

GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday 28 November 2013

9.00-10.55 a.m. in A204

Present: Dr Lisa Looney (Chair), Ms Gillian Barry, Professor Liam Barry, Ms Lisa Buckley, Ms Goretti Daughton, Dr Gabriel Flynn, Ms Louise McDermott (Secretary), Dr Enda McGlynn, Professor Colm O’Gorman, Dr Kevin Rafter, Dr Ana Terrés, Dr Blánaid White

Apologies: Dr Bernadette Flanagan, Ms Mairéad Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Dr Ekaterina Kozina, Ms Ann McCartney

In attendance: Dr Michael O’Leary

The Chair welcomed Dr Michael O’Leary, who attended the meeting to represent St Patrick’s College pending the identification of a successor to Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of two additional submissions under Item 8.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2013

The minutes were confirmed and were signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1** Noted that a change of internal examiner in the School of Law and Government had been approved by Chair's action on 18 October 2013. (Item 8.1 from the meeting of 27 June 2013)
- 3.2** Noted that the following matters were for ongoing development and would be reported on to the GRSB as and when appropriate:
- student representation on committees, and related issues (Item 3.3)
 - the possibility of providing examiners with electronic copies of theses prior to *viva voce* examinations (Item 3.4)
 - the role of an additional external examiner, where appointed in cases of disagreement (Item 3.10)
 - alignment of online information for potential research students on various pages of the DCU website (Item 3.13)
 - the potential benefits of a non-disclosure agreement with an external examiner (Item 3.20)
 - procedures for communicating the titles of doctoral theses at graduation (Item 14.1).
- 3.3** Noted that the *DCU Guidebook for Research Students* would be made available as soon as possible. (Item 3.5)
- 3.4** Noted that a revised module descriptor for a GTE had been made available by the School of Computing, a second revised descriptor was expected, and both would be reviewed together. (Item 3.7)
- 3.5** Ms Barry reported on the recent meeting to review the pilot online annual progression process, noting that while some recommendations for enhancement had been made there was satisfaction with the pilot overall. (Dr Rafter noted, in this connection, that the participating School in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences had specifically mentioned their satisfaction.) Approximately one-third of the total number of research students had been involved in the pilot. Some of the recommendations for enhancement can be carried out at no extra cost; with respect to others, the availability or otherwise of additional resources will determine whether or not they can be implemented. One outcome of the implementation of the pilot is the identification of the need to ensure that all records in respect to supervisors are correct on ITS; the online system cannot work unless this is the case. Steps are being taken to communicate this to Schools in the context of making the online system available campus wide in Summer 2014, and it is intended to upgrade ITS to allow for additional fields to record supervisors and ensure that these fields can be used on a flexible basis as required. The importance, for the University, of having an overall unified approach to document management was noted. The Chair, on behalf of the GRSB, expressed appreciation to Ms Barry and all others involved in the development and implementation of the online system. (Item 3.8)

- 3.6** Noted that consideration would be given to making YouTube videos in collaboration with student representatives and other research students. (Item 3.11)
- 3.7** Noted, with respect to the possibility of improved alignment between the information available via DORAS and the information on the Research Support System about potential supervisors' areas of expertise, that resources would be required to do this and that consideration would be given to it at a later stage, in the general context of updating the RSS. (Item 3.12)
- 3.8** Noted that a small number of changes, as agreed, had been made to the guidance documentation on recruitment and selection of research students. (Item 3.13)
- 3.9** Noted that a revised PGR3 form, with a sentence deleted as requested by the GRSB, was awaited from a School. (Item 3.14)
- 3.10** Noted that a PGR3 form had been completed in appropriate detail and contained assurances as requested by the GRSB. (Item 3.15)
- 3.11** Noted that a revised PGR3 form, completed in appropriate detail and containing assurances as requested by the GRSB, was awaited from a School. (Item 3.15)
- 3.12** Noted that a PGR3 form, revised as requested by the GRSB, was awaited from a School. (Item 3.17)
- 3.13** Noted that wording had been deleted from a PGR4 form, as appropriate, and the form had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 3.21)
- 3.14** Noted that an alternative nomination in respect of an external examiner in the School of Biotechnology had been approved. (Item 3.25)
- 3.15** Noted that it had been pointed out to relevant Schools that information on card fee issues is not relevant to, and should not form part of, requests for extension to registration. (See also Item 9.2 below.) Noted that it was intended to devise a form for the submission of such requests. (Items 3.36 and 13.2)
- 3.16** With respect to the HEA/QQI *Engagement document: towards the establishment of a national framework for doctoral education*, the Chair noted the following:
- the document was circulated to the GRSB and the Education Committee and made available to St Patrick's College; a considerable number of responses had been received
 - the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies have drafted a joint response on behalf of the universities which is to be given to the Registrars for comment prior to submission
 - the University will also make an individual submission
 - there will be a meeting of stakeholders in the IUA on 16 December 2013

