# RESEARCH DEGREES PROGRAMMES COMMITTEE

M16/151-M16/197

Minutes of the Research Degrees Programmes Committee on Thursday 12 May 2016 at 2:00pm in Founders’ East 139

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Prof Rosemary Deem (Chair), Prof Barry Langford (Deputy Chair), Mr Mohsen Bazargan, Ms Alex Borrett, Dr Laura Christie, Prof Margaret Collinson, Dr Rainer Dietman, Ms Jane Gawthrope, Miss Yihan Liu, Ms Anna Sendall, Dr Sarah Wright,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Mr Merlin Harries (Secretary), Mrs Louise Watson, (Assistant Secretary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apologies</td>
<td>Prof Paul Hogg (Deputy Chair), Prof Richard Alston, Mr Alexander Clarke, Prof Gillian Symon,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1. CHAIR’S WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and the apologies received were noted.  

## 2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

### i

The minutes of the Meeting held on 16 February 2016 were confirmed as an accurate record

### ii

19-11-15 Student Recruitment and Partnerships reported back that they would need a standard set of reasons for the rejection that could be entered into a drop down list in Banner. After discussion by the Committee it was decided that the most common reasons are: insufficient qualifications/grades too low, no suitable supervisor available, project not suitable for research degree applied for, no suitable funding available. The current offer letter only offers a place; for a studentship or bursary, a separate letter of funding is needed.  
**Action:** Create a standardised list of reasons for rejection and ask Admissions to add this as a drop-down list in Banner.

The requested data on equality issues has been received and a report will be brought to the next meeting.

## 3. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIPS

It was noted that not all DTPs/DTCs had sent in their reports and that these needed to be reviewed on an annual basis

**Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)**

The Chair was pleased to see adjustments were made after the first year's feedback had been received.  

It was noted that UCL had differing supervisory practices and supervisor development to Royal Holloway and members were encouraged to note the good practice seen in the relevant report.

It was noted that the names had been redacted from all comments. The Chair queried the wisdom of this for positive comments as the funding for the Centres/Partnerships was public money and any achievements should be publicly available unless there are IPR issues, where the research is regarded as confidential or the comment is negative.  
**Action:** The DTPs & Scholarships Manager was requested to investigate the policy regarding the redaction of student names.
### 4. UPDATE ON INTERNAL PGR STUDENT SURVEY 2016

The Educational Development office reported that the return rate is already at 35% up on last year’s final total of 22%. This is partly because many departments that have made it mandatory to complete the survey and also because of the tremendous effort made by Mr Cole Connick in creating and individualised links to the survey and sending out reminders only to those students who have not yet completed the survey. The committee noted with thanks the efforts of Mr Cole Connick.

The Committee thought that the deadline for the completion of the RHUL survey should be after the annual College PGR conference. The Committee was informed that this was possible but the deadline had been left in line with the HEA PGR survey. **Action:** The Committee would like the next RHUL survey to be timed to finish after the annual PGR conference.

### 5. ADMISSIONS PRINCIPLES

The committee concluded that not all departments could follow the same admissions principles because of discipline specific requirements, but that there should be a document detailing the correct procedure with required qualifications/grades, and a detailed summary of the focus of the application asking the student to contact a potential supervisor before commencing the application process. The document should also mention the need to work on the proposal before application, the fields of supervision available and any funding available (and who is eligible for what) and deadlines.

It was decided that this information needs to be made clear during the application process, especially for department-specific requirements and clearly signposted on the Doctoral School and Research Degree webpages. It was suggested that an easily accessible dedicated webpage was needed; Coursefinder was suggested.

**Action:** the Assistant Registrar to contact the Deputy Head of Admissions to clarify what details they already hold.  
**Action:** the Chair requested that a presentation be made at the next DoGS Forum by Admissions about Coursefinder; Committee secretary to pursue  
**Action:** The Chair requested that a member of SR&P should be invited to sit on the Committee; Committee Secretary to pursue  
**Action:** the Chair requested that a copy of the expectations on Equality and Diversity document be sourced for reference during the compilation of the admissions document.

