received a report on PhD Examiner Appointments in 2016-17, including a breakdown of examiners by host institution (RDPC/18/03). The Chair queried whether passports were being checked for examiners from outside the EU. This would not be an issue for examinations conducted by Skype, but there could be possible visa breaches if the examiner is in attendance in the UK.

**ACTION:** Student Administration representative to check that all examiners are entitled to work in the UK where relevant.

5. **PHD SUBMISSION RATES REPORT**  
The Committee received a report on PhD Submission Rates in 2016-17 and a comparison of PhD Submission Rates in 2015-16 and 2016-17 (RDPC/18/04). It was noted that submission rates had improved compared with previous years, but could further be improved, such as by Directors of Graduate Studies conducting short interviews with PhD students six months prior to submission.

**ACTION:** Secretary to send the PhD Submission Rates report to the Secretary of the Research Committee for discussion.

6. **PGR STUDENT NUMBERS**  
The Committee received a comparison of PGR student numbers at 1 December 2016 and 1 December 2017 count (RDPC/18/05). It was noted that the overall number of PGR students had decreased over the last few years, despite the number of new PGR students increasing over the same period. The Chair considered that it would be useful to have specific data on Research Council-funded students, such as progression information and submission rates.

**ACTION:** Student Administration representative to provide data on Research Council-funded students, including progression information and submission rates.

7. **PGR SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS**  
The Committee noted suspensions of regulations and PGR extensions requests considered by the Chair since the last meeting (RDPC/18/06).

8. **AMENDMENTS TO RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS 2018-19**  
The Committee agreed the proposed amendments to the *Research Degree Regulations* for 2018-19 (RDPC/18/07), with the following exceptions:

2) **Programmes of Study**  
It was unclear why permission was requested from the University of London, since the Doctor in Business Admission is a Professional Doctorate which have long existed in the University of London. The Chair recommended instead that this should be reworded to say that from time to time the College may offer new programmes of study.

3) **Interruption of Studies**  
The last sentence in bold should be deleted since this paragraph’s provision should extend to all students experiencing mental health issues. The Committee also considered that the paragraph should extend to students taking shared parental leave.

5) **Review of Academic Progress**  
The wording should be amended to make it clear that the outcomes of reviews will be considered by the School or Departmental Board.

6) **Appointment of Examiners for MPhil and PhD Programmes of Study**
Clarification needs to be sought from the Governance and Legal Department on the wording in the last sentence in bold to ensure it only relates to academic staff and not Doctoral students who may be undertaking a small amount of paid teaching.

**ACTION:** Secretary to seek advice from the Governance and Legal Department on the wording to ensure it only relates to academic staff and not Doctoral students who may be undertaking paid teaching.

9) Appeals against the Outcome of Formal Reviews, other Required Assessments, Refusal to Examine Incomplete Thesis and the Final Examination
It was agreed that the wording should change, but it was suggested that it should amended to: 'normally the Associate Dean of the Doctoral School and two members of staff with experience of Doctoral supervision to completion'.

10) Outcome of the PhD Examination
The Committee considered that this should be included in the PGR Code of Practice rather than the Research Degree Regulations. In the event that the Dean or the Director of Graduate Studies is unhappy with the examination reports, they should raise this with the Student Administration Manager and the Dean of Doctoral School.

12) Appendix 2: Regulations Governing the Doctor of Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)
The Committee did not agree to the removal of paragraph (e); it was considered better to leave it in even if it is not used.

13) Appendix 3: Regulations governing the Doctorate in Professional Studies (Health and Social Care Practice) (DPS)
The Committee did not agree that the Doctorate in Professional Studies regulations should be aligned to a different degree programme, but considered that sector research and further consideration is required before any change is made.

14) Appendix 5: Regulations governing the Doctorate in Medicine (MD)

14.1) Award
The Committee did not agree to accepting the University of London degree award title of Doctor of Medicine (Research) (MD (Res)), preferring instead to keep the degree award title of Doctorate in Medicine (MD). It was subsequently confirmed that the University of London was insisting on the former title.

14.2) Requirements of the Doctor of Medicine (Research) Thesis
The Committee agreed to the proposed amendment subject to rewording to state that the thesis should not normally exceed 50,000 words, and to specifying whether the full bibliography and references count towards the word count.

