

Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)

10 May 2017

Confirmed Minutes

Present

Professor Sue Gibson (Chair and Director of the Graduate School)
Dr Matthew Fuchter (Chemistry)
Professor Andrew Amis (Mechanical Engineering)
Dr Anil Bharath (Bioengineering)
Professor Henrik Jensen (Mathematics)
Professor Yun Xu (College Consul)
Professor Alessandra Russo (Computing)
Mr Luke McCrone (ICU Deputy President, Education)
Mr Ahmed Shamsi (GSU President)
Professor Ahmer Wadee (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
Dr Simon Archer (College Tutor)
Professor David Dye (Materials)
Professor Amparo Galindo (Chemical Engineering)
Professor Andrew Holmes (Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Dr Sally Leever (Crick Doctoral Centre)
Professor Tony Magee (Graduate School Deputy Director and NHLI)
Professor Stefan Maier (Physics)
Dr Mark Ungless (MRC Clinical Sciences Centre)
Dr Nesrina Imami (Medicine)
Dr Jeremy Woods (Centre for Environmental Policy)

In Attendance

Mr Bojan Cvijan (Quality Assurance Administrator, Senate and Academic Review)
Dr Martyn Kingsbury (Director of Educational Development)
Ms Laura Lane (Manager of the Graduate School)
Ms Eleri Canning (Records Officer, Research Degree Examinations, Registry)

1. Welcome

The Committee welcomed new members and alternates.

2. Apologies for absence

Professor Simone Buitendijk (Vice-Provost)
Professor Ferri Aliabadi (Aeronautics)
Professor Peter Allison (Earth Science and Engineering)
Dr Marco Aurisicchio (Design Engineering)
Mr David Ashton (Academic Registrar)
Professor Michael Seckl (Surgery and Cancer)
Professor Jonathan Haskel (Business School)
Professor Denis Wright (Director of Student Support)
Dr Niki Gounaris (Life Sciences)
Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin (School of Public Health)
Dr Kevin Murphy (Medicine)
Dr Felicity Mellor (School of Professional Development)

3. Terms of Reference & Membership

The terms of reference and membership of the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee for 2017-18 were approved.

PRQC/2016/31

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2017 were approved.

PRQC/2016/32

5. Matters arising

5.1 The Committee received and noted an action list detailing matters arising from the previous meeting and containing updates on progress in completing the required action.

PRQC/2016/33

5.2 The Committee agreed that the remaining matters arising were either ongoing and due for report at a subsequent meeting or that appropriate action had been taken since the last meeting.

ITEMS FOR REPORT

6. Joint and Collaborative PhD Degree Programme Committees

The Committee received minutes from joint research degree programme committee meetings and, where available, student data as follows:

6.1 A*STAR-Imperial Doctoral Programme

PRQC/2016/34

The Committee noted that the programme was no longer recruiting and was withdrawn for new entrants last year. Current students would be supported until completion of the programme.

6.2 Malaysia-Imperial Doctoral Programme (MIDP)

PRQC/2016/35

The Committee was reminded that the MIDP had been withdrawn for entry and that no new students had been admitted to the programme since January 2012. The Committee was reassured that the College was committed to supporting the remaining six MIDP students who were in the final stages of their PhD (i.e. awaiting viva or completing post-viva thesis corrections currently).

6.3 Nanyang Technological University (NTU)/Imperial Doctoral Programme

PRQC/2016/36

The Committee noted that all students had now completed and that the programme had been withdrawn.

6.4 National University of Singapore (NUS)/Imperial Doctoral Programme

PRQC/2016/37

The Committee noted that the programme was no longer recruiting and was withdrawn for new entrants last year. There were currently 21 students enrolled on the programme who would be supported through to completion with a further three students either awaiting a viva or award of the PhD.

6.5 Hong Kong University (HKU)/Imperial Doctoral Programme

PRQC/2016/38

The Committee noted that the programme was no longer recruiting and was withdrawn for new entrants last year. There were currently 13 students enrolled on the programme who would be supported through to completion.