### 6. SUBJECT SPECIFIC TRAINING INITIATIVES

Generic researcher development training is currently available to all and students have requested a wide range of courses. Departments are now able to apply for more discipline focussed training packages and where these have been delivered (for example in Statistics) they have been well received.

The possibility for inter departmental offerings and collaborative partnerships was brought to the attention of the Board. It was suggested that it would be beneficial if information regarding this was more prominent on the application form. **Action:** The paper on departmental researcher development funding is to be sent to the Heads of Department to cascade the information through their departments.
7. **ASSESSMENT OFFENCES**

The Chair confirmed that Academic Board had agreed to the random submission of PG theses to Turnitin although the regulations have not yet been amended to take this into consideration.  
**Action:** The Assistant Registrar is to amend the Code of Practice to include the random submission of PG theses to Turnitin

| 16/174 |

It was observed that the current assessment offences regulations do not apply very well to postgraduate research students & need to be re-written, especially with regard to degree outcomes which are not currently appropriate for these students.

| 16/176 |

It was decided that a tailored approach was required that defined the difference between minor and major offences, the escalation of outcomes for second and third offences and the rules surrounding the random selection of theses to be run through Turnitin.

| 16/177 |

The process for choosing a thesis and its processing needs to be defined, detailing who looks at them and the process for cases where an offence is identified. The committee decided that a small number would be chosen in the first year and where the thesis contained a large number of pictures or diagrams a separate word document with only the text would be requested for processing.

**Action:** Mr Martin King is to be consulted as to the capacity of file size for our licensed Turnitin.

| 16/178 |

The committee decided that Masters PGR dissertations should also be included in this process if they weren't already.

**Action:** To find out if dissertations for Masters by Research and MPhils were currently put through Turnitin

| 16/180 |

8. **RECRUITMENT DATA**

The table raised two questions from the Committee.
- What is the 'count of department decision' column?
- Is it possible to have boxes to give a reason for decision (3-4) and a box for 'other'

**Action:** The Student Administration Manager is to find the answers to the Committee’s questions.

| 16/182 |

| 16/183 |

9. **PHD LOANS SCHEME 2018**

The Chair brought the new student Loans scheme for PGRs to the attention of the members of the committee and requested that this information be disseminated.

**Action:** Information about the new student loan scheme is to be disseminated to departments

| 16/184 |

| 16/185 |

10. **PGR ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORTS**

The Chair assured committee members that useful discussions had taken place during the Annual Scrutiny meeting, but that the same themes seem to emerge on a regular basis. These include funding, student feedback and study space. The issue with space is likely to be resolved with the opening of the library complex but departments need to consider how to encourage students to participate in Staff Student Committees. The number of teaching opportunities for PGR Students and their allocation was also questioned; this will be discussed further at the DoGS away day or by the DoGS Forum. Also worthy of particular note was the very positive feedback on the new Doctoral School, students were appreciative of the varied opportunities afforded by the School. The Chair recommended the wider distribution of the content of the reports to the other academic staff.

**Action:** The Assistant Registrars are requested to extract the information on good practice into a report and send this to the Dean of the Doctoral School.

| 16/186 |

| 16/187 |
### 11. ESPRC CDT CYBER SECURITY SUBMISSION AND UPGRADE DEADLINES

The Chair confirmed that the College needs to conform to Funding Council rules and where they conflict with our regulations the Funding Council regulations take precedent. Where a student needs to apply for a suspension of regulations then they must cite the funding council regulations in their request.  

