



Department of Governance

<b>RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE</b>		
<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020</b>		
<b>Present:</b>	Dr B. Ahmed, Professor K. Currie, Dr S. Hagan, Dr K. Halcro, Professor J. Harris, Professor D. Harrison, Dr L. Gray (Chair), Dr C. MacRae, Dr B. Stansfield, Professor B. Steves	
<b>In attendance:</b>	Ms M. Daly, Ms D. Dickie, Mr I. MacKay, Ms C. McDonald, Dr G Poulter, Ms L. Waugh, Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
<b>Apologies</b>	Mr C. Glover, Dr M-A. Houston, Professor A. Klemm, Ms T. Nyariki, Professor O. Pahl	
<b>MINUTES</b>		
<b>020.001</b>	<b>Considered</b>	Minutes of the meeting of the Research Degrees Committee on 10 June 2020 ( <b>RDC19/29/01</b> ).
<b>020.002</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	That the minutes be approved as correct record.
<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>		
<b>Timetable for the return to labs</b> ( <i>arising on 019.092</i> )		
<b>020.003</b>	<b>Reported</b>	By the Director of the Graduate School that PGR students are subject to the same mechanisms as staff.
<b>STUDENT ISSUES RAISED BY RPAB</b>		
<b>020.004</b>	<b>Considered</b>	1. Generic issues related to a specific student case ( <b>RDC20/10/01</b> ). 2. Proposal for a subgroup of RDC to consider specifics of the case.
<b>020.005</b>	<b>Reported</b>	By Professor Stansfield that the matter had arisen in relation to a memo from supervisors of a student whose progress was not good. The matter was complicated by the fact that the student was externally funded. The student had now submitted but the case had raised a number of generic issues which were presented for consideration by RDC.  1. To review of the specific student case by RDC subgroup in to consider lessons learned. 2. Consider implementing a formal annual review process for PGR

		<p>students similar to RDC2 process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Tighten and/or clarify deadlines for the RDC14 process.</li> <li>4. Clarify what happens when roles are conflicted e.g. where PGRTs or Graduate School staff are supervisors.</li> <li>5. Clarify the legal position for Research Study Leads, Students and the University where work has been externally funded in regard to the content of the thesis.</li> <li>6. Clarify how inaccurate or incorrect content of a thesis can be kept out of public view where work is externally funded.</li> </ol>
020.005	Discussion	<p>Members were supportive on convening a review group. There was some support for an annual review process but others flagged a concern that this would be resource intensive and that it may be more prudent to look at annual monitoring processes and how these could be made more robust.</p> <p>The issue of a student submitting without the support of their supervisors was discussed and members felt that there may be research integrity implications.</p>
020.006	Resolved	That a subgroup to review these issues is convened ( <b>Action: RDC Secretary</b> ).
<b>PGR EXTENSIONS</b>		
020.007	Considered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. UKGCE survey on PGR Time/Funding Extensions in relation to Covid 19 (<b>RDC20/05/01</b>).</li> <li>ii. Note on Continuation Fees (<b>RDC20/09/01</b>).</li> </ol>
020.008	Received	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>iii. The Extension Policy approved by RDC circulation (<b>RDC19-30-01</b>).</li> <li>iv. The terms of reference and composition of the SRPABS approved by circulation (<b>RDC19/31/01</b>).</li> </ol>
020.009	Reported	By Director of the Graduate School that we are asked to contribute as an institution to this UKGCE survey which is seeking to capture a UK-wide picture of PGR funding / time extensions relating to COVID-19. Equality, diversity and inclusion information would also be gathered.
020.010	Reported	By the Chair that it was important to respond with the data on GCU's actions which he felt was a good response to the implications of the pandemic.
020.011	Resolved	That the Committee endorse preparation of a response from the Graduate School on behalf of the University.
020.012	Reported	By the Director of the Graduate School that the note on continuation fees was provided as there had been a degree of confusion over the past year over what happened when students reach the maximum period of registration. The note outlined the decision taken by Executive Board in 2019 i.e. that 4 <sup>th</sup> years are charged a continuation fee and for extensions approved beyond 4 years the RPAB will decide if full fee or continuation fee is appropriate.
020.013	Resolved	That the update be noted.