6.6 Imperial-University of São Paulo Joint Degree

PRQC/2016/39

The Committee noted that the programme's first student had completed in September 2016 with two students currently working towards completion.

6.7 EngD in Nuclear Engineering

PRQC/2016/40

The Committee noted that the programme had not been successful in obtaining new funding and would therefore not be recruiting any further students. Current students were unaffected and the existing Centre would support those students through to completion.

6.8 EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation

PRQC/2016/41

The Committee noted that October 2014 had been the last intake of students in the CDT in Non-Destructive Evaluation. The Committee was pleased to note from the review of progress of the EngD cohorts that excellent outcomes were being achieved across the cohorts.

The Committee noted that the second intake Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) in Quantitative Non-Destructive Evaluation had begun in October 2016, with the first intake of students commencing their studies in October 2015.

6.9 EngD in Water Engineering

PRQC/2016/42

The Committee noted that the Imperial cohorts were progressing well and that the programme appeared to be running smoothly.

6.10 Medical Research Council (MRC)-Asthma UK Centre in Allergic Mechanisms of Asthma 4-year training programme

PRQC/2016/43

The Committee was noted that the Centre had received further funding from Asthma UK last year to enable it to continue. 8 students commenced their studies in October 2016 with a further 8 students due to be recruited this year.

6.11 The London Pain Consortium 4-year PhD programme

PRQC/2016/44

The Committee noted that all students had now completed and that the programme had been withdrawn.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

7. World Class Research Supervision

7.1 Task and Finish Group for Prospective Student Information

- 7.1.1 The Committee received the revised Guidance for Prospective Research Applicants. The document will be sent to prospective research applicants as part of the regular communications sent by Student Recruitment and Out-reach. The Committee noted that the document had been revised following feedback the Task and Finish Group received from the Committee in October 2016. The document had been simplified and divided into themes which could be discussed at an applicant's interview instead of a prescriptive list of interview questions.

PRQC/2016/45

7.2 Task and Finish Group for the Student Supervisor Partnership 2016-17 - Framework for the Continuing Professional Development for Supervisors

- 7.2.1 The Committee received the online Supervisor's Guidebook. The guidebook was created in an attempt to collect all of the guidance available to supervisors across the College's webpages into a single comprehensive source of information. The guidebook also includes a section on supporting the wellbeing and mental health of students. The Committee agreed that the guidebook was good practice and that supervisors would find it useful.

- 7.2.2 The Committee approved the development of an online version of the introductory course provided to new supervisors. The Committee learned that many supervisors that join the College are experienced and do not require the one day introductory course. The online version of the course would be appropriate for such individuals as a brief introduction to supervision at Imperial. The Head of Department or Director of Postgraduate Studies would be able to discuss which form of training would be most suitable with each supervisor depending upon their experience. The Graduate School would provide departments with a termly report of all supervisors who complete the online course.

- 7.2.3 The Committee considered the development of a by-request two stage workshop for departments focusing on best practice in supervision. The first stage is for the Graduate School to organise a PhD student focus group to collect student feedback. The outcome of this then feeds into the second part of the workshop which is delivered by the EDU and which focuses on best practice but also incorporates some of the challenges for the department as highlighted by the students. The Task and Finish Group proposed that all supervisors should contribute to such workshops at least once every six years. The Committee noted that it would be difficult to get all supervisors in the College to participate due to their number but agreed that the workshop should be piloted over the course of the next two years.

- 7.2.4 In light of the development of the Framework for the Support and Development of Imperial College London Supervisors, amendments to the Research Degree and Collaborative Degree Precepts were proposed. The Committee agreed to these changes.

8. Periodic Reviews of Research Provision

8.1 Periodic Review of Departmental Research Degree Provision: Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

PRQC/2016/46

- 8.1.1 The Committee confirmed the outcome of the Periodic Review report and agreed that the Department would be asked to follow-up on the periodic review as part of its precept review in 3 years' time as per the normal review cycle. The final report and the department's response will be submitted to Senate in June 2017.

