



RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

5 June 2019

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Professor David Bogle (*Chair*); Mr Ben Colvill; Professor Hynek Pikhart; Mr Derfel Owen; Ms Helen Notter; Professor Stephen Marshall; Dr Paulo Drinot; Dr Virginia Mantouvalou; Dr Benet Salway; Professor Kaila Srai; Professor Tania Monteiro; Professor Alison Diduck ;Dr Mark Freeman; Dr Patti Adank; Dr Ruth Siddal; Ms Karolina Farrell.

In attendance: Mr Darren Payne (Secretary); Mr Adnan Ali (Doctoral School); Ms Bella Malins (item 4); Mr Peter Warwick (item 5); Mr Martin Moyle (item 7); Ms Anniina Wikman (item 9); Mr Nick McGhee (item 11); Ms Wendy Appleby (item 11).

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor Andrew Wills; Dr Andrew Stoker; Dr Sam Smidt; Dr Simon Banks; Dr Sally Leever; Dr Jill Norman; Mr Saddiqur Rahman.

Key to abbreviations

- 37.3 One key issue highlighted was the obligation to provide supervision, and that the Office for Students specifically requires a protection plan in place in the event that supervisors leave – a suitable alternative must be made available either from UCL staff or external staff with an honorary UCL contract should the student wish to remain registered at UCL. The student cannot be expected to resolve this, and the obligation is on UCL – a common position around the UK for such issues.
- 37.4 The Director of Access and Admissions confirmed, however, that it was a matter of what is considered to be “reasonable” in terms of student expectations but also what UCL can “reasonably” be expected to provide.
- 37.5 It was noted that under ‘Surprising Terms’, there was currently nothing regarding academic insufficiency to compel withdrawal if needed. The Director of Access and Admissions noted that whilst the list was not exhaustive as they are just examples, they would add this to section 1 in order to highlight it given its importance.
- 37.6 It was confirmed that students will get a copy of the Terms of Conditions during the admissions process, and that this will also be available on their admissions portal. In future an archive of all Terms of Conditions per year will be built up so

- 38.7 **Agreed:** It was agreed that UCL could adopt the Research Council wording on this as follows: “*the recommended maximum teaching time is no more than 6 hours in any week for full-time students, and students may in addition undertake a small amount of other paid work provided it does not interfere with their research or wellbeing*”. This approach allows sufficient flexibility on hours worked, and also specifically distinguishes full-time from part-time students.

39 PROPOSED MOVE TO DEFAULT ELECTRONIC PHD DISSERTATIONS (E-THESES)

- 39.1 **Received** – Proposed Move to Default Electronic PhD Dissertations (E-Theses) paper at RDC 3-04 (18-19).
- 39.2 The Library Director of Services identified two main issues with the proposal – 1. In relation to submission of E-Theses for evaluation/examination - UCL does not current have the required secure software to enable such submission and provision of electronic versions to examiners, and this would require an ISD solution; and 2. It was not clear from the proposal whether it also included cessation of printed copy after submission – but currently no infrastructure is in place for long-term preservation of E-Theses. This is a significant and unacceptable risk given that UCL currently has hundreds of years’ worth of theses in a reliable storage medium (hard copy).
- 39.3 It was suggested that examiners could potentially opt-in to receive E-Theses as part of the nomination process, and that this would be specifically just for the Examination process – with a hardcopy being submitted to the library at the end for storage purposes.
- 39.4 It was noted that Oxford University have a secure E-Thesis repository so examiners can be emailed a secure link to access these when needed. Due to size issues with email, and GDPR issues with other methods of sending, it is imperative ISD be involved in building an analogous system to handle electronic transmission of theses at UCL should e-theses be the preferred route in future. Issues were also raised with version control, and submission dates that would potentially be lost.
- 39.5 Whilst RDC supported a move to E-Theses in general, it was agreed that the implementation of such a system could not be brought in without the adequate infrastructure being in place. Any new system would require input from the Library Services, Student Records, and ISD to ensure the system works end-to-end, and would also require the relevant investment bid being put in to AISG (the Administrative Information Services Group) to fund this.

40 GENERIC ISSUES ARISING FROM JOINT EXAMINER REPORTS

- 40.1 **Received** – Generic Issues Arising from Joint Examiner Reports paper at RDC 3-05 (18-19).
- 40.2 The Chair highlighted two particular issues. The first, prompted by comments from the IoE, was whether 3 months and 18 month referrals were appropriate – where 3 month was for drafting issues, and 18 month indicated more substantial problems that required further research - as the IoE had historically also had a 6 month referral . After discussion, it was felt that the current 3 and 18 month referral structure was sufficient

40.3

