



Department of Governance

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE		
Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2016		
Present:	Dr L. Gray (Chair), Dr S. Hagan, Professor D. Harrison, Professor B. Kumar, Professor J. McKendrick, Mr S. Olaniyan, Professor P. Shukla, Professor B. Steves, Professor B. Stewart	
In attendance:	Ms S. McGiffen, Ms E. Toland, Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
Apologies:	Dr K. Halcro, Dr B. Stansfield, Dr E. Tulle, Professor O. Walsh, Professor J. Woodburn, Mr S. Lopez, Ms J. Main, Dr L. Carey	
CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION		
015.001	Considered	An introduction led by the Chair focusing on the changes to PGRS governance arrangements and including reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Senate paper <i>Changes to Postgraduate Research Student Governance Arrangements (S15.10.01)</i> 2. Any initial feedback on the process from the Schools. 3. Any initial feedback from the Graduate School.
015.002	Reported	By the Chair that changes to the way research degrees were governed and administered was approved by Senate in October 2015, with a move towards a less process driven governance arrangement. The Research Degrees Committee replaced the Higher Degrees Subcommittee and would have a more strategic focus and role in enhancing the PGR student experience. There was a full workload for the Committee but he was hopeful that the new arrangements would be a positive direction for all PGR students.
015.003	Discussion	Members were largely positive about the changes and felt that the School Progression and Awards Boards pilot phase had gone well. There were some specific improvements that members felt could be made to the research degrees forms in relation to ethics and risk assessment to enhance consistency across Schools. These would be discussed under the matters arising from the Higher Degrees Subcommittee minutes from 9 December 2015.
015.004	Resolved	That the feedback is noted.
MINUTES		
015.005	Considered	Minutes of the final meeting of the Higher Degrees Sub-committee on 9

		December 2015 (HDC15/140/1).
05.006	Resolved	That the minutes are approved as a correct record.
05.007	Reported	By the Secretary that the reserved business would be circulated to the School PAB chairs outwith the meeting (Action: RDC Secretary).
MATTERS ARISING		
RDC1/RDC2 forms (arising on HDSCM 15.99)		
015.008	Reported:	By the Chair that the HDSC had flagged the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further options are needed for the ethics section of the RDC1 form for students to indicate the stage of approval and how this would be tracked. 2. It was proposed that there is a pro-forma made available within each School for students for risk assessment of projects 3. There should be guidance to students and staff on completing the risk assessment section of the RDC1 form. 4. That there should be a section included in the RDC2 form to record if a student refuses to sign the form when a decision is unfavourable to them. 5. Information is added to the regulations on the options for students if they wish to appeal the RDC2 outcome.
015.009	Discussion:	Members felt that the areas of ethical approval and risk assessment were key areas of inconsistency and the HDSC proposals were suggestions on how to address them. It was important to track the ethical approval stage of students and it was possible that it could be built in to the mini viva examination. Risk assessment was inconsistently completed by students and it was important to address under the University's new risk register arrangements which required a risk register for all projects and could be audited. Guidance for both students and staff would be welcome and it was suggested that, for students, the guidance could be built into Graduate School workshops.
015.010	Resolved:	That the RDC1/RDC2 forms are updated in line with the recommendations of HDSC (Action: Chair RDC/Secretary RDC).
RESEARCH DEGREES POLICY, REGULATIONS AND PROGRAMMES REVIEW		
015.011	Considered:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research programmes update and action plan (RDC15/04/01). 2. Research student leads (RDC15/05/01). 3. The draft ELIR response as it relates to the Postgraduate Student Experience (RDC15/06/01)
015.012	Reported:	By Professor Steves that there were numerous required actions as a result of the Senate changes to PGR student governance and ELIR/ELISR. The report from ELIR 2015 made recommendations for development in relation to the PGR Student Experience. This paper (RDC15/04/01) had tried to draw together all of the various elements and present both a summary of what is required and a timetable for expected completion of actions. QAA will return in June to visit staff and students and will expect progress by then.

