

Postgraduate Research Quality Committee

22 February 2017

Confirmed Minutes

Present

Professor Sue Gibson (Chair and Director of the Graduate School)
Professor Peter Allison (Earth Science and Engineering)
Professor Andrew Amis (Mechanical Engineering)
Dr Simon Archer (College Tutor)
Dr Anil Bharath (Bioengineering)
Dr Christine Franey (School of Public Health) [*representing Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin*]
Dr Matthew Fuchter (Chemistry)
Professor Amparo Galindo (Chemical Engineering)
Dr Niki Gounaris (Life Sciences)
Professor Uta Griesenbach (NHLI) [*representing Professor Tony Magee*]
Mr Mobeen Iqbal (Student Representative)
Professor Henrik Jensen (Mathematics)
Professor Stefan Maier (Physics)
Ms Karen Makuch (Centre for Environmental Policy)
Dr Felicity Mellor (School of Professional Development)
Professor Kevin Murphy (Medicine)
Professor Alessandra Russo (Computing)
Mr Ahmed Shamsu (GSU President)
Dr Mark Ungless (MRC Clinical Sciences Centre)
Professor Ahmer Wadee (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
Professor Denis Wright (Director of Student Support)
Professor Yun Xu (College Consul)

In Attendance

Ms Eleri Canning (Records Officer – Research Degree Examinations) – in attendance for item 7
Mr Richard Monk (Assistant Registrar, Senate and Academic Review)

1. Welcome

The Committee welcomed Ms Karen Makuch as the new representative for the Centre for Environmental Policy, replacing Dr Mike Tennant. The Committee expressed its thanks to Dr Tennant for his contributions.

2. Apologies for absence

Professor Ferri Aliabadi (Aeronautics)
Mr David Ashton (Academic Registrar)
Dr Marco Aurisicchio (Design Engineering)
Professor Simone Buitendijk (Vice-Provost [Education])
Professor David Dye (Materials)
Professor Jonathan Haskel (Business School)
Professor Andrew Holmes (Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Dr Sally Leever (Crick Doctoral Centre)
Professor Tony Magee (Graduate School Deputy Director and NHLI)
Mr Luke McCrone (ICU Deputy-President [Education])
Professor Michael Seckl (Surgery and Cancer)

3. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2016 were approved.

PRQC/2016/17

4. Matters arising

4.1 The Committee received and noted an action list detailing matters arising from previous meetings with updates on progress in completing the required action.

PRQC/2016/18

4.2 The Committee confirmed that the required action had been completed and that there were no further matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Alternative Thesis Format

5.1 The Committee considered a paper from the Faculty of Engineering regarding the introduction of an 'alternative thesis format' as an option for final submission.

PRQC/2016/19

5.1.1 The Committee noted that the 'alternative thesis format' referred to an integrated format thesis which generally allowed for the inclusion of sections in a format suitable for submission for publication in a peer-reviewed journal/conference proceedings or that had already been published in a peer-reviewed journal/conference proceedings, either with or without adaptation. The Committee further noted current practice at Imperial in respect of the College Regulations for PhD and MPhil and practice at other institutions, principally members of the Russell Group.

5.1.2 The Committee engaged in a detailed discussion which took account of varying opinions amongst the members of the Committee, both in favour and against the introduction of the alternative format. In conclusion the Committee agreed not to proceed with the proposal to introduce the alternative format as an option for submission, taking the view that the current PhD and MPhil regulations offered sufficient flexibility with respect to the format of the final submission, allowing as it did the inclusion of published papers where suitably adapted to form an integral part of the thesis (but not the published papers themselves).

6. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

6.1 PRES 2015: Departmental Updates

6.1.1 The Committee received and considered Departmental updates on action taken in response to PRES 2015.

PRQC/2016/20

6.1.2 The Committee noted that updates had been submitted by 13 of the 20 Departments who had returned results in PRES 2015. Having reviewed the individual Department updates it was suggested that Departments consider publicising the updates to students ahead of the launch of PRES 2017 on 25 April 2017, as a means of closing the feedback loop.

6.1.3 It was noted that the following Departmental updates were outstanding and it was agreed that these would be requested from the Departments concerned for submission to the May 2017 meeting:

- Bioengineering
- Centre for Environmental Policy
- Chemical Engineering
- Earth Science & Engineering
- Electrical & Electronic Engineering

- Life Sciences
- Mechanical Engineering

ACTION: Registry Surveys Team

6.2 PRES 2017

6.2.1 The Committee noted that PRES 2017 would launch on Tuesday 25th April 2017 and close on Thursday 18th May 2017.

6.3 PRES 2017: Responding to Results

6.3.1 The Committee received and noted a paper outlining a revised process for Departments and Faculties to respond to the PRES 2017 results.