- among the issues that are identified as needing detailed discussion/resolution are: the proposed timescale; the apparent focus on a typical doctoral student as being a young person in a science/technology-related discipline; the level at which critical mass is defined; the risk of identifying different kinds of doctoral programmes as being in a hierarchy, in terms of status, relative to one another; the importance of ensuring consultation with the universities; the importance of identifying appropriate resources. (Item 5.6)
- 3.17** Noted that issues relating to the processes and templates for collaborative research supervision were being discussed with Registry, RIS and Invent and would be referred to Executive, as appropriate. (Item 6)
- 3.18** Noted that the policy and procedures on Higher Doctorates, revised on the basis of GRSB recommendations, would be circulated to the GRSB and would then be submitted to Academic Council for consideration at its meeting of 11 December 2013. (Item 7.2)
- 3.19** Noted that the proposal with respect to the title ‘MPhil’ would be redrafted and submitted to the Chair so that it could be circulated for discussion in Faculties and, subsequently, further discussion by the GRSB. (Item 8.4)
- 3.20** Noted that posters had been put up as part of the work involved in publicising the orientation sessions for research students in October 2013. (Item 10.2)
- 3.21** Noted that the outcomes of the exit survey made available from 7 November 2013 would be submitted for the consideration of the GRSB at its meeting of 23 January 2013. (Item 10.3)
- 3.22** Noted that guidance for supervisors and examiners on completing the PGR3 form had been incorporated into the revised version of the form now in use. (Item 11)
- 3.23** Noted that a revised PGR3 form, with the wording in Section 1a modified, was awaited from a School. (Item 11.2)
- 3.24** Noted, in the case of a PGR3 form, that clarification had been provided about the year of registration and the alignment of this with the proposed completion date, and the transfer had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 11.3)
- 3.25** Noted that a fully typed version of a PGR3 form had been made available and had been deemed approved. (Item 11.11)
- 3.26** Noted, in the case of a PGR4 form, that it had been confirmed that regulations were being adhered to, and the form had therefore been deemed approved. (Item 12.8)
- 3.27** Noted that a nomination of an additional external examiner for a student was awaited from a School. (Item 12.23)

- 3.28** Noted, in the case of the report on the appeals process approved by the GRSB, that letters had been sent to the appellants on 17 October 2013 to inform them of the outcomes of their appeals. (Item 13.1.1)
- 3.29** Noted that a request in respect of a MEng student in the School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering for deferral (in 2013/14) and for extension of registration (to 2014/15) had been approved by Chair's action on 25 October 2013.
- 3.30** Noted that a request in respect of a student in the School of Biotechnology for transfer to the Master's register had been approved by Chair's action on 6 November 2013.
- 3.31** Noted that a request in respect of a PhD student in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies for an extension to registration had been approved by Chair's action on 7 November 2013.
- 3.32** Noted that a request in respect of a PhD student in the School of Law and Government for an extension to registration had been approved by Chair's action on 12 November 2013.

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4. Proposed Graduate Training Elements:

None.

5. Report on card fee and O'Hare scholarships

The Chair expressed appreciation to all those who had acted as evaluators for the submissions under the Daniel O'Hare Scholarship scheme 2013/14. An event is to be held on 15 January 2013 at which Dr O'Hare will be present to meet current and past recipients, and an associated book of abstracts, and photographs, will form part of the publicity material for future calls for submissions. In this connection, the crucial importance of the availability of ongoing funding for the scholarships was noted.

6. Proposal on postgraduate research appeals processes

- 6.1** The proposal was approved subject to the following:
- the maximum number of members of the appeals standing committee is to be changed from six to eight (to allow for the fact that some individuals might be

likely to be precluded from considering one or more specific cases at any given meeting because of having had prior involvement in them)

- the wording of point 6 in section 2 is to be amended to: ‘... from a pool of Emeritus professors and colleagues very experienced in research student supervision and examination’
- concomitant changes are to be made to the wording of point 7b in section 2
- the wording of the first bullet point in section 3.1 is to be changed to: ‘... or a compelling argument as to the insufficiency of regulations which have a bearing on the case’
- the wording of the third bullet point in section 3.1 is to be amended to reflect the fact that extenuating circumstances need to be documented
- the wording of the second bullet point in section 3.2 is to be changed to: ‘appeals may not be submitted on the basis of allegations of inadequate supervision ...’
- the reference to ‘referral’ in the first bullet point in section 3 is to be supplemented by explanatory wording
- the reference to Terms of Reference, in section 5, is to be changed to allow for the proposed changes to membership, as noted above.