14.3) Examination Entry
The Committee agreed to the proposed amendment subject to the removal of the section, ‘and normally within thirty months of their registration, or sixty months for those registered on a part-time basis’ in paragraph (1), and the removal of paragraph (5).

9. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS
The Committee agreed the proposed amendments to the Code of Practice for Research Degree Students and Supervisors for 2018-19 (RDPC/18/08), with the following exceptions:

Paragraph 43
The Committee considered that the paragraph should specify that successive Skype meetings would not be permitted except in cases of extenuating circumstances such as illness.
The Committee considered that the paragraph should extend to students with shared parental leave.

The Committee considered that the proposed additional section (v) needed further explanation and that conducting risk assessments was outside the remit of supervisors in general and that supervisors asked to do this should seek specialist advice where appropriate.

10. INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SUPERVISION
The Committee considered a paper suggesting ideas for consideration to be given to the issuing of College guidelines on interdisciplinary doctoral supervision (RDPC/18/09). The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) suggested forming a forum for supervisors engaged in interdisciplinary doctoral supervision to discuss particular areas that would be appropriate to address in College guidelines.

**ACTION:** Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to arrange an initial forum for supervisors engaged in interdisciplinary doctoral supervision to discuss particular areas that would be appropriate to address in College guidelines.

11. PRIZE FOR BEST COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR SUPERVISORS AND STUDENTS
The Chair reported that the suggestion to award a prize for the Department which demonstrates evidence of the best community support for supervisors and students had arisen from last October’s PGR supervisor development session with Professor Pam Denicolo. The College does not currently award such a prize, and consideration would need to be given to how to fund it. The Committee agreed to the proposal in principle.

**ACTION:** Chair and Deputy Chair to consider how to take forward the proposal to introduce a prize best community support for supervisors and students before the end of July 2018.

12. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH HANDBOOK
The Chair reported that there was a need to make it clear to students who wish to make their own viva recording that they cannot use it for anything other than personal use; for example, they must not post it on the internet. The usefulness of recording vivas was noted, for example, in the event of an appeal made against the viva outcome. However, there was no clear guidance regarding the availability to students of viva recordings, and it was suggested at the February meeting of the Directors of Graduate Studies Forum that the PGR Student Handbook should be updated to clarify this. The Committee suggested specifying that the viva recording will be available to the student if they wish to listen to it, but they will not be permitted to take the recording away.

**ACTION:** Chair and Deputy Chair to consider how to take forward the need to provide clear guidance to students regarding the availability to students of viva recordings.

13. DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM
The Committee received the notes of the meeting of the DOGs Forum held on 2 November 2017 (RDPC/18/10).

14. STUDENT ISSUES
The student representatives reported that the computers in the Politics and International Relations PhD research room were running slowly. The Chair responded that this was a departmental matter, and the department should report the issue to the IT Service Desk.

The student representatives expressed concern that they are not informed in advance when Applicant Visit Days or events such as the Science Festival are being held. Research students might
drive to campus on a Saturday expecting to work, and find that they cannot park because there is an event on campus that day.

**ACTION:** Secretary to raise the issue with Marketing and Communications of notifying research students about weekend events on campus, such as Applicant Visit Days, Open Days and Science Days.

The Committee noted that there is still a vacancy on the Committee for a Postgraduate Research Student Representative. The Secretary reported that she had been in contact with the Students’ Union Academic Representation Coordinator, and there should be someone in place for the next academic year.

15. **TRAINING**
There were no issues relating to RDP training.

16. **DOCTORAL SCHOOL**
The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) reported that he had spoken to the Strategic Space Manager about how to reconfigure the Doctoral Hub into a social and networking space. Since the new Davison Building has dedicated space for PGR students, the Doctoral Hub no longer needs to provide quiet study space. The matter is scheduled to be discussed at the Space Sub Committee meeting on 22 March.

17. **DOCTORAL SCHOOL STRATEGY WORKING GROUP**
17.1 There was nothing to report from the Doctoral School Strategy Working Group.

17.2 The Committee approved the Doctoral School Mission Statement (RDPC/18/11). This will be taken to the next meeting of Academic Board for note.

