Research Degrees Programmes Committee

M17/55-M17/90

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 26 October 2017 in the Large Boardroom

Present  Professor Rosemary Deem (Chair), Professor Barry Langford, Ms Alex Borrett, Professor Margaret Collinson, Dr Mark Crompton, Dr Julia Gallagher, Dr Danielle Sands, Professor Laura Spence, Miss Kuziwakwashe Zigomo

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

Apologies  Miss Francesca Baylis, Dr Amany Elbanna, Ms Jane Gawthrope, Professor Pat O'Mahony

1. **CHAIR’S WELCOME** and apologies.
   The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and apologies were noted. 17/55

2. **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
   2.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2017 (M17/28-M17/54) (RDPC/17/16). 17/56
   2.2 Actions
      Minute 17/34: Complete. 17/57
      Minute 17/36: The Secretary reported that Kostas Stathis, Julia Gallagher, Margaret Collinson, Jo Barrs, Amany Elbanna, IjaTrapeznikova, Jane Gawthrope and Alex Borrett had agreed to be on the Doctoral School Strategy Working Group. The Chair recommended that another representative from the Research Degrees Programmes Committee should also be on the Working Group. 17/58
      Minute 17/39: The proposal from the Science Faculty regarding guidelines on interdisciplinary supervision will be added to the agenda for the next meeting. 17/59
      Minute 17/42: The Director of Commercial Services was not available for this meeting, so she will be invited to the next meeting. 17/60
      Minute 17/45: The Student Administration representative confirmed that the PGR Examiner Appointments report can include a breakdown by host institution. 17/61
      Minute 17/47: The Committee agreed it would be better to have one annual report of PGR Examination Outcomes. 17/62
      Minute 16/214: This is related to the action above (Minute 17/47). It would be preferable to have data with analysis once a year. 17/63
      Minutes 16/219: Masters by Research students should be included in the PGR data, not the PGT data. The Student Administration representative confirmed that Masters by Research students would be included in the PGR data going forward. 17/64

3. **MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE**
   The Committee noted the membership list and terms of reference for 2017/18 (RDPC/17/17). The terms of reference are unchanged, but the membership has been restructured due to the reorganisation of the Senior Management Team. The Committee noted that the Students’ Union have not yet provided a Postgraduate Research Student Representative. 17/65
4.

PERIODIC DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS FOR PGR PROVISION

The Committee received the proposed new periodic review process for postgraduate research provision (RDPC/17/18). The proposal is to move from a six-yearly periodic review process to risk-based quality assessment, and to move to a separate postgraduate research review across the whole College, focussing on themes. The Chair commented that the new postgraduate research review process would not necessarily be an annual process. The Committee made the following points:

(i) The postgraduate research review could be timed to tie in with the PRES;
(ii) It would be good practice to review themes that have been identified as part of the annual review monitoring of postgraduate research provision; but PRES and Annual Review are at separate times of the year;
(iii) There would be a significant increase in workload for the staff collating the documentation for each risk-based review;
(iv) The review could focus on one theme per review, but that would affect the frequency; if only one theme is being considered at each review, the review process would have to be an annual process which would add considerably to panel and administrative costs;
(v) The review panel could meet with postgraduate research students and supervisors from one faculty at a time; having students and staff from every department would be too many; even by faculty the range of departments/disciplines is considerable so it might be hard to get a good spread of students/staff to meet with the panel;
(vi) The review could take place every two years, with each review focussing on one faculty, so each faculty would be reviewed every six years but this would be no more often than PDRs now take place, so if more frequent review was required this would not work;
(vii) The review could be linked to the length of a PhD, so it could take place every three years but it would be hard to do the whole university at once;
(viii) The review process for postgraduate research provision could be a peer review process, with the panel comprising of postgraduate research students, directors of graduate studies, and supervisors but it would be difficult to find a plausible external.

The Chair will report the comments back to the Head of the Academic Quality and Policy Office, and let the Vice-Principal (Quality and Standards) know that the proposal as set out in the paper is unworkable.

ACTION: Chair to report the comments back to the Vice-Principal (Quality and Standards) and suggest a new proposal is needed.

5.

PRES RESULTS

5.1 The Committee considered the results of the PRES 2017 (RDPC/17/19) and noted that the College scored higher satisfaction levels than the sector in all questions of the ‘Supervision’, ‘Progress and Assessment’ and ‘Overall Experience’ categories, but achieved lower scores than the sector average in all questions in the ‘Resources’, ‘Research Skills’, ‘Professional Development’, and ‘Teaching Opportunities’ categories. ‘Resources’ was the weakest response section, but the PRES summary indicated that this may well improve with the opening of the new Emily Wilding Davison building. However, a member of the Committee reported that there was an issue with postgraduate taught students gaining access to postgraduate research space in the Emily Wilding Davison library. The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) reported that he would speak to the library to ensure that only postgraduate research students have access to postgraduate research space.

ACTION: Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to speak to the library to ensure that only postgraduate research students, and not postgraduate taught students, have access to postgraduate research space in the Emily Wilding Davison library.

The Chair noted that the report did not provide an analysis of qualitative responses, and there is not enough information in the report to identify what most of the issues are about.
The PRES 2017 data was sent to Heads of Departments and Directors of Graduate Studies by Strategic Planning and Change, but it was unclear what instructions or guidance departments had been given about responding to students. The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) reported that he would seek clarification on what instructions departments had been given at next week's Directors of Graduate Studies Forum.

