Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 February 2016 in Founders East 139 (FE139)

Present  Professor R Deem (Chair), Professor P Hogg, Prof B Langford, Ms A Borrett, Dr L Christie, Ms Jane Gawthrope, Professor R Alston, Mr M Bazargan, Mr A Clarke, Professor M Collinson, Professor G Symon, Dr S Wright, Ms Nicola Cockarill.

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

Apologies Ms A Sendall, Dr R Dietman, Miss Y Liu,

1. CHAIR’S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and the apologies received were noted. Ms Jane Gawthrope was welcomed to her first meeting.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING
2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2015 (M 15/74 - M 15/111) (RDPC/16/02) were confirmed as an accurate record.

2.2 After the results of the PRES were discussed at the DoGS Forum and the last RDPC meeting, they were the given to the research students who welcomed the opportunity to have read and discussed them with staff.

3. MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE
It was noted that Ms Jane Gawthrope had been added to the membership list and Dr Laura Christie’s job title had changed.

4. ANNUAL REVIEW OF RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
It was noted that this report was from last year and all the actions had been completed. Dr Christie is meeting with staff from Epigium on 17 February 2016 to ensure that the program is up to date.

A member asked if questionnaires were still being issued for CARMA courses. It was clarified that questionnaires were run after every newly validated course but could be sent if requested and were sent to randomly selected courses. If students had feedback they could send this to Dr Laura Christie who was very happy to receive any feedback.

5. PROVISION FOR SUPERVISORY TRAINING AND COMPULSORY TRAINING FOR STAFF NEW TO SUPERVISION;
. The members present agreed that submission and completion rates might be further improved by working to improve supervisors’ knowledge of current regulations.

The committee members thought that this was a sound proposition when done as a half day on a rolling three year basis which would not be a heavy burden on anyone’s time. It would support new staff employed by the College and keep current supervisors regularly informed of the changes in regulations.

It was clarified that this was a briefing session rather than the training sessions that were held for newly appointed staff which is done through the CAPITAL programme.
It was acknowledged that there may be some scepticism about how useful these sessions may be but each session is led by an academic from the Faculty and past sessions have received positive feedback. Any feedback received is used to inform future sessions to keep them up to date and relevant to each faculty.

Non-attendance would be monitored by the Doctoral School. Whilst it may take time to become established as an accepted protocol it was not thought that non-attendance would become an issue.

6. **REVISIONS TO RESEARCH DEGREE REGULATIONS**

**Reviews of Academic Progress**

There is a need to rethink the way in which we chose the panel members for the review and upgrade meetings. The current regulations were created when the University of London still had regulations and before it devolved degree awarding powers in 2006. Therefore as the current system no longer works in the same way it needs to change.

The changes are being made in order to offer flexibility to the departments whilst maintaining standards that will meet the QAA Quality Code B11 and fall in line with sector practice.

The changes proposed included revised wording which should include ‘or other nominated representative’ for instances when the supervisor cannot be present.

The committee concluded that the upgrade panel should always consist of a minimum of three members one of whom should be familiar with the student and their work, (the supervisor or a member of the supervisory team) at least one internal adviser, (within the parameters set out above) and an external adviser if relevant (eg CASE awards etc). Any less than three panel members would mean that the upgrade would not be rigorous enough especially where the upgrade was unsuccessful. Three would be the minimum number needed to be quorate; more could attend as long as care was taken not to overwhelm the student.

It was decided by the committee that a minimum of two panel members would be needed for the review one of whom must be independent of the candidate.

**Requirements of the MPhil and PhD theses**

The changes to Section 13, Paragraph 10, were considered to be reasonable and in keeping with the regulations and the sector.

**Submission of the MPhil and PhD theses**

The committee confirmed the change with the addition of the wording to ensure that where the subject of the theses is highly confidential an electronic copy does not need to be submitted with previous authorisation of the Faculty Dean.

**Action:** The Secretary is to reword the paragraph and send to the Chair and Committee for approval.

**Conduct of the MPhil and PhD final examination**

The changes to Section 16, Paragraph 7, were considered to be reasonable and in keeping with the regulations and the sector.

7. **TECHNE ANNUAL REPORT**

This was the report of the first full year. The committee considered it to be well written and comprehensive. The redaction of the student names was noted as good practice.

8. **SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING OF PG STUDENTS**

This report had already been seen at the DoGS forum so it is expected that it will be disseminated to departments.
Point 7 was discussed as the ideas are well conceived although it was thought by members that interruption for mental health issues was not always the best option from the student point of view as it could cause isolation and further problems on their return to study. Partial interruptions would be likely to be problematic for International students with Tier 4 visas and those external funding due to the restrictions imposed the relevant organisations. The Chair decided that it should be looked into at a future date as there were many challenges and it would be discussed at the DoGS away day. It is not thought that any institutions are currently using any of these ideas.

