# Imperial College London

# Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)

# Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2017 at 14:00 in Room G01, Royal School of Mines, South Kensington Campus

#### **Present**

Professor Sue Gibson (Chair and Director of the Graduate School)

Alexandre Adler (PhD Student Representative)

Professor Peter Allison (Earth Science and Engineering)

David Ashton (Academic Registrar)

Dr Marco Aurisicchio (Design Engineering)

Nick Burstow (ICU Deputy President, Education)

Dr Matthew Fuchter (Chemistry)

Dr Imad Jaimoukha (Electrical and Electronic Engineering) [representing Professor Andrew Holmes]

Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin (School of Public Health)

Professor Henrik Jensen (Mathematics)

Luke McCrone (GSU President)

Dr Michael McGarvey (Department of Medicine) [representing Professor Kevin Murphy]

Dr Felicity Mellor (School of Professional Development)

Dr Salvador Navarro-Martinez (Mechanical Engineering) [representing Professor Daniele Dini]

Professor Catherine O'Sullivan (Civil and Environmental Engineering)

[representing Professor Ahmer Wadee]

Caroline Ransom (Crick Doctoral Centre) [representing Dr Sally Leevers]

Professor Alessandra Russo (Computing)

Professor Eduardo Saiz (Materials)

Dr Tony Southall (Life Sciences) [representing Dr Kleoniki Gounaris]

Dr Mark Ungless (Institute of Clinical Sciences and MRC LMS)

Dr Peter Vincent (Aeronautics)

Paul Wan (PhD Student Representative)

Dr Andrew Williamson (Physics) [representing Dr Bill Proud]

#### In Attendance

Eleri Canning (Records Officer, Research Degree Examinations, Registry)
Ruth Harrison (Head of Scholarly Communications Management) [for Item 5]
Laura Lane (Head of Strategy Operation, Graduate School) [for Item 6]
Scott Tucker (Assistant Registrar, Monitoring and Review)

#### 1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Committee welcomed new members and alternates.
- 1.2 The following apologies for absence were received:

Dr Anil Bharath (Bioengineering)

Professor Simone Buitendijk (Vice-Provost, Education)

Professor Daniele Dini

Professor Amparo Galindo (Chemical Engineering)

Professor Jonathan Haskel (Business School)

**Professor Andrew Holmes** 

Dr Sally Leevers

Professor Tony Magee (Graduate School Deputy Director and NHLI)

Professor Kevin Murphy

Professor Michael Seckl (Surgery and Cancer)

Professor Ahmer Wadee

Dr Jeremy Woods (Centre for Environmental Policy)

Professor Yun Xu (College Consul)

#### 2. Terms of Reference & Membership [PRQC.2017.01]

2.1 The Committee noted the terms of reference and membership for 2017-18, as approved by Senate on 11 October 2017 (Senate Paper/2017/12).

# 3. Minutes of the last meeting [PRQC.2017.02]

3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the last meeting held on 10 May 2017.

### 4. Matters arising [PRQC.2017.02a]

- 4.1 The Committee noted an action list detailing matters arising from previous meetings and updates on progress in completing the required actions.
- 4.2 The Committee agreed that the remaining matters arising were ongoing and due for report at a subsequent PRQC meeting, where appropriate.

#### 5. Creative Commons Licence [PRQC.2017.03]

- 5.1 The Committee considered a proposal to permit PhD, EngD, MD (Res) and MPhil students the choice of Creative Commons (CC) licence under which their thesis will be made available in the College's repository.
- 5.2 The Head of Scholarly Communications Management provided an introduction to the proposal and highlighted that postgraduate research students are currently required to deposit the final version of their thesis to Spiral, the College's repository, to be available on open access. Although open access, the current licence is the most restrictive CC licence available ('CC BY-NC-ND': Attribution-Non-commercial-No Derivatives). It was proposed that in future, students are

offered a choice, but that the default licence is less restrictive. It was argued that the application of using a less restrictive licence enables better reuse, repurposing and reproducibility, ensures more open science and visibility to research, and permits text and data mining (TDM).

