



Department of Governance

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE		
Minutes of the meeting held 12 June 2019		
Present:	Dr B. Ahmed, Ms H. Akalu, Mr M. Apiliga, Professor D. Edgar, Dr K. Halcro, Professor J. Harris, Professor D. Harrison, Dr L. Gray (Chair), Mr W. Javed, Ms M. Sadeghu, Dr B. Stansfield, Professor B. Steves	
In attendance:	Ms D. Dickie, Mr D. Moore, Dr G Poulter, Ms K. Roden, Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
Apologies:	Dr S. Hagan, Dr M-A. Houston, Professor A. Klemm, Dr N. Lombard, Mr M. Marshall, Professor O. Pahl	
MINUTES		
018.085	Considered	Minutes of the meeting of the Research Degrees Committee 17 April 2019 (RDC18/23/01).
018.086	Resolved	That the minutes be approved as correct record.
MATTERS ARISING		
SPGRT/PGRT role profiles (<i>Arising on 018.063</i>)		
018.087	Reported	By the Secretary that the University Research Committee had approved the profiles. The revised profiles would now be recommended to the Deans Group.
RPAB Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedure: Refresh (<i>Arising on 018.077</i>)		
018.088	Reported	By the Secretary that the University Research Committee had approved the revised Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedure.
CHANGES TO THE RESEARCH DEGREE APPEAL PROCEDURE TIMESCALES		
018.089	Considered	Proposed changes to the appeal procedure timescales for research degrees (RDC18/24/01).

018.090	Reported	<p>By the Committee Secretary that the issue had been discussed at the last meeting of RDC and centred on students in receipt of a studentship stipend who make an appeal against an examination decision. Under current regulations and procedures it may be several months before their outcome is decided and in this period they continue to be in receipt of the stipend. This is problematic for the University in that stipend funds are paid during a period where no academic progress is made and also problematic for the student in that stipend funds are likely to run out before completion of their PhD. As it is in the interests of both the University and the student to conclude the process as quickly as practicable, an update to the Research Degrees Appeal regulations is proposed.</p> <p>Currently the regulations state: 10.5 The candidate must give written notice that they wish to request a review of the examination decision to the Secretary to the Research Degrees Committee in the Department of Governance within three months of the date of notification of the result of the examination.</p> <p>A review of sector practice indicates that this time period is excessive and the period of one month/30 days is more common.</p> <p>Currently the period for resolution is not specified: 10.17 The aim shall be to conclude the review process as quickly as possible. During the process, the candidate will be kept informed by the Department of Governance of the likely timescale for completion and of any circumstances that may prolong the process.</p> <p>Sector practice shows a wide variance of outcome timescales and unstated timescales, in recognition of the complexity of many cases. However a <i>normal</i> timescale could be set alongside the current proviso that candidates are kept informed of any circumstances that may prolong the process.</p>
018.091	Discussion	<p>Members discussed whether the stipend issue was a separate matter to the general timescales for appeal. Regardless of that it was agreed that the timescales for appeal should be brought into line with the sector and similar University processes. With that in mind it was proposed that notification should be within two weeks of the result decision and the final submission of the case within one month.</p> <p>Equally with a revision of the timescales for submission, timescale for completion could be similarly set as normally one month from receipt of appeal.</p>
018.092	Resolved	<p>That the regulations be amended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give appellants 14 days to submit notice of appeal. 2. That the appeal itself is submitted within 30 days. 3. That completion of process is set as normally 1 month from receipt. <p>(Action: RDC Secretary) and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Consideration is given to a possible standing appeals panel. <p>(Action: RDC Chair/Secretary).</p>

		<p>5. That for students on a stipend, there is no change to their payments during the period to completion of the process.</p> <p>6. There is discussion with the PVC/URC over any required changes to the PhD studentship terms and conditions. (Action: Director Graduate School).</p>
PGR STUDENT REPRESENTATION		
018.093	Considered	A report by the Director of the Graduate School on changes to student representation proposed way forward.
018.094	Reported	<p>By Professor Steves that the GCUSA Academic Representative Review proposals approved by Senate in May had led to a number of changes that seriously impacted on PGR student representation. The linkage with research disciplines had been “abolished” with there now being two PGR representatives per School, with GCU London unchanged. The intention was to pilot this model for 2019-20. This meant that each representative would now have a very diverse portfolio and heavy workload.</p> <p>There were two potential reactions to this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the pilot 2. Explore ways to ensure PGRS representation across Schools, working with GCUSA.
018.095	Discussion	<p>Members asked why the change. Mr Apiliga explained that the changes were in reaction to the thematic review and the student feedback regarding the previous system. Consultation had been sought with the PGRS representatives but the response had been poor. So the proposals had been presented to ETSE, SAGE and Senate.</p> <p>Other representatives stated that their responses to consultation had been disregarded. Mr Apiliga stated that the GCUSA were aware that representatives had concerns but the thematic review provided evidence that students themselves had indicated that the system was not working effectively.</p> <p>The GCU London representative stated that these were fair points and that PGRS representatives had not made the case forcefully/responded. Nonetheless this was a disappointing outcome and she informed members she had asked for a review after first trimester.</p> <p>It was suggested that it wasn’t really about the number of reps but about the visibility of any action.</p> <p>Professor Steves stated that the problem with the thematic review was that it was reacting to feedback from a year earlier without taking into account progress in the meantime.</p>
018.096	Resolved	Further discussion to ensure PGRS representation across Schools for 2019-20 academic session (Director of the Graduate School/GCUSA) .
PGR DEGREES FEES		
018.097	Considered	An update from the Director of the Graduate School on PGR degree fees.

