

Postgraduate Research Quality Committee

3 February 2014

Confirmed Minutes

Present

Professor Sue Gibson (**Chair**)
Dr Tim Albrecht (Chemistry)
Professor Andrew Amis (Mechanical Engineering)
Dr Simon Archer (College Tutor)
Dr Paul Bruce (Aeronautics)
Dr Bernadette Byrne (Graduate School Deputy Director, Professional Skills)
Professor Chris Cheeseman (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
Professor Lesley Cohen (Physics)
Dr John Gibbons (Mathematics)
Dr Niki Gounaris (Department of Life Sciences)
Professor Andrew Holmes (Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Professor Debra Humphris (Vice Provost, Education)
Professor Marjo-Riitta Jarvelin (School of Public Health)
Ms Natalie Kempston (ICU Deputy President, Education)
Professor Peter Lindstedt (College Consul, Engineering & Business School)
Professor Tony Magee (NHLI)
Dr David McPhail (Graduate School Deputy Director and Materials)
Dr Felicity Mellor (School of Professional Development)
Dr Kevin Murphy (Department of Medicine)
Mr Dean Pateman (Academic Registrar)
Mr Shijing Si (Student Representative, Mathematics)
Professor Anne Soutar (Institute of Clinical Sciences)
Mr Andreas Thomik (GSU President)
Professor Denis Wright (Director of Student Support)
Professor Xiao Yun Xu (Chemical Engineering)

In Attendance

Ms Sally Baker (Senior Assistant Registrar, Senate & Academic Review)
Professor Peter Cawley (Mechanical Engineering) – for item 5.1
Dr Jaideep Dhariwal (PhD student, NHLI) – for item 5.3
Dr Daniele Dini (Mechanical Engineering) – for item 5.1
Professor Nigel Gooderham (Senior College Consul) – for item 5.1
Mr Nigel Marx (PhD student, Mechanical Engineering) – for item 5.1
Mr Richard Monk (Assistant Registrar, Senate & Academic Review) – **Secretary**
Mr Stefan Piatek (PhD student, NHLI) – for item 5.3
Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson (Medicine) – for item 5.2
Mr Richard van Arkel (PhD student, Mechanical Engineering) – for item 5.1
Dr Emma Watson (NHLI) – for item 5.3
Mr Ross Webster (PhD student, Chemistry) – for item 5.2
Professor Tom Welton (Chemistry) – for item 5.2
Ms Hui Lin Wong (PhD student, Chemistry) – for item 5.2
Professor Sophia Yaliraki (Chemistry) – for item 5.2

Observing

Mr Calum MacLeod (Management Trainee, Registry)

1. Welcome

The Committee welcomed Mr Dean Pateman who had recently been appointed as Academic Registrar, succeeding Mr Nigel Wheatley.

2. Apologies for absence

Professor Ferri Aliabadi (Aeronautics)
Professor Erko Autio (Business School)
Professor Sophia Drossopoulou (Computing)
Mr Adam Page (Student Representative, Physics)
Dr Mike Tennant (Centre for Environmental Policy)
Professor Michael Seckl (Surgery and Cancer)
Dr Simon Schultz (Bioengineering)
Professor Robert Zimmerman (Earth Science and Engineering)

3. Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2013 were approved.

PRQC/2013/28

4. Matters arising

4.1 Minute 9.1.5 – Review of ESA and LSR student progression arrangements

The Committee agreed that, in view of the recent introduction of the Completing Research Status (CRS) milestone, the review should be delayed for 12-24 months to allow the CRS milestone to become established.

ACTION: Graduate School Deputy Director

4.2 Minute 9.3.2 – PRES 2013 – Department responses

The Committee noted that the four outstanding Departmental responses and action plans had been requested from the Departments concerned but were still to be received. It was agreed that the Departments would be contacted again and that the outstanding responses would be submitted to the May 2014 meeting.

ACTION: Registry

4.3 Minute 11.3 – Review of Translation Studies Unit provision

The Chair reported that the recommendations arising from the review of the Translation Studies Unit provision would be considered as part of the Doctoral Proposition Project and that the action was therefore ongoing.

4.4 Minute 14.3 – Plagiarism Awareness Course

It was noted that the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee would be submitting a proposal for a Master's version of the online Plagiarism Awareness Course to the Master's Quality Committees in due course, with a view to introducing the course in October 2014.

4.5 The Committee noted that the remaining items were either included on the agenda or that appropriate action had been taken since the last meeting.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

5. Periodic Reviews of Research Degree Provision

5.1 Review of Research Degree Training in the Department of Mechanical Engineering

5.1.1 The Committee considered the periodic review of research degree training in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Collaborative Precept Review of the

EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation, including the reports of the assessors, the internal Chairman's completed Reviewer's Comments Forms and the Department's response to the assessors' comments.