9. Submission Data

- 9.1 The Committee considered a report on submission rates for students due to submit for an MPhil or PhD during the period 1 February 2016 to 31 January 2017. The Committee noted that the overall College on-time submission rate had improved compared with the previous year at 91.1%. On-time submission rates for the majority of Departments showed an increase on the 2014-15 figures.

PRQC/2016/47

- 9.1 The Committee noted that it would be informative to include referral and failure rates for comparison with the submission rates.

ACTION: Registry QA Team

10. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

10.1 PRES 2015: Departmental Responses

- 10.1.1 With regard to the departmental updates for Department of Bioengineering, the Centre for Environmental Policy, the Department of Chemical Engineering, the Department of Earth Science and Engineering and the Department of Life Sciences considered at the meeting, the PRQC were pleased to note that all actions were completed or in progress and that the departments were making positive steps to improve communication, administration and implementing more cohort building activities.

PRQC/2016/48

- 10.1.2 The Committee noted that action plans from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering and the Department of Mechanical Engineering remained outstanding and it was agreed that these would be requested from the Departments concerned as soon as possible for presentation to the October 2017 meeting.

ACTION: Registry Surveys Team

10.2 PRES 2017: Participation rates

- 10.2.1 The Committee received and noted the current participation rates by Department for PRES 2017.

PRQC/2016/49

ITEMS FOR REPORT

11. Review of GTA Framework

- 11.1 The Committee noted that the Graduate School was due to review the Framework for GTA Training in June 2017. However, this was now postponed until the new Learning and Teaching Strategy has been published as the new Strategy is likely to impact upon and feed into this review. The Graduate School will therefore review the GTA Framework, together with its training courses for GTAs, during the 2017-18 academic session. The Committee will be updated in May 2018.

12. Application Statistics – Postgraduate Research Application Numbers for 2017 entry

- 12.1 The Committee received a report showing the number of Postgraduate Research applications (excluding MRes) made for 2017 entry by 18 April 2017 compared with the number of applications made at the same point in the previous two years.

PRQC/2016/50

13. CDT/DTP Governance Committee

- 13.1 The Committee received the minutes of the Graduate School CDT/DTP Governance Committee meetings held on 16 November 2016 and 8 February 2017.

PRQC/2016/51 & 52

14. Senate

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

15. Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee

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

16. Any Other Business

16.1 Late Case Requests

- 16.1.2 The Committee was invited to consider whether a fee should be applied to additional registration periods beyond the usual maximum registration period, and subject to the approval of a late case request.

PRQC/2016/53

- 16.1.3 It was proposed that a nominal fee of £200 is applied to candidates wishing to continue with the Completing Research Status (CRS) phase, to retain their registration status at the College. It was proposed that this is applied regardless of any CRS allowance already used by the candidate. In exceptional cases where additional experimental or data collection work is required following expiry of the maximum registration period, the candidate will be required to pay full fees as determined by the College Tuition Fees Team for the period in question.

- 16.1.4 The purpose of the CRS fee was unclear to the Committee and it was requested that the Research Degrees team produce a new proposal for the next Committee meeting, providing greater detail on the purpose of the CRS fee and its relation to late case requests. The Committee also requested that the late case form and extension request form be separated into two different forms to avoid conflating academic and financial issues.

ACTION: Research Degrees Team

16.2 Writing Up Period

- 16.2.1 The Committee was invited to consider updates to the guidance note for the Writing Up Period.

PRQC/2016/54

- 16.2.2 The Committee agreed to approve the updates to the guidance notes once the Committee's concerns regarding 16.1 Late Case Requests have been addressed.

17. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 25 October 2017. The meeting will start at 14:00. The deadline for papers is Wednesday 11 October 2017.

18. Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)

18.1 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/2016/55

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

PRQC/2016/56

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

PRQC/2016/57