- 5.3 The committee agreed that, if student choice is offered, it is essential to provide information pertaining to licencing prior to depositing to Spiral, to allow students sufficient time to make an informed decision.
- 5.4 It was confirmed that, at the point of the final submission to Spiral, students would be required to sign a copyright statement.
- 5.5 The Committee agreed to recommend to QAEC:
  - That the thesis submission regulations are changed to allow PhD, EngD,
     MD(Res) and MPhil students to choose the licence under which their thesis will be deposited in Spiral
  - b) That the 'CC BY-NC' licence (Attribution-No Derivatives) is made the default licence
  - c) That any research student funded by RCUK must deposit their thesis under the 'CC BY' licence, as this is required by the RCUK open access policy.
- 5.6 Although further technical work will need to be carried out by the Graduate School prior to full implementation of the proposal, the committee agreed to further recommend to QAEC:
  - a) That students and supervisors will be expected to be responsible for understanding the CC licences available
  - That the Library Services and Graduate School will continue to provide education on CC licences, including the online copyright awareness course available in Blackboard
  - That the embargo request procedure remains as is, but that there should be no extension of the maximum 24 months (unless a specific exception is granted)
  - That theses should be given digital object identifiers (DOIs) to aid discoverability, citation, impact tracking, reuse and access to researchers conducting TDM
  - e) That research students are strongly encouraged to register for an ORCiD iD to aid discoverability, authorship identification, indexing of their work, and reporting.

#### 6. World Class Research Supervision

- 6.1 Final Report of the Task and Finish Group for Doctoral Student Wellbeing [PRQC.2017.04]
- 6.1.1 The committee noted the final report, which was presented by the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School), and focussed on the three recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group. The report on Student Wellbeing is timely as HEFCE has recently begun a project in the same area,

- which the College is contributing to (see item 11 HEFCE PGR Wellbeing Project).
- 6.1.2 It was highlighted that the College's Director of Student Services is also carrying out research in a similar area therefore the Task and Finish Group's recommendations should be fed into this additional work, where appropriate.
- 6.1.3 It was agreed that the report of the Task and Finish Group will be submitted to QAEC for information.

# 6.2 Final Report of the Task and Finish Group for Research Culture and Community [PRQC.2017.05]

- 6.2.1 The committee noted the final report, which was presented by the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School), and focussed on the five recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group.
- 6.2.2 Within the report it was specified that, to ensure postgraduate students have physical space in which to meet other students and have greater interaction with other research groups, a business case for the development of a postgraduate hub has been developed. The Chair confirmed that further discussion will be carried out with the ICU and GSU and that, in the interim, members are encouraged to contact the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School) with any suggestions on how to support implementation of a postgraduate hub.
- 6.2.3 The Committee discussed the complexities of strengthening research culture within and across faculties, and improving the College's understanding of the work across research groups. There is currently varied levels of student engagement in cross-faculty seminar programmes despite the fact that students seek more opportunities to discuss entrepreneurial initiatives and research opportunities with peers. It was agreed that more data is required to drive initiatives that engender student interaction but that the Finish Group's report will go a long way in bolstering research culture across the College.
- 6.2.4 One observation posited was that supervision organised across departments can promote interaction across disciplines. Such arrangements could therefore be further rolled out across the College, where appropriate.
- 6.2.5 It was agreed that the report of the Task and Finish Group will be submitted to QAEC for information.
- 6.3 Interim Report of the World-Class Research Supervision Task and Finish Group for the Student Supervisor Partnership [PRQC.2017.06]
- 6.3.1 The committee considered the interim report, which was presented by the Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School). To date, seven recommendations have been proposed by the Task and Finish Group. It was confirmed that the Group has reviewed and consulted on the pastoral care structures in departments, specifically the role of Postgraduate Tutor and Academic Mentor.

- 6.3.2 The Committee agreed to recommend to QAEC, the principle that all students are appointed a 'Main Supervisor' as of the 2018-19 session. Although the term itself is not a direct solution to issues around student supervision, it was highlighted that rationalising College terminology will allow for further policies and guidance documents to be produced to be which will address the issues identified.
- 6.3.3 The Committee agreed to recommend the following documents to QAEC, to take immediate effect:
  - a) 'Roles and Responsibilities Main Research Degree Supervisor' (Appendix 1 of PRQC.2017.06)
  - b) 'Mutual Expectations for the Research Degree Student Supervisor Partnership' (Appendix 2 of PRQC.2017.06), to replace the Codes of Practice (subject to a minor amendment: 'as your supervisor, I will set up an appropriate project' to be changed to 'as your supervisor, I will work with you to develop an appropriate project')

