

GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday, 16 January 2025
10:00 am – 11:30 am

A204, Glasnevin Campus

Present: Dr Conor Brennan, Ms Lisa Buckley, Ms Isabelle Caulfield, Dr Maura Coulter, Dr Brendan Egan, Prof. Yseult Freeney, Dr Alan Gorman, Ms Karen Keating, Mr Josh King, Prof. Theo Lynn, Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary), Dr Tim McCormac, Prof. Sharon O'Brien (Chair) and Dr Lisa Van der Werff

Apologies: Ms Nuala Clancy and Dr Gëzim Visoka

The Chair thanked Dr Timo Gans for his contributions to the Graduate Research Studies Board over the last two years and welcomed Dr Brendan Egan as the new Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Science and Health.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 28 November 2024

The minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2024 were **approved** subject to the following change being made:

Addition of the underlined text to Item 11.4: "The Chair emphasised the importance that clear instructions are provided to support staff when using the system. It was noted that these are not currently in place and need to be provided urgently".

3. Matters arising from the minutes

Matters arising from the meeting of 28 November 2024 were **noted** as follows:

	<i>Item no. from 28 November 2024</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Details of decision/actions</i>	<i>Status</i>
3.1	7.13	PGR3, School of History and Geography	<u>Decision Deferred</u> . It was <u>noted</u> that the candidate has not signed the PGR3 and consequently does not have recourse to appeal the decision not to confirm them on the PhD register. The Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has agreed to meet separately with the candidate and the Principal Supervisors and Head of School to discuss possible options following the decision not to confirm the candidate on the PhD register.	Ongoing Awaiting update from ADR regarding next steps following meeting with candidate and Principal Supervisor and Head of School.
3.2	7.20	PGR3, School of Mathematical Sciences	<u>Approved</u> subject to the Chair verifying that the Internal Examiner has supervised three candidates from early stage through the confirmation/transfer stage and/or completed all elements of professional development for examiners as per Academic Regulation 10.1.	Ongoing Head of School confirmed that Internal Examiner does not meet criteria as per Academic Regulation 10.1. Confirmation examination to be taken again with new Internal Examiner.
3.3	10.4	PGR14, School of Computing	<u>Approved</u> subject to the Chair verifying whether a PGR13 is required depending on when the candidate returned to their home country.	Ongoing Awaiting submission of PGR13 by Principal Supervisor.

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3.4	3.6 (Original Ref. Item 9.50, 15 August 2024)	PGR3, School of Physical Sciences	<u>Decision Deferred</u> . It was <u>noted</u> that Section C should be completed jointly by Principal Supervisor(s) and Internal Examiner(s). The revised PGR3 must be submitted to GRSB.	Complete Included on Agenda for meeting of GRSB on 16 January 2025, Item 7.7.
3.5	3.2 (Original Ref. Item 12.8, 17 October 2024)	PGR13, School of Mathematical Sciences	<u>Approved</u> subject to Section B being completed by the Principal Supervisor, which should be verified by the Chair.	Complete Included on Agenda for meeting of GRSB on 16 January 2025, Item 9.1.
3.6	6	DkIT Annual Report	This item was deferred to the January meeting of GRSB	Complete Included on Agenda for meeting of GRSB on 16 January 2025, Item 5.
3.7	8.7	PGR4, Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge	<u>Decision Deferred</u> . It was <u>noted</u> that the Internal Examiner has not completed all elements of professional development for examiners. Confirmation is required that the Internal Examiner has completed the necessary training on examining postgraduate research students or will complete the upcoming training session. Once received, the PGR4 may be approved by Chair's Action.	Approved by Chair's Action on 9 December 2024.

The Chair provided an update on Item 3.1. Dr Gëzim Visoka, Associate Dean for Research (ADR) for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and Mr Josh King, Postgraduate Officer, DCU Students' Union, met with the student to discuss issues with supervision and the negative recommendation from the annual progress review (PGR2). Dr Visoka and Mr King also met with the supervisory panel and the Head of School. The student has still not signed the PGR3 Form and the Chair agreed to follow-up with the ADR to have this resolved and to advise the student of the appeal mechanism.

