

GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Wednesday 5 March 2015

9.00 – 11.00 a.m. in A204

Present: Professor Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Gillian Barry, Professor Liam Barry, Ms Lisa Buckley, Dr Gabriel Flynn, Dr Patricia Flynn, Ms Margaret Irwin-Bannon (Secretary), Ms Rachel Keegan, Dr Caroline McMullan, Professor Colm O’Gorman, Dr Mary Rose Sweeney, Dr Ana Terrés, Professor Kevin Rafter, Dr Tim McCormac

Apologies: Dr Mary Ivers, Mr Ronan Tobin

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted with clarification that there were two related items for consideration under Item 4.2 and with the addition of one late item:

- Dundalk Institute of Technology, Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis (*inserted as item 8*).

And one item under AOB

- Consultation Paper for Successor to Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2015 (GRSB/A2/2)

The minutes of the meeting of 21 January 2015 were approved and signed.

3. Matters arising from the minutes of 21 January 2015 (GRSB/A2/3)

- 3.1** It was noted that the issues raised in relation to the Quality Assurance of Graduate Training Elements (GTEs) document had been resolved, and the document had been finalised. It was noted that the finalised document would be placed on the GSO website and linked to the OVPAA website (Item 6).
- 3.2** It was noted that following a review of expenditure data relating to external examiners, it was concluded that to legislate for the capping of external examiner expenses would have questionable positive impact. It was agreed that the PGR4 form would be amended from 2015-2016, with an insertion requesting Heads of School to provide a justification for the appointment of examiners where it is anticipated travel costs would be particularly high (Item 3.5).
- 3.3** It was noted that the proposed Joint Award Agreement with the Military University of Technology (MUT) had been reviewed by MUT and by DCU Registry. Following some brief discussion it was agreed that the Chair would clarify a legal aspect with the Chief Operating Officer. Subject to this clarification, and with the permission of GRSB, the Chair indicated she would finalise the agreement and request the Vice President for Academic Affairs/Registrar to sign the finalised document. This was agreed (Item 9).
- 3.4** It was noted that resolution of Course Builder issues (university wide agreed descriptors for GTE modules) was awaiting the introduction of a new version of Course Builder in 2015 (Item 3.4).
- 3.5** It was noted that support from the Graduate Studies Office and the Teaching Enhancement Unit in terms of implementing GTE cross-cutting themes was a matter for ongoing discussion (Item 3.6).
- 3.6** It was noted that a broader initiative across the university on training in research integrity is ongoing (Item 3.8).
- 3.7** It was noted that information provided for a student (School of Communications) as an attachment to the PGR3 form but which should be incorporated into the form was being followed up by Registry (Item 3.12, originally raised 8 Sept 2015 meeting item 9.16).

- 3.8** It was noted that the PGR3 form (School of Nursing and Human Sciences) where a more detailed report was requested is ongoing (Item 3.13, item originally raised at 11 December meeting as Item 10.12).
- 3.9** It was noted that the agreed statement in respect of involvement of a panel member in confirmation or transfer would be revisited when other proposals for amendments to *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees* were being considered at the next meeting of GRSB.
- 3.10** It was noted that work is ongoing in relation to the proposal for the E-portfolio for Research Students (Item 7).
- 3.11** It was noted that the correction to an abstract attached to the PGR4 Form for a student in the School of Chemical Sciences is not yet complete (Item 11.2).
- 3.12** It was noted that the approved *Guidelines on Deferrals for Research Students*, has been published on the DCU website (Item 3.1)
- 3.13** It was noted that the agreed amendments have been made to the module EE609 and the module is finalised (Item 3.11).
- 3.14** It was noted that the internal and external examiner for a student in the School of Law and Government had been approved by Chair's action, 4 February 2015.
- 3.15** It was noted that discussions with the Fees Office in relation to fees issues for postgraduate research students had been completed. Deferral related fee information has been published on the Registry website and other fee related information will be published in the Graduate Research Guide for 2015-2016 (Item 3.1).
- 3.16** It was noted that NS5041 has been referred to the Working Group on GTE cross-cutting themes (Item 3.7).
- 3.17** It was noted that the PGR3 form from the School of Computing had been re-submitted indicating the joint agreement of the principal and internal examiner (Item 10.6).
- 3.18** It was noted that the PGR3 form from the School of Chemical Sciences had the 'other panel member' included, as requested (Item 10.3).

- 3.19** It was noted that the PGR3 form from the School of Chemical Sciences had the ‘other panel member’ included, as requested (Item 10.4).
- 3.20** It was noted that confirmation had been received from the School of Electronic Engineering there was no alternative external examiner within closer proximity to DCU (Item 11.8).

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4. Proposed Graduate Training Elements Modules (GTEs)

4.1 Qualitative Research Methods, NS5055

It was noted that the proposed module was an updated version of a module previously approved, with the modification of learning outcomes and assignment information, and a change of module code, to reflect School ownership. The module was approved, subject to the modification of the module title to distinguish it from those with similar titles in other Faculties.