PRQC/2016/21

6.3.2 The Committee noted the addition of a Faculty level reporting stage in the process, with those reports due to be submitted to the Committee in due course for consideration. The Committee was supportive of the revised reporting and action planning process as outlined in the paper.

6.4 PRES: Update on PRES

6.4.1 The Committee received and considered a paper outlining changes to PRES beyond 2017.

PRQC/2016/22

6.4.2 It was noted within the update that PRES was to become an annual survey and that the Committee had been invited to provide its views to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee as to whether the College should participate in the survey on an annual basis.

6.4.3 Following discussion, the Committee agreed that it was preferable for the current arrangements to remain in place (i.e. participation every 2 years) rather than moving to an annual survey. In the Committee's view, a longer survey window would allow Departments time to plan and implement longer term transformational action rather than focussing on shorter term 'quick fixes' which an annual survey might encourage.

7. Late Submission of Theses

7.1 Data on cases of late submission in 2015-16

7.1.1 The Committee received a paper on cases of late submission in 2015-16. The Committee was invited to consider the analysis of factors affecting the timely submission of theses in 2015-16.

PRQC/2016/23

7.1.2 The Committee noted from the report that the number of late case requests in 2015-16 stood at 116 (from a total of 905 expected submissions), which equated to 12.81% of expected submissions. This compared to 145 late case requests from a total of 1139 expected submission in 2014-15, or 12.64%.

7.1.3 Following discussion of the data presented in the report the Committee agreed that it would be beneficial for future reports to also include data on the proportion of late case requests submitted within one week of the final submission deadline. The Committee also agreed that it would be valuable for future reports to also include data relating to on-time completion of the ESA and LSR milestones to allow for comparison with the late case data. This additional data would assist the Committee in monitoring whether there was any direct correlation between late completion of one or both milestones and subsequent submission of late case requests.

ACTION: Records Officer: Research Degree Examinations

8. Exchange Agreements

- 8.1 The Committee considered a proposal to renew a postgraduate student exchange partnership with the University of Osaka [Faculty of Natural Sciences exchange].

PRQC/2016/24

- 8.2 The Committee approved the renewal of the postgraduate student exchange partnership with the University of Osaka [Faculty of Natural Sciences exchange].

9. Admissions

9.1 2016-17 Admissions Cycle Report

- 9.1.1 The Committee received and considered a report on research degree application and enrolment numbers for 2016-17 compared with data for the previous two years.

PRQC/2016/25

- 9.1.2 The Committee was asked to note that as the College was still recruiting into the 2016-17 cycle the applications, offers, offer accepts and enrolments would continue to increase until the end of September 2017. For that reason the numbers shown for 2016-17 would appear lower when compared with the previous two cycles as those cycles were complete.

- 9.1.3 The Committee was also asked to note that the statistics excluded students who had enrolled on a PGR programme after progressing through the 1+3 route. This was because those students did not have an admissions record for PGR. Similarly, staff research applicants were excluded from the statistics as they were created as an enrolment but did not have an admissions line. If those students were included, enrolment numbers would appear to be higher than applications received.

9.2 2015-16 Admissions – End of Cycle Report

- 9.2.1 The Committee received and considered an end of cycle report on research degree application and enrolment numbers for 2015-16 compared with the previous two years.

PRQC/2016/26

- 9.3 Having considered both Admissions reports the Committee did not identify any particular matters of concern, trends or patterns in the data which required further monitoring and/or action.

10. Postgraduate Professional Development Committee

- 10.1 The Committee received and noted the unconfirmed minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee meeting held on 30 November 2016.

PRQC/2016/27

ITEMS FOR REPORT

11. Chair's Action

It was noted that no action had been taken by the Chair on behalf of the Committee since the previous meeting in October 2016.

12. Senate

Members noted that the latest executive summaries from Senate were available [here](#).

13. Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

Members noted that the latest executive summaries from the QAEC meetings were available [here](#).

14. Any Other Business

No other items of business were raised.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 May 2017 in The Ballroom, 58 Prince's Gate, South Kensington Campus. The meeting will start at 14:00. The deadline for papers is Wednesday 26 April 2017.

16. Date of Meetings in 2017-18

Wednesday 25 October 2017, 2pm – 5pm [paper deadline 11 October 2017]
Wednesday 21 February 2018, 2pm – 5pm [paper deadline 7 February 2018]
Friday 11 May 2018, 10am – 1pm [paper deadline 27 April 2018]

17. Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)

17.1 Special Cases Reports

The Committee received reports on special cases as follows:

(i) Special cases for admissions considered by the Deputy Directors of the Graduate School

PRQC/2016/28

(ii) Special cases for Examiners, considered by the Director and/or Deputy Directors of the Graduate School

PRQC/2016/29

(iii) Special cases for late entry, considered by the Director and/or Deputy Directors of the Graduate School

PRQC/2016/30