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4. Graduate researcher development

4.1 Graduate Skills Sessions, January – February 2025

The Graduate Studies Office (GSO) provided a list of the Graduate Skills Sessions that will be delivered in January and February 2025. The Chair requested the Associate Deans for Research (ADRs) to promote these sessions in their respective faculties.

Noted

5. DkIT Annual Reports

5.1 DkIT Annual Report to Graduate Research Studies Board 2023-2024

Dr Tim McCormac, Head of Research, DkIT, introduced the annual report from DkIT to GRSB for the 2023-2024 academic year, calling particular attention to the timeline for PhD students to complete the process for confirmation on the PhD Register, which improved compared to previous years.

Dr McCormac informed the Board that the report includes the calculation of completion rates for postgraduate research students who commenced their programme in 2016 onward. The Chair welcomed this as DCU is now required by the HEA to calculate completion rates for PGR students, which will indicate the percentage of students per intake that receive their intended award. It was noted that there has been an improvement in completion rates for postgraduate research students in DkIT and that there is scope for further improvement.

The difficulty in calculating completion times due to changes in students' engagement type during their enrolment period was acknowledged by the Board. It was agreed that DCU and DkIT would work together in this area going forward to ensure calculations are correct and consistent across both institutions.

The DkIT Annual Report to Graduate Research Studies Board 2023-2024 was **noted**.

5.2 DkIT Graduate School Quality Enhancement Plan

Dr McCormac introduced the DkIT Graduate School Quality Enhancement Plan, which provides a progress report on the second year of implementing the plan. Dr McCormac informed the Board that good progress has been made against the majority of planned actions, including the full adoption, where appropriate, of all DCU Postgraduate Research (PGR) forms and supporting policies, and enhancing the information provided in the Annual Report to DCU GRSB.

Actions that could not be initiated or completed in the 2023-2024 academic year have been moved to Year 3 of the quality enhancement plan, such as devising and implementing a research access policy and developing student and staff handbooks specific to postgraduate research provision.

The DkIT Graduate School Quality Enhancement Plan was **noted**.

6. President's Award for Excellence in Doctoral Supervision

The Chair informed the Board that the President's Awards will now recognise excellence in doctoral supervision.

The Chair asked ADRs to raise this at their respective Faculty Research Committees and recommended that each faculty should nominate at least one staff member.

Ms Karen Keating confirmed that the closing date for nominations is 14 March 2025 and agreed to share the relevant information with the ADRs so they can distribute it amongst relevant colleagues.

SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES**7. Applications for transfer to the PhD Register or confirmation on the PhD Register (PGR3)**

7.1 GRSB2025/A1/7.1, 7.1, School of Chemical Sciences

Approved – The Board acknowledged the explanation for the considerable delay in the student undergoing the procedure for confirmation on the PhD Register. It was noted that secondments to collaborating research institutes should not be a reason for such a delay.

7.2 GRSB2025/A1/7.2, School of Chemical Sciences

Approved – The Board acknowledged the explanation for the considerable delay in the student undergoing the procedure for confirmation on the PhD Register. It was noted that secondments to collaborating research institutes should not be a reason for such a delay.

7.3 GRSB2025/A1/7.3, DkIT Health and Science

Approved

7.4 GRSB2025/A1/7.4, School of Electronic Engineering

Approved

7.5 GRSB2025/A1/7.5, Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge

Approved

7.6 GRSB2025/A1/7.6, School of Law and Government

Approved

7.7 GRSB2025/A1/7.7, School of Physical Sciences

Approved

7.8 GRSB2025/A1/7.8, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies

Decision Deferred – It was noted that Section B(ii) should be completed jointly by the Principal Supervisor(s) and the Internal Examiner(s). The revised PGR3 may be considered by Chair's Action.