# **ACTION: Head of Strategy Operation, Graduate School**

- 'Defining the Roles within Research Degree Supervisory Teams' (Appendix 3 of PRQC.2017.06)
- d) 'Roles and Responsibilities Assistant Supervisor' (Appendix 4 of PRQC.2017.06)
- e) 'Framework for the support and development of Imperial College London Postdocs who are Assistant Supervisors' (Appendix 5 of PRQC.2017.06)
- f) 'Postdocs who contribute towards the research student supervisor partnership: Formal appointment of Assistant Supervisors and Co-Supervisors' (Appendix 6 of PRQC.2017.06)
- g) 'Early Stage Assessment (ESA) Form / Late Stage Review (LSR) Form' (Appendix 7 of PRQC.2017.06)
- h) The 'Policy on Research Degree Supervision' (Appendix 8 of PRQC.2017.06), to replace Eligibility for Research Degree Supervision.
- 6.3.4 The Committee debated whether to establish a formal mechanism whereby students sign to indicate that they have read and understood all documentation related to supervision arrangements. Although there was some support that this would reinforce the importance the College places on supervision, it was agreed that adding another administrative dimension to the process would be over burdensome. In addition, the Committee did not want to build this type of sign off into the ESA as it was deemed this would disrupt a process that functions effectively. It was agreed that individual departments should ensure that roles, responsibilities and expectations are managed appropriately and that students engage fully with the agreed processes and revised documentation.
- 6.3.5 The Committee agreed that the final report will be considered at the PRQC on 11 May 2018.
- 7. Periodic Reviews of Research Programmes
- 7.1 Department of Bioengineering [PRQC.2017.07]

- 7.1.1 The Committee considered the periodic review of postgraduate research provision in the Department of Bioengineering which took place on 28th March 2017.
- 7.1.2 The Committee confirmed the outcome of the Periodic Review as 'full confidence' and agreed to recommend to Senate that the Department would be asked to follow-up on the periodic review as part of its precept review in three years' time, as per the normal review cycle.
- 7.1.3 The report and the department's response will be submitted to the Senate to be held on 6 December 2017.

# 7.2 Department of Physics [PRQC.2017.08]

- 7.2.1 The Committee considered the periodic review of postgraduate research provision in the Department of Physics took place on 27th March 2017.
- 7.2.2 The Committee confirmed the outcome of the Periodic Review as 'full confidence' and agreed that the Department would be asked to follow-up on the periodic review as part of its precept review in three years' time as per the normal review cycle. However, the Committee agreed that an update regarding recommendation 1.3.1 ('The Department should implement further measures to significantly increase its on-time completion rates for the ESA and LSR milestones. In doing so it should consider ways to incentivise on-time completion and therefore compliance with the College precepts') should be provided to PRQC in one year's time.

**ACTION: DPS Physics** 

- 7.2.3 The Committee considered the two matters referred to the College. It was agreed that the first matter pertaining to supervisor training was in hand but that the second matter, reducing the time taken to award President's Scholarships, must be followed up by the Research Office.
- 7.2.4 The report and the department's response will be submitted to the Senate to be held on 6 December 2017.
- 7.3 Members of PRQC who were present for both periodic reviews acknowledged that student engagement was strong throughout the process. However, it was agreed that the contents of future reports should more explicitly reference the views of the student representatives on the panels.

#### 8. Admissions

#### 8.1 PGR Entry Requirements for 2019-20 [PRQC.2017.09]

The Committee considered a list of entry requirements for PGR programmes for 2019-20 entry. It was highlighted that, once approved, the list cannot be revised for 2019-20 as the information will be printed in the postgraduate prospectus.

- 8.1.1 The Committee agreed that the following data are revisited:
  - The title 'Research (CDT)'
  - The department description 'Centre for Co-Curricula Studies'
  - The 'minimum UK honours' for programmes in the Department of Computing
  - The 'subject requirement' for all programmes
  - The 'contact name' and 'contact email' for all programmes.

In addition, the Committee queried whether the 'title' column could be broken down into specific research programmes but acknowledged that there might be restrictions due to shared programme codes.

It was agreed that the Registry QA Team carries out further consultation with Admissions regarding the entry requirements template as well as the wider College for departmental PGR entry data.

