



Department of Governance

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE		
Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2020		
Present:	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	
In attendance:	Ms M. Daly, Ms D. Dickie, Mr I. MacKay, Ms C. McDonald, Dr G Poulter, Ms L. Waugh, Mr P. Woods (Secretary)	
Apologies	Mr C. Glover, Dr M-A. Houston, Professor A. Klemm, Ms T. Nyariki, Professor O. Pahl	
MINUTES		
020.031	Considered	Minutes of the meeting of the Research Degrees Committee on 2 September 2020 (RDC20/29/01).
020.032	Resolved	That the minutes be approved as correct record.
MATTERS ARISING		
Student issues raised by RPAB (<i>arising on 020.006</i>)		
020.033	Reported	By the Secretary that a meeting of the agreed subgroup was arranged for 10 December.
Research Student Experience Action Plan (REAP) (<i>arising on 020.022</i>)		
020.034	Reported	By the Director of the Graduate School that the revisions had been made in line with RDC comments and the revised REAP had been presented to the University Research Committee.
External Examiner Honorarium (<i>arising on 020.029</i>)		
020.035	Reported	By the Senior Registry Officer that the ARC group had been consulted and GCU appeared to have the lowest honorarium of those HEIs who responded.
020.036	Discussion	Members agreed that they would be happy to propose an appropriate uplift to the Academic Registrar.
020.037	Resolved	That the Academic Registrar be consulted on uplift of the honorarium

		(Action: Senior Registry Officer).
RESEARCH STUDENTS' USE OF ASSISTANTS IN THEIR RESEARCH DATA COLLECTION		
020.038	Considered	A paper for discussion on this issue raised earlier in the session (RDC20/13/01)
020.039	Reported	By the Director of the Graduate School that this issue had arisen in response to Covid-19 research recovery plans, specifically in relation to data collection in other countries. Students had asked the Graduate School for training and guidance. Concerns had been raised in response to consultation and these were collated in the paper.
020.040	Discussion	<p>Members welcomed the summary. There were differing opinions around the desirability of this option and members discussed the matter in some depth.</p> <p>The key concerns were as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the issue of quality assurance of the award in respect of potential loss of key skills (e.g. qualitative interviews); • how a RA might impact on the overall project and the quality of the work returned; • responsibility for training the RA; • payment of the RA and affordability; • risk assessment. <p>Other members felt that these matters could be resolved. Students could also be developing other skills by negotiating a project through a pandemic. A case by case approval mechanism with appropriate guidance could mitigate the quality assurance concerns.</p> <p>Members discussed the role of the supervisor and it was felt that any training would have to be done by the supervisor. PGRTs may also have a role. Guidance would have to be provided via RDC.</p> <p>Payment could be, potentially, via the covid-19 response with Executive Board approval, possibly via casual hours or by some other mechanism e.g. budget transfer to a partner institution. These were issues that needed to be clarified.</p> <p>An appropriate risk assessment of any request would have to be factored in.</p>
020.041	Resolved	That draft guidance is brought back to RDC (Action: RDC Chair/Director Graduate School).
PGR FEES AND STUDENTSHIP POLICY		
020.042	Considered	PgR Fees and Studentship Policy, plus appendix giving EB agreed Fees and Studentships 2021/22 (RDC20/14/01).
020.043	Reported	By the Director of the Graduate School that the paper was provided for clarity of Executive Board decisions on PGR fees and studentships policy and to set out current arrangements.

020.044	Discussion	<p>The Director of the Graduate School informed members that a proposal was being made to the Executive Board regarding international students and studentships regarding the fees to be paid, which are currently covered by the overall package and substantially reducing their stipend. The outcome would be communicated to RDC.</p> <p>Members noted the provision to charge full fees for students continuing beyond their expected duration of study and possible reversion from the continuation fee, and discussed if there should be regulatory change or more rigorous enforcement of the RDC14 process to minimize the numbers in this category. Members were supportive of stricter enforcement in this category, with appropriate acknowledgement of mitigating circumstances and individual circumstances.</p>
020.045	Resolved	That stricter enforcement of duration of study be factored in to review of current regulations (Action: RDC Chair/Secretary).
RDC3E – POLICY AND CRITERIA FOR RPAB DECISIONS		
020.046	Considered	Proposed Policy and criteria for RPAB decision to charge continuation fee or full fee (RDC20/15/01).
020.047	Reported	<p>By the Director of the Graduate School that following on from the previous discussion, the Finance Office has supplied a list of students who are beyond their maximum period of study and for whom FNO require urgent billing advice. This paper is therefore presented to RDC for discussion of policy and criteria for RPAB decisions regarding students in this category.</p> <p>A number of solutions were proposed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a transition year where just the continuation fee is applied. • Create an algorithm; if student plans to submit within 6 months, charge the continuation fee and if submitting after 6 months, charge the full fee (this raises the question of pro-rata charges or what sum to charge part-time students) • Should students who have completed their Viva and are in the process of writing up corrections be charged a continuation fee? • Should there be a grace period following submission, meaning the continuation fee is waived if the date for Viva is examination is set? • Create clear distinction between end of RDC3c extension (where no fee is charged for extension period) and beginning of a further RDC3e extension as full fee or continuation fee would apply from that point
020.048	Discussion	<p>It was clarified that current policy says that it is for RPABs to decide on the fee for students going beyond expected duration and that this potentially allows a switch from continuity fee back to full fee. One of the RPAB chairs informed members that switching between the two was problematic and pro rata charging was overly complicated. Others suggested if there is a final thesis draft then continuation should be charged, otherwise it should be full fee.</p> <p>Members agreed that all solutions required consultation and feedback</p>

		<p>from PGR representatives.</p> <p>On the group currently beyond maximum period of study, it was agreed that an interim position for 2020-21 should be to charge continuity fee with further work needed on future guidance to RPABs on when to charge continuity or full fee and policy around students going beyond maximum time without mitigating circumstances. This could involve stronger enforcement of RDC14 or a mandatory exam at a specific point but further discussion and consultation with PGR student representatives was required.</p>
020.049	Resolved	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the interim position is to charge continuity fee for this session. 2. That policy is developed around stricter enforcement of students continuing beyond their expected duration of study. 3. That there is appropriate consultation with PGR Student representatives. <p>(Action: Chair RDC/RDC Members/RDC Secretary).</p>
THESIS PREPARATION GUIDELINES		
020.050	Received	Updated Thesis Preparation Guidelines (RDC20/16/01).
RESEARCH DEGREE EXAM APPROVALS & AWARDS		
020.051	Received	A record of examinations and awards ratified since the previous meeting of RDC (RDC20/17/01).
RPAB MINUTES		
020.052	Received	The confirmed minutes of The confirmed minutes of GCU London RPAB 10 September 2020 (RPAB/GCUL/0920).