		<p>The paper recommended the development of PGR networks of students and PGRTs and also of the research administrators. These networks were intended to bring forward practical ideas to enhance the student experience.</p> <p>The formation of the RPEG would develop these practical ideas and also address the issues of ELIR.</p> <p>A review of PGR regulations, including the MRes and Prof D Framework would be implemented in order to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adapt to the changes decreed by Senate 2. Enhance the PGR student experience in general.
015.013	Discussion:	<p>Research Programmes Update and Action Plan</p> <p>Members discussed the timetable of activity and management of the remaining transition.</p> <p>Authorisation of Awards were currently being made through the Chair and this was not a long term solution.</p> <p>There was a discussion about research themes and the need to allocate students to PGRTs/groups linked to their Director of Studies. There was a general lack of clarity surrounding roles and responsibilities and members felt that it should not be confused with a purely administrative responsibility.</p> <p>There was a need to fully involve the research administrators and ensure roles and responsibilities are made clear.</p> <p>Research Degrees Policy, Regulation and Programmes Review</p> <p>Members discussed how to take forward the review i.e. through working groups and a larger RPEG.</p> <p>The areas the working groups were to cover were suggested as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Induction and Progression • Environment <p>ELIR</p> <p>This was first draft response. PVCr and PVC LSE were both considering it and input was required from the ADRs.</p>
015.014	Resolved:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Chair would seek clarity from the PVCr 2. That the working groups are set up in the first instance to begin process of review. (Action: Chair RDC/ Secretary RDC)
CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES SURROUNDING PGRS STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND PROGRESSION		
015.015	Considered:	A summary of the progress and activity surrounding the issues raised by PGR Students (RDC15/02/01).
015.016	Reported	By the Secretary that the paper was an attempt to summarise various issues and actions that had taken place in the past twelve months.

015.017	Reported	By the Chair that Professor Parker's work was focused on the discrepancy in payment and People Services were revamping the casual hours system.
015.018	Discussion:	Members were interested to see what People Services guidance would entail. It was reported to be due before the end of the month. Members welcomed the regularisation of the payment to PGRS for teaching/demonstration across Schools. However care was required to monitor all aspects that inhibit completion within normal timeframes and that would include students working more than (6?) hours and the other factors identified by the HDSC investigation.
015.019	Resolved:	That the summary be noted.
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES)		
015.020	Considered:	An analysis of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) (RDC15/03/01).
015.021	Reported	By Ms Toland that there was a large amount of data and this was compared in various ways. The HEA analysis had been circulated.
015.022	Discussion:	Members discussed strategies to increase the response rate. There were various suggestions such as seminars specifically related to PRES but general agreement that greater focus and plan was needed. It was noted that Strategy and Planning would now be responsible for administering the PRES and the next survey would be in 2017. Better communication was necessary with the student body as well in order to improve satisfaction.
015.023	Resolved:	That a breakdown of the results by School is prepared for circulation to the appropriate Schools (Action: Graduate School)
PGRS LEAVER DESTINATIONS		
015.024	Considered:	A discussion on the issues related to GCU PGR Students Leaver Destinations.
015.025	Discussion:	Members felt that a good starting point would be to consider data held by the Alumni Office.
015.026	Resolved:	The Secretary contact the relevant department to ascertain what data is available on PGRS leaver destinations.
AOCB		
015.027	Considered:	Any other competent business not dealt with on the agenda.
Research Postgraduate Application Form		
015.028	Reported	By Professor McKendrick that GSBS had revised their list of programme details for inclusion on the PGR application form.
Fees Discount for transitioning students		
015.029	Reported:	By Mr Olaniyan that students had been experiencing difficulties in obtaining discounted fees when transitioning from MSc to PGR degrees.

015.030	Resolved	That the policy on fee discounts is clarified (Action: Secretary RDC)
TERMS OF REFERENCE & COMPOSITION		
015.030	Approved:	The terms of reference and composition of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC15/01/01).

AG/RDC/agenda/10 February2016