**ACTION: Secretary** 

## 8.2 PGR Admissions Policy

8.2.1 The Committee noted the revised PGR Admissions Policy, which has now been published:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-supportservices/registry/academic-governance/public/academicpolicy/admissions/Postgraduate-research-admissions-policy.pdf

### 8.3 Special Cases for Admission to Postgraduate Programmes

8.3.1 The Committee noted the revised Special Cases for Admission to Postgraduate Programmes, which has now been published:

http://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/academic-policy/admissions/Special-Cases-Policy-for-Admission-to-Postgraduate-Programmes-of-Study.pdf

# 9. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017

- 9.1 The Committee considered the results of the 2017 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey [PRQC.2017.10].
- 9.1.1 The College has significantly improved participation rates for the 2017 survey with an increase of 16% on the previous survey. This was also significantly above the national participation rate. College students continue to have positive experiences, with 81% of respondents agreeing that they are satisfied with their programme overall, compared to 82% for the sector.
- 9.2 The Committee considered the ICU response to the 2017 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey [PRQC.2017.11].

- 9.2.1 The committee praised the ICU and GSU for the quick turnaround time in producing the document and welcomed the astute reconditions contained within.
- 9.2.2 The Committee agreed that the link to the PRES response is sent to members, for onward dissemination to research students in general and PGR SSC members in particular.

**ACTION: Secretary** 

9.3 It was noted that the departmental PRES action plans will be considered by an appropriate research committee in each Faculty this term and the Faculty summaries will be considered by the PRQC on 21 February 2018 and by QAEC on 10 April 2018.

# 10. Graduate Teaching Assistant Training (GTA): Annual Report 2016-17 [PRQC.2017.12]

- 10.1 The Committee noted the GTA annual report from the Graduate School.
- 10.2 Since 2014-15 there have been 33 successful applications for Associate Fellowship of the HEA and four successful applications for Fellowship of the HEA.
- 10.3 The Committee agreed to continue to monitor developments in the Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) training provision and to receive a subsequent annual report in 2018-19.

#### 11. HEFCE PGR Wellbeing Project

- 11.1 It was noted that the Graduate School will be taking part in a HEFCE funded PGR Wellbeing Project. The College will be one of ten institutions taking part in the project which comprises:
  - An institutional visit to speak to staff involved with pastoral care of PGR students (26 October, afternoon)
  - A PGR student focus group and/or 1-2-1 student interviews (26 October, morning)
  - An institution-wide PGR student survey (for 2nd years and above).
- 11.2 It was agreed that, following completion of the HEFCE funded PGR Wellbeing Project, the results will be considered at PRQC.

# 12. PRI, Split PhD and IRL

- 12.1 The Committee noted the list of active Partner Research Institutes, Split PhD and Imperial Recognised Locations and considered a minor amendment to the PRI procedure [PRQC.2017.13].
- 12.2 The Committee agreed to recommend to QAEC, the proposed amendment to the Approval, Renewal and Review of PRIs process. As PRIs are only activated

when there is a new student application and inactivated when there are no registered students at the site, it was agreed that five-year reviews of active PRIs will not be undertaken. Instead, PRQC will receive an annual report on collaborative partners.

#### 13. CDT/DTP Governance Committee

13.1 The Committee noted the minutes of the Graduate School CDT/DTP Governance Committee meeting held on 17 May 2017 [PRQC/2017/14].

#### 14. Senate

14.1 Members received a link to the latest executive summaries from the Senate.

# 15. Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

15.1 Members received a link to the latest executive summaries from the QAEC.

#### 16. Any Other Business

16.1 No other business was reported.

### 17. Date of next meeting

- 17.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 21 February 2018, 14:00-17:00, G01, Royal School of Mines, South Kensington campus. The deadline for items is Wednesday 31 January 2018. The deadline for papers is Wednesday 7 February 2018.
- **18.** Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)

# 18.1 Special Cases Reports

- 18.1.1 The Committee received reports on special cases as follows:
  - Special cases for PGR admissions (April 2017 October 2017) considered by the Director and/or Deputy Directors of the Graduate School [PRQC.2017.15]
  - Special cases for examination arrangements, considered by the Director and/or Deputy Directors of the Graduate School [PRQC.2017.16]
  - Special cases for extensions, considered by the Director and/or Deputy Directors of the Graduate School [PRQC.2017.17].
- 18.1.2 It is important for the Committee to maintain oversight of special cases and for the College to reduce as far as possible, the factors leading to the cases presented. Members were reminded that departments should consider the interruption of studies option as early as possible, in appropriate student cases.