4.2 Laboratory Tutoring, GS607

The Chair provided the contextual background to presentation of this module for approval. Various similarly-themed module proposals had been submitted from Schools from the Faculty of Science and Health, and this module was the first in a series of cross-cutting thematic modules developed for use across all Faculties, but delivered at local level. A working group comprising members of the Teaching Enhancement Unit (TEU) and module co-ordinators was convened to develop a descriptor facilitating the support of research students tutoring in a practical laboratory setting. It was noted that GS607 will capture work undertaken over three years, and research students will register for the module in the year of module completion.

The module GS607 was approved subject to:

- Making GS602, *Postgraduate Tutor/Demonstrator Course*, a co-requisite and pre-requisite to GS607. The decision that GS602 is to be both a co-requisite and pre-requisite was made in the context of students already being involved in building up practice-based teaching and learning over the last two years, but maybe not having taken GS602. At the point at which this is no longer applicable, GS602 will become a pre-requisite only.

- The reduction of proposed credits for GS607 from ten to five credits. The consensus of the Board was that five ECTS is reflective of the equivalent learning, notwithstanding that a large number of hours of work is undertaken.
- Adding further detail to the module descriptor on tutoring contact hours and the range of modules with which the research student is expected to be involved.
- Clarification that the module is pass/fail and whether or not there is a re-sit opportunity.

The intention to change the module title for GS602 from *Postgraduate Tutor/Demonstrator Course* to *Postgraduate Tutoring Principles and Practice* was noted.

The Chair thanked Ms Rachel Keegan for her work in drawing all the elements of this proposal together.

4.3 *Writing Supports for research students*

GS608: Academic Writing

GS609: Writing for Publication

GS610: Grant Writing for Researchers

The Chair introduced this item, informing the Board that following on from submissions of multiple modules related to academic writing for research students, a group, comprising DCU colleagues and an external expert, was convened by Ms Rachel Keegan to look at the commonality in the modules and to submit a proposal which would respond to the needs of students, but facilitate local implementation.

In parallel with this initiative, it was noted that there are several non-accredited writing supports in place, including the writing centre in the library, recently opened by the Student Support and Development Office, and available to research students as well as undergraduates. There is also supplemental support for non-native English speakers.

The modules as proposed were considered and the following points/issues were raised in the discussion:

- It was noted that the module descriptor GS608 as presented was not detailed, as it was expected that the discipline specific context would be provided at School level, with the support of TEU through provision of resources to staff.

- It was queried if all modules as proposed were necessary and if research students should gain credits for learning how to write, given that this is part of pursuing a PhD, in and of itself. In contrast, the significant additional benefit of structuring support in developing such competencies was pointed out.
- It was clarified that the external adviser had advised that it is important to evidence the process through assessments, not just the output of the process.
- It was proposed that the descriptor for GS608 might place more emphasis on the 'how' of writing i.e. grammar and logical presentation of an argument.
- There was a suggestion that the name of the module should revert to *Academic Writing for Researchers*.
- It was questioned if the normal functions of a supervisor in providing support to a research student in the writing of a thesis would be superseded by this module. It was clarified that the intention of the module was to empower the supervisor in assisting the student, but this support would be in addition to regular supervisory meetings.
- It was suggested that the learning outcome 'Review, evaluate and synthesise the body of literature relevant to their research' is not appropriate as a learning outcome in the context of a module which aims to develop the skill of writing.
- It was clarified that the request for these modules and the allocation of credits has come from Schools and it was intended there would be local co-ordination of the module, with supervisors assisting with implementing the module at local level.
- It was noted that workshops are provided to support writing for publication and grant writing and the modules were a response to Schools requiring more coherent and consistent support to writing.
- It was noted that it would be unsustainable to offer these modules as generic offerings across the university as the disciplines are so diverse and require local input.
- There was a suggestion that the total credits for writing-related modules accrued by any student should be capped at ten.

It was agreed that each of the modules required modification of learning outcomes, with a suggestion for GS608 that the learning outcome 'Consider and develop the relevant skills, techniques and strategies required to undertake research and writing in their chosen field' should come first in the list of learning outcomes and that it should include items such as 'grammar and structure'.

It was also agreed that the role of the co-ordinator, elements of assessment, course work breakdown and how it relates to learning outcomes should be elaborated upon for each School implementing a descriptor.

5. Incorporation and Graduate Research

The Chair outlined that under this standing item, regular updates would be provided on the progress relating to Graduate Research and Incorporation.

It was noted that St. Patrick's College (SPD) and Mater Dei Institute (MDI) have now finished accepting new entrant research students and every new student will apply for admission to DCU. It was further noted students will continue to have supervisors from St. Patrick's and MDI until the Incorporation process is complete. The research admissions process will be conducted through the Postgraduate Applications Centre (PAC).

It was noted that a brochure entitled *Research at the DCU Institute of Education* has been published and an equivalent for Humanities was planned. The next steps in the Incorporation project were to examine fees and charges for research students.