**ACTION:** Secretary to send the Doctoral School Mission Statement to the College Secretary’s Office.

18. **FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES**
The Committee received the minutes from the College Research Committee meetings held on 28 September (RDPC/18/12a) and 29 November 2017 (RDPC/18/12b), the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty Research Committee meeting held on 19 September 2017 (RDPC/18/12c), the Science Faculty Research Committee meeting held on 22 January 2018 (RDPC/18/12d), and the Management, Economics and Law Faculty Research Committee meeting held on 23 January 2018 (RDPC/18/12e).

It was noted that the minutes did not contain any items related to student issues. The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) reported that student issues were not generally discussed at Faculty Research Committees, but should be covered by departmental PGR Committees. He recommended that departmental PGR Committees should be encouraged to report any student related issues to the Research Degrees Programmes Committee.

19. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**
There were no issues relating to Equality and Diversity.

20. **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting:
**Thursday 10th May 2018 at 9am in the Founder’s Large Boardroom.**

21. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
The Chair reported that she had been asked by a retired Physics professor why the College no longer offered a Higher Doctorate. The decision was taken by the University of London to suspend
the Higher Doctorate from 2005/06. The Chair reported that the College could reintroduce the Higher Doctorate as a Royal Holloway award if there was sufficient interest, but considered it would be unlikely to attract large support. The Chair would forward the UKCGE report to the enquirer and inform him that the Committee had discussed the matter.

**ACTIONS**

**ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 20TH FEBRUARY 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18/05</td>
<td>All Committee members to send suggestions for questions to include in a student survey on campus catering to the Secretary.</td>
<td>All Committee Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/05</td>
<td>Secretary to add the draft student catering survey to the agenda for the next meeting for discussion and approval.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>18/06</td>
<td>Student Administration representative to check that all examiners are entitled to work in the UK where relevant.</td>
<td>Student Administration Manager</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18/07</td>
<td>Secretary to send the PhD Submission Rates report to the Secretary of the Research Committee for discussion.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/08</td>
<td>Student Administration representative to provide data on Research Council-funded students, including progression information and submission rates.</td>
<td>Student Administration Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/14</td>
<td>Secretary to seek advice from the Governance and Legal Department on the wording of the proposed amendment to Section 12 Paragraph 4 of the Research Degree Regulations, to ensure that the requirement that both examiners are external only relates to academic staff and not Doctoral students who may be undertaking paid teaching.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
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<td>18/25</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to arrange an initial forum for supervisors engaged in interdisciplinary doctoral supervision to discuss particular areas that would be appropriate to address in College guidelines.</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>18/27</td>
<td>Chair and Deputy Chair to consider how to take forward the proposal to introduce a prize best community support for supervisors and students before the end of July 2018.</td>
<td>Chair and Deputy Chair</td>
<td></td>
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<td>18/30</td>
<td>Chair and Deputy Chair to consider how to take forward the need to provide clear guidance to students regarding the availability to students of viva recordings.</td>
<td>Chair and Deputy Chair</td>
<td></td>
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<td>18/31</td>
<td>Secretary to raise the issue with Marketing and Communications of notifying research students about weekend events on campus, such as Applicant Visit Days, Open Days and Science Days.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/36</td>
<td>Secretary to send the Doctoral School Mission Statement to the College Secretary's Office.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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**ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 26TH OCTOBER 2017**

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<th>Minute</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17/70</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to seek clarification at next week's Directors of Graduate Studies Forum on what instructions or guidance departments had been given about responding to students following the PRES results.</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/75</td>
<td>Secretary to add a question to the annual review report form for postgraduate research provision asking for departments to comment on the difference between number of applications and student enrolments.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/83</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to follow up on the issue of the power socket not working in the Doctoral Hub.</td>
<td>Associate Dean (Doctoral School)</td>
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### ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 10\textsuperscript{th} MAY 2017

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Action Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>17/36</td>
<td>Secretary to coordinate a new working group in Autumn 2017 to develop the Doctoral School Strategy. Strategy to be formulated by December 2017.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Membership established subject to one more representative being recruited from RDPC. The date for the first meeting is yet to be set.</td>
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<td>17/47</td>
<td>Student Administration representative to look at the presentation and analysis of the data in the PGR Examination Outcomes report, particularly with regard to cases of 18 months resubmission and historical comparative data.</td>
<td>Student Administration Manager</td>
<td>Proposal to move towards one annual report with historical comparative figures (as opposed to the raw numbers each term).</td>
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