- 6.2** With respect to the last bullet point in section 3, it was noted that it would become redundant in the event of a related change to wording in the PGR6 (examination report) form, and agreed that the possibility of making such a change to this form would be investigated
- 6.3** With respect to the proposal that appellants be asked to specify the outcome they desired, it was agreed that this option would be made available, but that there would be no obligation to avail of it, and that this would be explained in guidance documentation rather than being included in *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*. The importance of making it clear to appellants that an appeal does not involve a re-examination was noted.
- 6.4** It was agreed that it would be necessary to provide clarity with respect to the timing and frequency of meetings of the appeals standing committee, taking due account of issues such as the dates of Faculty Awards Boards for Research Degrees and the timeframe for the annual progression process.
- 6.5** It was agreed that it would be desirable to have all the regulations about appeals concentrated in one section of *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*. The Chair undertook to draft wording accordingly and submit it to the GRSB with a request for approval prior to submitting it to Academic Council. A discussion took place on the implications of doing this in the middle of the academic year (as distinct from at the end, when changes to *Academic Regulations*, if any, are normally agreed).

- 6.6** The Chair also undertook to draft guidance in respect of the completion of the PGR2 form (soon to be made available on line across the University, as noted at Item 3.5 above), with particular reference to the importance of providing the student with a clear indication that progression is, or is not, recommended as well as to the importance of providing written records of the meetings with students (that take place prior to the completion of the PGR2 form) where it is considered that a negative recommendation may ultimately be made.

SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES

7. Applications for transfer to the PhD register or confirmation on the PhD register

- 7.1 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.1, Dublin City University Business School
Approved.
- 7.2 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.2, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 7.3 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.3, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 7.4 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.4, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved.
- 7.5 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.5, School of Nursing and Human Sciences
Approved.
- 7.6 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/7.6, School of Physical Sciences
Approved.

Agreed that, for 2014/15, the reference on the PGR3 form to ‘Names of Supervisory Panel Members’ would be changed to ‘Name(s) of Supervisor(s)’, to reflect the fact that the supervisor(s) must sign the form but the same does not apply to other members of the supervisory panel.

8. Appointment of external examiners

- 8.1 Professor Gary Henehan, Dublin Institute of Technology
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.1, MSc, School of Biotechnology/ICNT
Approved.
- 8.2 Professor Geoff King, Brunel University
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.2, PhD, School of Communications
Approved.
- 8.3 Dr Niall McMahon, Dundalk Institute of Technology
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.3, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved subject to confirmation that there is appropriate professional distance between the nominee and the University, as per regulations.

- 8.4 Professor James Lunney, Trinity College Dublin
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.4, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 8.5 Professor Seán McLoone, Queen's University Belfast
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.5, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved.
- 8.6 Professor Peter Vermeersch, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.6, PhD, School of Law and Government
Approved.
- 8.7 Professor Cormac McGuinness, Trinity College Dublin
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.7, PhD, School of Physical Sciences
Approved.
- 8.8 Dr Philip Griffin, University of Limerick
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8/8, MSc, School of Physical Sciences
Decision deferred pending receipt of a full list of publications, and the dates for all publications. Agreed that the decision could then be taken by means of Chair's action. Noted that the date of entry to the research programme by the student should read 1 December 2011, not 1 December 2012.
- 8.9 Dr Marco Wischmeier, Max-Planck-Institut für Plasmaphysik, Germany
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.9, PhD, School of Physical Sciences
Approved subject to the provision of details about experience of supervising research students.
- 8.10 Dr Helen O'Connor, University of Sydney
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.10, MSc, School of Health and Human Performance
Approved.
- 8.11 Professor Ray Murphy, National University of Ireland, Galway
Student ref. GRSB2013/A8/8.11, PhD, School of Law and Government
Noted that the external examiner had been approved at the meeting of 17 October 2013 and that approval was now sought for a new internal examiner, the person approved on 17 October 2013 now not being in a position to act. Agreed to defer a decision pending further discussion between the Chair and the Head of School.

9. Other student issues: requests for extension to registration period

- 9.1 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/9.1, School of Communications
Approved.
- 9.2 Student ref. GRSB/2013/A8/9.2, School of Computing
Approved. Agreed that it would be mentioned to the School that fees issues are not germane to decisions about extension to registration period and are therefore not adverted to by the GRSB. (See also Item 3.15 above.)

Agreed that a future meeting of the GRSB would give consideration to the fitness for purpose of the stipulation in *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* that deferral on the part of a student involves a temporary cessation of registration.

14. Any other business

None.

Date of next meeting:

**Thursday 23 January 2014
9.00 a.m. in A204**

Signed: _____
Chair

Date: _____