10. **SUBMISSION OF PHD THESES THROUGH TURNITIN**

Learning Teaching & Quality Committee have passed these recommendations on following a Times article regarding plagiarism. The Committee supported the use of Turnitin to check early chapter submission providing the reports were received by academics and not students and that a discussion of the report with the student occurred after the submission as the results can be misconstrued if not looked at carefully and regarding the improvements that the student needed to make. The system is already in use in some departments and colleagues were recommended to speak to Mr Martin King if they were interested in setting it up for themselves. It was said to be an extremely easy process which had been found to be most useful. It was further thought that the random submission of the full theses should be implemented and students informed in an effort to deter them from plagiarising. The submission of every complete thesis was thought to unnecessarily problematic and time consuming for the small benefit that would be gained. As before any suspicion of plagiarism in a thesis would mean that it would be submitted through Turnitin as a matter of course.

**Action:** The proposal will now go to Academic Board with the recommendation that it is approved.

11. **MD DOCTORATE**

This is a common form of programme mostly found in medical schools but as we have students who work in the field it was considered to be sensible to provide a programme of study here. There is a small market for this programme in the connections with St Peters Hospital. There are no funding implications as it is not a taught programme and the consequences of not offering it would be that potential students will register elsewhere. The Committee considered this to be a valid addition to our programme offerings.

12. **APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL EXAMINERS**

This was discussed as part of the revisions to the Research Degree Regulations and the committee decided that where possible internal examiners should be drawn from Royal Holloway rather than the University of London colleges, unless the expertise and or detachment is not currently available internally. This would be relevant in small departments or where a student is well known to the staff with that specialism or is a member of staff. The value of an internal examiner who knows College procedures and regulations should not be undervalued.

13. **PROPOSAL FOR THE SUBMISSION OF POST EXAMINATION PRINT THESES TO BECOME OPTIONAL**

A representative from Library Services joined the meeting for this item. It was recommended that the submission of a hard copy of the final theses became optional and only electronic copies would be submitted to the library unless the student wanted to submit the hard copy. The proposal was approved by the committee. The current policy on the Embargo period was discussed and there was some confusion over the automatic embargo period, this was resolved as being an automatic two year embargo unless the student stipulated otherwise. This was in order to encourage publication because publishers are now refusing to publish where the theses is already electronically available.
Students may request a further period up to five years through a request to their supervisor and a period beyond five years (e.g. ten years) via request to their Faculty Dean.

**Action:** Alex Borrett in Student Administration will update the form which the students use to submit their theses to the library and this is to be circulated to the Committee once done.

14. **REPORT ON PGR STUDENT NUMBERS**
This form did not have all the information requested and will be returned to the next meeting.

**Action:** Alex Borrett in Student Administration will arrange for the information to be requested and presented at the next meeting.

15. **DIRECTORS OF GRADUATE STUDIES FORUM**
The interim questionnaire was discussed and the questions will be kept the same as last time in order to facilitate the comparison of data. There were no further comments.

16. **STUDENT ISSUES**
It was asked if more could be done to enable PGR students to exercise. It was suggested that the Sports Centre be asked to attend the induction week to advertise their facilities. It was agreed that this was important especially in the light of increased mental health issues in PGR students.

17. **TRAINING**
There were no issues to be discussed

18. **DOCTORAL SCHOOL**
The Faculty challenge will take place on Tuesday 1 March 2016
On 8 March there will be a discussion forum with Early Career Researchers discussing how they approached getting their first formal position.
The Summer conference will take place on 6 June with the theme of ‘Space’ followed by the Summer Party

19. **FACULTY RESEARCH ISSUES**
*Science Faculty Research Committee 20/11/15 7.1,* the proposal for an automatic fee waiver was thought to be a good idea.

*Science Faculty Research Committee 20/11/15 7.3,* It was considered that joint studentships were too costly and administratively burdensome to be useful, but dual degrees could be considered if the numbers were likely to be at least two per year for at least five years any less than this and the costs of setting it up would outweigh the benefits.
The Chair was concerned by the lack of discussion of research students by the Faculty Research Committee. It was decided that the Dean of the Doctoral School would request that he attended each committees once per year to specifically discuss research student issues in either the Summer or Autumn terms.

**Action:** To request to attend the faculty research committee meeting once a year
### ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 16, February, 2016

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action Description</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Completion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-02-16</td>
<td>6. Re word the regulations as discussed in the meeting and send to committee members for approval and feedback.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-02-16</td>
<td>10. Send proposal for the submission of theses chapters to Turnitin for approval by Academic Board.</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-02-16</td>
<td>13. to update the form which the students use to submit their theses to the library and this is to be circulated to the committee once done.</td>
<td>Student Admin Manager</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-02-16</td>
<td>14. to arrange for the information on PGR student numbers to be requested and presented at the next meeting.</td>
<td>Student Admin Manager</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-02-16</td>
<td>19. To request to attend the faculty research committee meeting once a year</td>
<td>Dean of the Doctoral School</td>
<td>Complete</td>
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### ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 19, November, 2015

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<tr>
<td>19-11-15</td>
<td>10. 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>Ongoing</td>
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### ACTIONS FROM MEETING HELD ON 13, May, 2015

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13-05-15</td>
<td>13. Data on equality issues and research students is to be compiled</td>
<td>Student Admin Manager</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
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