**ACTION:** 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.

5.2 The Committee noted that the PRES reporting process to departments is now being dealt with by Strategic Planning and Change.

6. **APPROVED PGR EXAMINATION OUTCOMES REPORT**
The Committee noted a report on approved PGR examinations outcomes in 2016-17 (RDPC/17/20).

7. **PGR DEGREES AWARDED REPORT**
The Committee noted a report on PGR degrees awarded in 2016-17 (RDPC/17/21).

8. **PHD RECRUITMENT DATA**
The Committee noted a report on PhD recruitment data for 2017-18 (RDPC/17/22). The Chair commented that it would be useful to also have the data for the previous two years for comparison.

**ACTION:** Secretary to ensure that for future meetings the data for the current year plus the previous two years are requested from Student Administration.

The Associate Dean (Doctoral School) recommended that a question should be added 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.

**ACTION:** 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.

9. **KEY REGULATORY ISSUES FOR PGR SUPERVISORS**
The Committee received a summary of key regulatory issues for PGR Supervisors (RDPC/17/23), and commented that this document is helpful for new supervisors. The Committee recommended that this document should be renamed ‘Regulatory FAQs’ and circulated to Heads of Departments and Directors of Graduate Studies. This paper has also been circulated to Directors of Graduate Studies for consideration at next week’s Directors of Graduate Studies Forum.

10. **REGULATORY ISSUES WITH SUBMISSION OF DOCTORAL THERSES**
The Committee considered a paper suggesting appropriate ways in which to respond to the recent problems with the submission of hard and electronic copies of doctoral theses (RDPC/17/24). The issue had arisen as some students had not been submitting hard and electronic copies at the same time, and there have been cases where the hard and electronic copies are different. The Committee recommended that the wording should be amended to say that the hard and electronic copies must be submitted on the same day, rather than that they must be submitted together. The two copies must also be identical.

11. **PGR SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS**

11.1 The Committee noted requests for suspensions of regulations and PGR extensions considered by the Chair since the last meeting of meeting of the College Board of Examiners’ Executive Committee (CBEEC) held on 29 June 2017 (RDPC/17/25).
The Committee considered a detailed analysis of PGR requests for suspensions of regulations in 2016-17 (RDPC/17/26), and noted that requests for suspensions of PGR regulations had increased slightly from the previous academic year. There had been a marked increase in the number of students with delayed attempts at the first and/or second upgrade attempts. It had previously been shown that there is a correlation between delayed attempts at the upgrade and requests for extensions to submission deadlines. There had also been an increase in requests for interruptions longer than 24 months, which is concerning given that it is not always easy for PGR students to recommence their studies after such a long break.

**PGR SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT SESSION WITH PROFESSOR PAM DENICOLO**

The Committee received the notes (RDPC/17/27a) and the slides (RDPC/17/27b) from the recent PGR supervisor training event with Professor Pam Denicolo. The training event had been very useful with some good ideas coming out of the session. The notes from the session list suggestions made by attendees of how supervisors at the College could be supported in their practice and development. An additional suggestion not included in the notes was to encourage students at the end of their first year or start of their second year to anonymously write about their experiences, whether good or bad, of being a postgraduate research student in the College.

**SOCIAL SCIENCE PhD EVENT**

The Committee agreed that an interdisciplinary Social Science PhD event or activity should be included in the Doctoral School programme. The Associate Dean (Research) of the Faculty of Management, Economics and Law and the Associate Dean (Doctoral School) are currently in discussion about this.

**Standing Items**

**DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM**

The Committee received the notes of the meeting of the DOGs Forum held on 4 May 2017 (RDPC/17/28). The Chair commented that the last bullet point under item 5 is incorrect; it is not accurate that, ‘Examiners are now only sent electronic copies so do not require hard copies,’ as all examiners are also sent hard copies of PhD theses.

**STUDENT ISSUES**

The student representative reported that a power socket in the Doctoral Hub was not working.

**ACTION:** Associate Dean (Doctoral School) to follow up on the issue of the power socket not working in the Doctoral Hub.

**TRAINING**

There were no issues relating to GSP training.

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL**

There were no issues relating to the Doctoral School.

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL STRATEGY WORKING GROUP**

The Committee noted the establishment of a new working group in Autumn 2017 to develop the Doctoral School Strategy. The date for the first meeting is yet to be set.

**FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES**

The Committee received the minutes from the College Research Committee meeting held on 27 April 2017 (RDPC/17/29a) and the Science Faculty Research and Enterprise Committee held on 23 January 2017 (RDPC/17/29b).

There are no minutes since the last meeting for the Arts and Social Science Faculty Research Committee and the Management, Economics and Law Faculty Research Committee as there has been
no secretarial support for the Faculty Research Committees. The Chair suggested that the Associate Dean MEL (Research) write to the Senior Vice-Principal to raise the issue of lack of administrative support for the Faculty Research Committees.

**ACTION:** Associate Dean MEL (Research) to write to the Senior Vice-Principal to raise the issue of lack of support for the Faculty Research Committees.

20. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**
The Committee noted the Equality and Diversity issue of people working long hours resulting in poor work life balance.

21. **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**
The Committee noted the dates of the next meetings: Tuesday 20th February 2018 at 2pm in the Principal’s Meeting Room; Thursday 10th May 2018 at 2pm in the Principal’s Meeting Room.

**ACTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 26TH OCTOBER 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minute</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 10TH MAY 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Minute</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>