The Chair wished to acknowledge the contribution made by Dr Gabriel Flynn, Dr Patricia Flynn and Dr Tracy Dixon for the progress achieved to date.

6. Agreement for supervision of DCU registered research students by Principal Supervisors in Mater Dei Institute of Education (GRSB2015/A2/6)

The Chair outlined that the agreement under consideration was an interim one to facilitate appointment of MDI principal supervisors to DCU registered students undertaking the Religious Education Pathway of the DCU Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD) programme.

The agreement was approved and will be referred for signature

7. National Framework for Doctoral Education

The Chair outlined briefly the main points contained in the National Framework for Doctoral Education due to be formally launched shortly, noting that the framework has been endorsed by the HEA, QQI, IUA and IoTI. She indicated that the existing DCU structures largely mirror the framework and the key element for DCU will be

to what extent the framework influences funding agency policy and in turn, how that will impact institution funding.

8. Dundalk Institute of Technology, Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis.

It was noted that on foot of the linked provider agreement, DkIT Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees had been revised. It was noted that the regulations mirrored those of DCU and there were very few differences in the regulations. The following items were noted and advised in discussion:

- There are references to professional doctorates, even though professional doctorates are not run at DkIT.
- DCU will review the detail on Music, Composition and Performance, as it is also relevant in the context of Incorporation.
- DCU academic staff cannot act as external examiners for DkIT students. It was noted that this needs to be reflected in DCU regulations.
- There are some discrepancies in terms of supervisory panel membership.
- It is indicated in the regulations for DkIT that the student needs permission to submit. This is not the case in DCU; however, it was noted that this issue has arisen within DCU.

It was noted that the document as presented had been approved by DkIT Academic Council. The Chair indicated that the document was available to members on Goggle drive and she requested that members provide feedback over the next two weeks for sharing with colleagues in DkIT for their future consideration.

SECTION C: Individual student issues

9¹. Applications for transfer to the PhD Register or confirmation on the PhD Register

9.1 GRSB2015/A2/8.1, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies Approved.

¹ Please note, due to the insertion of a late agenda item under Section B Item 8, the form reference numbers are different to the minuted number. (Original form numbering is maintained for reference purposes). Agenda items following item 8 have been renumbered.

- 9.2 GRSB2015/A2/8.2, DCU Business School
Approved.
- 9.3 GRSB2015/A4/8.3, DCU Business School
Approved.
- 9.4 GRSB2015/A2/8.4, DCU Business School
Approved.
- 9.5 GRSB2015/A2/8.5, DCU Business School
Approved.
- 9.6 GRSB2015/A2/8.6, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved.
- 9.7 GRSB2015/A2/8.7, School of Communications
Approved, subject to confirmation that an oral examination took place and the report is modified to reflect feedback on the oral examination.
- 9.8 GRSB2015/A2/8.8, School of Health and Human Performance
Approved, subject to a more detailed report, specific to the student.
- 9.9 GRSB2015/A2/8.9, School of Health and Human Performance
Approved, subject to a more detailed report, specific to the student.
- 9.10 GRSB2015/A2/8.10, School of Law and Government
Not approved on the grounds that it is not clear from the documentation that it is a joint report from the internal examiner and supervisor. It should be clarified if an oral examination was held and if a written submission, other than two chapters of the thesis, was submitted.

10. Appointment of external examiners

- 10.1 GRSB2015/A2/9.1, PhD, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Dr Vesna Malesevic, NUI Galway
Approved.
- 10.2 GRSB2015/A2/9.2, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Professor Jordi Riu, Universitat Rovira I Virgili, Spain
Approved.

- 10.3 GRSB2015/A2/9.3, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
Professor David Guerra, Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería de Bilbao
Approved.
- 10.4 GRSB2015/A2/9.4, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
Dr Pavlos Lazaridis, University of Huddersfield
Approved.
- 10.5 GRSB2015/A2/9.5, PhD, School of Law and Government
Professor Harsh Pant, King's College London
Approved.
- 10.6 GRSB2015/A2/9.6, School of Nursing and Human Sciences
Professor Dany Nobus, Brunel University London
Approved.

It was noted that a panel member cannot be the Chair for the *Viva Voce* and that Schools for which this information was pertinent to their PGR4 would be so advised.

11. Other student issues

11.1 Permission to reside/carry out research abroad

- 11.1.1 GRSB2015/A2/10.1.1, DCU Business School

Noted.

11.2 Request for extension to maximum registration period OR re-admission to the research programme

- 11.2.1 GRSB2015/A2/10.2.1, School of Nursing and Human Sciences
Approved. (Candidate to be readmitted for 2015-2016 and allowed extension to maximum registration period).

12 AOB

12.1 Consultation on the Science Technology and Innovation Strategy

The Chair informed the Board that consultation was happening in relation to a new national Science Technology and Innovation Strategy. Board members were advised that documentation was available on the HEA website and that Chapter 8, entitled 'Research for knowledge and the development of human capital' is particularly relevant to graduate research.

End

Date of next meeting:

Thursday 16 April 2015

9.00 a.m. in A204

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____