018.098	Reported	<p>By Professor Steves that the Executive Board had taken a number of decisions regarding PGRS fees, in particular the “writing up” fee was simplified.</p> <p>In summary, all research degrees fees are frozen except for the professional doctorate. The DBA and professional doctorate being looked at by Deans Group before final decision. The overseas PhD fee is £15.5K.</p> <p>The writing up fee is set at £525 p.a. This means for 3 years full-time PhD students pay full fee and for a continuation year they will pay the writing up fee. After that a decision is made based on supervisory requirements i.e. they will pay either the continuation fee or full fee.</p> <p>As for bench fees, there was likely to be a range of fees which would be subject to confirmation in the admissions offer.</p>
018.099	Discussion	<p>Members asked if the writing up fee would revert to full fee after year 4. Professor Steves stated that it depended on the supervisory requirements at that stage. The RPAB would be decided based on an assessment of work programme.</p> <p>Members asked if continued supervision into year 4 would be charged as writing up and it was noted that this would be the case.</p> <p>Members discussed the need to have stronger programme review and monitoring to identify issues and help to keep students on target for completion.</p> <p>Members noted that there was no intention to charge a writing up fee to students with a studentship who required a fourth year.</p> <p>It was noted that there was no distinction being made between full-time and part-time and that there should be no charges for major/minor changes to a thesis post viva.</p> <p>Some members voiced concerns about reverting to a full fee after a writing up year and thought this could potentially lead to complaints.</p> <p>Another member asked if there could be a request to the FNO to invoice all fees together (i.e. fee plus bench fee).</p>
018.100	Resolved	That any issues raised in the discussion are raised to the PVCR (Action: Chair RDC).
GCU LONDON RESEARCH TRAINING		
018.101	Considered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An update from the GCU London PGR Student representative (RDC18/20/02). 2. An update on training provision and arrangements (RDC18/27/01).
018.102	Reported	By the Chair that students at GCU London should be aware that the

		<p>Committee was supportive of them and was committed to seeking a solution to any issues.</p>
<p>018.103</p>	<p>Discussion</p>	<p>Ms Akalu, the GCU London PGRS representative outlined the main concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insufficient training. 2. Students don't feel involved. 3. Student experience is poor. <p>Ms Akalu stated that this is impacting on students' progress.</p> <p>Dr Ahmed added that there is the intention to develop a GCU London training framework in collaboration with the Graduate School and GCU London staff. The aim is equity of experience, not exactly the same provision as Glasgow students. However there are issues currently.</p> <p>Some provision used in the London area (e.g. Access Education) was not working and whilst there is staff expertise at GCU London, time and availability can be limited.</p> <p>Ms Akalu stated that there is frustration amongst GCU London students with identifying where responsibility for resolving issues lies but clearly the University had a responsibility to address the issues.</p> <p>She felt that the Graduate School should take a lead role discussed.....</p> <p>There is financial aspect – small budgets for external training can be used up with students coming to Glasgow.</p> <p>Professor Steves welcomed the opportunity to have the discussion.</p> <p>She informed members that there have been discussions but it is a work in progress. There is an aim to identify a clear GCU London researcher development programme for 2019-20. Dr Ahmed and Dr Cartwright are working on the principles (draft provided on the agenda) but there is still work to do.</p> <p>The process needs to encompass evidence of past provision and uptake, what has been tried and isn't working and what isn't needed. There needs to be an overall training needs analysis of GCU London and to make the most of the limited resources available.</p> <p>Professor Steves proposed that as part of the process she would visit GCU London during the summer of 2019 and work together with stakeholders to finalise the programme, taking into account the issues raised here.</p> <p>Another member suggested that other Schools processes for attributing the external training budgets could be shared with London to provide a potential model. Members also felt that we should make the most of video-conferencing, where appropriate i.e. where School-based training being provided in Glasgow is also applicable in GCU London.</p>

		<p>Dr Ahmed stated that ideally training would be all provided locally but this is not possible at the moment so a partnership approach is required and would be welcomed.</p> <p>The Chair stated that a conversation with the PVCRC regarding the specific funding pressures on GCU London may be helpful.</p>
018.104	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Committee notes the ongoing discussion 2. That Director of Graduate School will visit GCU London to work with stakeholders on finalising a programme for 2019-20. (Action: Director Graduate School). 3. That there is a conversation with PVCRC about funding allocated to GCUL (Action: Chair RDC).
AOB		
Progression Rates		
018.105	Discussion	Member query about progression rates data. Professor Steves informs members there is HESA data on GCU Dash
018.106	Resolved	Circulate to SPGRS
Delays in IT set up for PGR Students		
018.107	Reported	By SCEBE Student Lead that there are issues with delays for students getting desk and IT access.
018.108	Discussion	<p>Members noted that IT Services can't set up until student is registered. However there should be a desk available.</p> <p>Student members raised an issue about student leavers occupying space with their belongings after they have left or graduated. Students also reported they were unaware of to whom they should report these matters.</p> <p>The GCUSA representative proposed a meeting with PGR representatives to attempt to resolve this matter.</p> <p>Other members pointed out that there was a need to make clear contact links with the Research Degree administrators and PGRTs and this should happen initially at induction and be ongoing.</p>
018.109	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That these issues are reported to the appropriate PGRT and administrator. 2. That any issues that persist are reported back to the Committee. (Action: PGRS representatives).
RESEARCH DEGREE EXAM APPROVALS & AWARDS		
018.110	Received	A record of examinations and awards ratified since the previous meeting of RDC (RDC18/18/01)