<b>SAFE RETURN TO CAMPUS</b>		
<b>020.014</b>	<b>Considered</b>	Guidance issued on the safe return to campus ( <b>RDC20/06/01</b> ).
<b>020.015</b>	<b>Reported</b>	<p>By the Director of the Graduate School that this was the subject of much discussion at the moment. The guidance provided was the initial STRC guidance which had also been provided in the SRTC newsletter.</p> <p>It should be noted that PGR students follow similar processes to staff. An update to the guidance was being prepared and would be issued shortly via the SRTC newsletter. Students should be guided in the process by their Director of Studies. The key difference to staff processes was that research students returning to campus, including those who apply to come on campus for a one-off short visit, must complete the Health Questionnaire and a short (10 mins) mandatory SRTC online induction and obtain a certificate of completion. PGR students now have access to SRTC SharePoint and to GCU Learn.</p> <p>The new guidance would include further detail on priority return (e.g. for lab use), study spaces, ad hoc visit requirements and pick up of equipment.</p>
<b>020.016</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	The Chair reiterated the need for students to approach any decisions on return to campus in conjunction with their Director of Studies. There were complex health and safety considerations and these needed to be managed carefully.
<b>020.017</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	That the update be noted.
<b>REGULATIONS FOR AEGROTAT AND POSTHUMOUS AWARDS</b>		
<b>020.018</b>	<b>Approved</b>	Proposed regulations for the award of aegrotat and posthumous research degrees for recommendation to the University Research Committee ( <b>RDC20/04/01</b> ).
<b>RESEARCH STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN (REAP)</b>		
<b>020.019</b>	<b>Considered</b>	A review of REAP in 2019-20 ( <b>RDC20/08/01</b> ) and draft REAP plan 2020-21 ( <b>RDC20/11/01</b> ).
<b>020.020</b>	<b>Reported</b>	<p>By the Director of the Graduate School that the review was a summary of previous year's plan and completed actions. This was a useful record for annual reporting or exercises such as ELIR.</p> <p>The 2020-21 plan was a draft including actions carried over and various other items that had been raised by students or other research groups.</p>
<b>020.021</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	The Chair commented that it was important to prioritise the plan. He recommended that proposed actions be subdivided in to priority actions and others which are medium term or aspirational. This was particularly important now due to ongoing Covid-19 impact.

		Members discussed if the recruitment targets. It was noted that while part-time recruitment appeared to be holding up well, full-time was more problematic. Members felt the target of 40% was not realistic given the current circumstances.  It was further noted that 27 students were starting in this cycle, mostly by remote working and there were some deferrals.
<b>020.022</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	That the draft plan be revised in line with the comments above ( <b>Action: DoGS</b> ).
<b>RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20</b>		
<b>020.023</b>	<b>Approved</b>	An overview report on RDC activity in 2019-20 ( <b>RDC20/02/01</b> )
<b>RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW 2019-20</b>		
<b>020.024</b>	<b>Considered</b>	The Annual Report by the Graduate School on researcher development ( <b>RDC20/07/01</b> ).
<b>020.025</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	That the Committee noted that the rapid move to online provision was very impressive.
<b>RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION &amp; MEMBERSHIP UPDATED FOR 2020-20</b>		
<b>020.026</b>	<b>Approved</b>	The Terms of Reference and Composition and Membership 2019-20 ( <b>RDC20/01/01</b> ).
<b>AOCB</b>		
<b>External Examiner Honorarium</b>		
<b>020.027</b>	<b>Reported</b>	By the Chair that the honorarium was paid by from a Registry budget. There had been renewed queries about why it appeared to be so low in comparison with other HEIs.
<b>020.028</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	Members discussed how to approach this issue. It had been suggested that the expenses were not as applicable now so could be consolidated in the honorarium but also noted that Schools pay expenses separately.  In principle members were supportive of raising the rate of the honorarium to match sector norms.
<b>020.029</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	That the Chair discuss the matter further with the Academic Registrar.
<b>RESEARCH DEGREE EXAM APPROVALS &amp; AWARDS</b>		
<b>020.029</b>	<b>Received</b>	A record of examinations and awards ratified since the previous meeting of RDC ( <b>RDC20/03/01</b> ).
<b>RPAB MINUTES</b>		
<b>020.030</b>	<b>Received</b>	The confirmed minutes of: i. SCEBE RPAB 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 (RPAB-SEBE-19.156) ii. GSBS RPAB 20 May 2020 (RPAB-GSBS-19-54) iii. SHLS RPAB 8 April 2020 (SHLSRPB/19/75) iv. SHLS RPAB 24 June 2020 (SHLSRPB/19/105)

		<b>Covid-related extension special RPABs:</b> <b>v.</b> 13 August 2020 (COVIDSPAB/Sep03/040) <b>vi.</b> 3 September 2020 (COVIDSPAB/Sep03/061)
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Common/Senate/RDC/minutes/30 September 2020