

**RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE**

**9 March 2016**

**MINUTES**

**23 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**23A Doctoral Supervision** *[Minute 6.5 refers]*

23A.1 At the previous meeting, CALT agreed to work up more detailed plans for the development of doctoral supervision. 2016-17 would be an exploratory year offering a range of events. Faculties and supervisors would be asked to provide feedback on what worked well, and what would be most valuable, particularly to new supervisors. There would also be opportunities to add to the body of research about best for the quality of its doctoral supervision across the UK and Europe. CALT and the Doctoral School would then conduct a review at the end of the year and make some recommendations. Any mem[F1

- 24.5 **Agreed** - a section would be added to the upgrade report allowing examiners to flag the need for a learning agreement.  
**Action: Senior Executive Officer, Doctoral School**
- 24.6 **Agreed** the Doctoral School would circulate the new procedures to FGTs and DGTs.  
**Action: Senior Executive Officer, Doctoral School**

## **25 ANNUAL REPORT ON PGR UPGRADE, SUBMISSION AND COMPLETION STATISTICS**

- 25.1 **Received** the paper at RDC 2-02 (15-16).
- 25.2 RDC welcomed the Head of Student and Programme Data Services and Deputy Director of Academic Services. The data related to students entering in 2008-09 - the most recent available. The data included the IOE, although it was not yet possible to break the data down by IOE department. The data would be included in the annual report to SMT as one of the key indicators of quality in doctoral training.
- 25.3 The headline figures included a rise in rates of upgrade within 18 months from 33% to 44%. Submission rates were slightly up from 63% to 66%. RDC welcomed the upward curve in for both full and part time students, although the Doctoral Strategy aims for a target of 75% for submission rates, so there was still some way to go. The committee noted the high submission rates in Brain Sciences and a sharp rise in upgrade rates in the Bartlett and was keen to identify and share any good practice in the faculties. The FGT for the Bartlett noted that the faculty kept to strict upgrade timescales, helping more students to meet targets and reflecting a culture of timeliness amongst supervisors, departments and the faculty. Life Sciences found that good upgrade rates had been achieved by involving the student in arranging the upgrade committee (RDC confirmed that the Department was ultimately responsible for making these arrangements).
- 25.4 At the March 2015 meeting, RDC had asked if it was possible to compare the data with the PRES results. The PRES questions on supervision and overall satisfaction were used as signifiers of satisfaction. It was however noted that the PRES results came from a different cohort. No apparent correlation had been found. RDC had also asked if the data could be compared with the existence of thesis committees. It was suggested that Data Services might speak to Life Sciences as the f

## 26 FACULTY REPORTS ON ISSUES RAISED IN EXAMINERS' JOINT REPORTS

- 26.1 **Received** the paper at RDC 2-03 (15-16).
- 26.2 The reports provided an opportunity to discuss and address any issues which might be common across UCL. It was noted that few theses were approved without corrections. A significant number of examiners gave three months for revisions, whilst very few gave 18 month referrals. Three themes arose consistently across the reports: statistics, issues around presentation - including typographical errors, referencing, stating word counts etc. and the standard of English for both native and non-native speakers.
- 26.3 It was suggested that the IELTS requirements for PGR students might need to be reviewed. Doctoral supervision training could also include sessions on ensuring a high standard of English. RDC considered whether UCL might introduce a requirement for all supervisory teams to include at least one native-English speaker. It was recognised that this could be difficult to apply in some disciplines, but it could nonetheless be put forward as best practice.
- 26.4 However many of the problems were not about the standard of English but rather typographical errors and a lack of proof-reading. A number of reports found a significant whilst the research was of a high standard, the writing was less so. In some cases the

27.3 The item generated an extensive debate about whether such a model, often used in European countries, could be adopted at UCL. The general consensus was that it was an interesting idea, which could promote the visibility of UK research and celebrate the

**29 ANNUAL REPORT ON RESEARCH DEGREE ADMINISTRATION AND EXAMINATION STATISTICS**

29.1 **Received** the paper at RDC 2-06 (15-16).

29.2 RDC noted an increase in the volume of queries about examiner nominations and agreed that guidance on eligibility would be helpful.

**Action: Research Degrees Office**

**30 REGISTER OF RESEARCH DEGREE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS**

30.1 **Received** the paper at RDC 2-07 (15-16).

30.2 Academic Services provided a register of all the research degree academic partnerships currently in place at UCL. RDC members were asked to advise Academic Services of any existing or potential partnerships of which they were aware.

**31 NEW PROGRAMMES APPROVED BY RDC CHAIR'S ACTION**

31.1 **Approved** the following programmes as at RDC 2-08 (15-16):

- a) MRes Reproductive Science and Women's Health
- b) MRes Advanced Neuroimaging
- c) PhD programme route in African Studies
- d) PhD programme route in Sustainable Prosperity

**32 ANONYMISED SUSPENSIONS OF REGULATIONS REPORT**

32.1 **Approved** the suspensions of regulations at RDC 2-09 (15-16).

**33 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE MINUTES OF FACULTY GRADUATE TEACHING COMMITTEES – FINAL**

33.1 **Received** the updated version of the report including all faculties at RDC 2-10 (15-16).

**34 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**34A Three Minute Thesis**

34A.1 The organisers of the Three Minute Thesis competition asked RDC members to encourage students to take part and attend rounds - national final. Faculties were also asked to provide any feedback on the process.

**35 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

35.1 Wednesday 8 June 2016 at 10.00am in the Council Room

35.2 **Agreed** - Future meetings should take place between 11.00am and 1.00pm and that the day of the week should be varied to allow as many members as possible to attend.

**Action: Secretary**

LIZZIE VINTON

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