8. Appointment of internal and external examiners (PGR4)

- 8.1 GRSB2025/A1/8.1, PhD, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved
- 8.2 GRSB2025/A1/8.2, PhD, DCU Business School
Approved
- 8.3 GRSB2025/A1/8.3, PhD, School of Computing
Approved
- 8.4 GRSB2025/A1/8.4, PhD, School of Computing
Decision Deferred – It was noted that there is a potential conflict of interest between the Principal Supervisor and the External Examiner (see Academic Regulation 10.2.10). An alternative External Examiner is required and the revised PGR4 must be submitted to GRSB for consideration.
- 8.5 GRSB2025/A1/8.5, EdD, DCU Institute of Education
Approved
- 8.6 GRSB2025/A1/8.6, EdD, DCU Institute of Education
Decision Deferred – It was noted that clarification is sought regarding the number of PhD candidates examined by the External Examiner. Confirmation is also required that the Internal Examiner has supervised at least 3 candidates from early stage through the confirmation/transfer process and completed all elements of professional development for examiners. If not, an alternative Internal Examiner will be required. The revised PGR4 must be submitted to GRSB for consideration.
- 8.7 GRSB2025/A1/8.7, EdD, DCU Institute of Education
Approved
- 8.8 GRSB2025/A1/8.8, PhD, School of Law and Government
Approved
- 8.9 GRSB2025/A1/8.9, MEng, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved

- 8.10 GRSB2025/A1/8.10, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved

9. Notice of Intention to Reside/Carry out Research Abroad (PGR13)

- 9.1 GRSB2025/A1/9.1, PhD, School of Mathematical Sciences
Approved

10. Request for Extension to Maximum Registration Period OR Re-admission to the Research Programme (PGR14)

- 10.1 GRSB2025/A1/10.1, PhD, School of Health and Human Performance
Noted – Approved by Chair’s Action on 9 December 2024.
- 10.2 GRSB2025/A1/10.2, MEng, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Noted – Approved by Chair’s Action on 10 December 2024.

11. Notice Application for Transfer / Advanced Entry to Postgraduate Research Programme (PGR15)

- 11.1 GRSB2025/A1/11.1, PhD, DCU Business School
Approved – It was noted that the student will be registered in Year 2 full-time and must complete the necessary research integrity training. The Board also recommends that they undergo the procedure for confirmation on the PhD Register by 30 June 2025. It was further noted that the student will be transferring their funding from their home institution and that funding from DCU cannot be guaranteed when the student commences Year 4 of the PhD programme.

12. Any other business

- 11.1 The Chair informed the Board that ‘Tell It Straight’, the annual competition that allows postgraduate research students to communicate their research to a non-specialist audience, will take place on 5 March 2025 and asked the ADRs to promote this event within their respective faculties.

Dr Maura Coulter, ADR for DCU Institute of Education, thanked the Chair, Ms Keating and Ms Linda Prosa in the Graduate Studies Office for their work on this important initiative and for engaging with staff and students on the St. Pat’s campus.

- 11.2 The Chair informed the Board that the approval of GTE Modules and Structured Doctoral Pathways (SDPs) will have to be completed earlier in Semester 2 in order to align with the University’s revised curriculum calendar. The Board agreed that new and revised GTE Modules will be considered by GRSB at its meeting in February and SDPs at its meeting in March. ‘Guidelines for the Development, Approval and Review of Graduate Training Element (GTE) Modules and Structured Doctoral Pathways’ will be updated by the Secretary to reflect this change.
- 11.3 The Chair informed the Board that the annual stipend has increased to €25,000 for full-time PhD students in receipt of Research Ireland funding or a DCU scholarship. This increase will be implemented in February 2025 and backdated to January 2025.
- 11.4 The Chair informed the Board that she is preparing a document for students and supervisors on the use of Generative AI (GenAI), which is currently being reviewed by the ADRs, and that a webinar will be delivered when the document is ready to be shared. It was noted that GenAI is a university-wide issue and that DCU’s position on its use needs to be articulated before policies and guidelines can be developed.

Prof. Theo Lynn, ADR DCU Business School, asked that Sage Campus is promoted amongst supervisors as it provides students with a wide range of useful online learning resources for skills and research methods, including on the use of GenAI. Ms Keating agreed to promote the platform in the scheduled communications from the GSO to postgraduate research students. The ADRs were also advised to liaise with Prof. Lynn as the licence holder once they have determined what resources their respective faculties want access to.

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Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting

Thursday, 13 February 2025

10.00 a.m.

A204, Glasnevin Campus