16/188

16/189

### 12. SUPPORT FOR MAJOR REVISIONS AND RESUBMISSIONS OF THESES:

The Chair clarified that as a college we have a responsibility to support those students working on major resubmission and revision of their theses. The DoGS should be made aware of these students by Alex Borrett’s office and where there is a major revision required, DoGs should assist the supervisor in determining the arrangements for continued support. Committee members requested further advice on how much support should be given to these students and it was agreed that whilst this would be on a person to person basis, a minimum number of meetings or contacts (eg Skype) would be set in line with Tier 4 visa requirements which is once a month.

**Action:** The Committee recommends to the DoGS Forum that the minimum number of meetings/contacts in line with Tier 4 visa requirements be set in the Code of Practice.  

16/190

16/191

### 13. REPORT ON PGR STUDENT NUMBERS

The Committee agreed that this was a useful document and it was good to see the comparison information over the years.  

16/192

### 14. DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM

There were no confirmed minutes of the Directors of Graduate Studies forum to be brought to this meeting. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2016 will be brought to the next meeting.  

16/193

### 15. STUDENT ISSUES

No student issues were raised by the representatives. The Chair thanked the student union representatives and commented on the strength of the incumbent team and the friendly atmosphere evident in the student union which brought benefits to the student body as a whole.  

16/194

### 16. TRAINING

There were no issues raised in regards to RDP training.  

16/195

### 17. DOCTORAL SCHOOL

The Doctoral School Summer Conference will be on 6 June 2016, the final deadline for papers is 13 May 2016 and the final programme will be advertised shortly. A Plenary student meeting will form part of the programme.  

16/196

### 18. FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES

No issues were raised for consideration by the Research Committee or the Faculty Research Committee the minutes of these meetings will be bought to the next meeting.  

16/197

### 19. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Dates of the meetings in 2016-17 academic year are

- Thursday 17th November 2016 in Founders East 139
- Tuesday 21 February 2017 in Founders East 139
- Thursday 11th May 2017 in Founders East 139
## ACTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16/155</td>
<td>Create a standardised list of reasons for rejection and ask for them to be added to Banner.</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/160</td>
<td>Investigate the policy regarding the redaction of student names.</td>
<td>DTPs &amp; Scholarships Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/164</td>
<td>Time the next RHUL PGR survey to finish after the annual conference</td>
<td>Educational Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/167</td>
<td>Liaise with Admissions over what information they currently hold on PGR admissions requirements for specific departments.</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/168</td>
<td>A presentation be made at the next DoGS Forum by Comms about Coursefinder</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/169</td>
<td>A member of Student Recruitment &amp; Partnerships should be invited to join the Committee.</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/170</td>
<td>A copy of the Equality and Diversity Scheme be sourced for reference during the compilation of the Admissions document.</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar/Admissions</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/173</td>
<td>The paper on departmental researcher development funding is to be sent to Heads of Department to cascade the information through departments</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/175</td>
<td>The Assistant Registrar is to amend the Code of Practice to include the random submission of PG theses to Turnitin</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Pending: to be included in CoP 2017/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/179</td>
<td>Mr Martin King is to be consulted as to the capacity of file size for our licensed Turnitin</td>
<td>Mr Martin King</td>
<td>Complete. Maximum is 40MB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/181</td>
<td>To find out if dissertations for Masters by Research and MPhil’s were currently put through Turnitin</td>
<td>Assistant Registrar</td>
<td>Complete. No currently they are not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 16/183| On the recruitment data form  
  - What is the 'count of department decision' column?  
  - Is it possible to have boxes to give a reason for decision (3-4) and an box for 'other'                                                                 | The Student Administration Manager                       |                      |
| 16/185| Information about the new student loan scheme is to be disseminated to departments                                                                                                                                 | All Committee Members                                    |                      |
| 16/187| Extract the information on good practice into a report and sent this to the Dean of the Doctoral School.                                                                                                       | Assistant Registrar                                      | Pending              |
| 16/191| The committee recommends to the DoGS Forum that the minimum number of meetings in line with Tier 4 visa requirements be set in the Code of Practice.                                                             | Assistant Registrar                                      | Pending: to be included in CoP 2017/18                  |