PRQC/2013/29

- 5.1.2 The review was presented by Professor Nigel Gooderham, the internal Chair for the review. Professor Peter Cawley, the Head of Department and Dr Daniele Dini together with Mr Richard van Arkel and Mr Nigel Marx, the student representatives from the Department of Mechanical Engineering, attended to present their responses to the review.
- 5.1.3 The Committee noted that the reviewers had rated the Department of Mechanical Engineering "compliant" with ten of the eleven precepts and working towards compliance in the other precept. The Committee noted from the Department's written response that action was in the process of being taken to ensure that the Department was fully compliant with all of the precepts and therefore agreed that the Department of Mechanical Engineering was "compliant" overall. The Committee congratulated the Department on its excellent review and noted that all the points raised by the review panel had been satisfactorily addressed by the Department in its response.
- 5.1.4 The Committee noted that the periodic review also incorporated a Collaborative Precept Review of the EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation. The reviewers had observed that the EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation followed the same academic assessment and progression procedures as the PhD programme, except that the first stage assessment was held at 12 months. The panel's comments, observations and recommendations on the PhD programme therefore applied equally to the EngD programme. The Committee noted that the reviewers had therefore rated the EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation "compliant" with ten of the eleven precepts and working towards compliance in the other precept. The Committee noted from the Department's written response that action was in the process of being taken to ensure that the Department was fully compliant with all of the precepts and therefore agreed that the EngD in Non-Destructive Evaluation was "compliant" overall.
- 5.1.5 The review panel had formed a very positive impression of the training that research students receive within the Department of Mechanical Engineering. The panel had found the provision of postgraduate research training to be very good and were of the view that much of the programme was worthy of mention. The panel commended the Department on the quality of its research students, noting that students enjoyed the opportunities of working in world renowned and respected research groups and that they were proud to be members of the Department. The panel had also noted the Department's positive response to previous reviews of its research degree training and complimented the Department on the significant improvement in its PhD completion rate since the previous review. The panel considered the awarding of College Awards for Excellence in Research Student Supervision to members of the Department to be indicative of a healthy culture within the Department. The panel had further noted the support that the Department gave to assisting and developing newer staff in their role as PhD supervisors and that the Department looked favourably on new staff when allocating studentships.
- 5.1.6 The review panel members had highlighted a number of examples of good practice. The panel had identified: the provision of Department funds for aiding students to attend conferences; the involvement of students in the design of the 6 monthly progress reports; the Department's strong links with industry, leading to excellent support for students; allocation of resources to the Exceptional Overseas Student Scheme, the Bursary Guarantee Scheme and the Travel Support Scheme and the appointment of a Women's Tutor to advise female students; as examples of good practice.
- 5.1.7 The panel had concluded that the Department was working towards compliance with Precept 6 (postgraduate committee). The panel had observed that the Department did not operate a postgraduate committee as described by the precept. The panel observed that the Director of Postgraduate Studies and the Postgraduate Tutor operated independently but met as required. Postgraduate matters were reported to the Departmental Management Committee, which met weekly. The panel noted that this arrangement was currently working but felt that managing postgraduate business along

such lines would ultimately result in an absence of evidence-based quality assurance. The panel had therefore recommended that the Department consider formalising the business of a postgraduate committee with minutes for each meeting, which would achieve the necessary evidence-based quality assurance. In response the Department had formalised the necessary business of the postgraduate staff team in November 2013 with the establishment of a postgraduate committee with minuted meetings. The postgraduate committee met on a monthly basis and its core members were the Director and Deputy Director of Postgraduate Studies and the Postgraduate Administrator. The Postgraduate Tutor and Deputy Postgraduate Tutor would attend the meetings on a quarterly basis to discuss postgraduate matters that required a broader overview.

- 5.1.8 The panel noted that whilst the Department was compliant with Precept 5 (academic mentors), the process appeared to be minimal and functioning as a safety net. The panel considered it pertinent that few students were aware of the academic mentor arrangements. In view of these observations the panel recommended that the Department review the effectiveness of its arrangements and communicate the details more effectively to its students. In response, and in view of the recent Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2013 results, the Department had begun to review the effectiveness of the academic mentor scheme. It had been proposed that a number of eminent retired Professorial staff should act as academic mentors. The Department considered that their experience of dealing with postgraduate students made them ideally suited to helping identify and solve individual and/or group issues. It was intended that they would liaise directly with the Postgraduate Tutor or the Director of Postgraduate Studies and that their principal role would be to advise PhD students. The Department had further responded that the Postgraduate Tutor and Deputy Postgraduate Tutor had started a programme to conduct interviews with students from different groups selected at random every month to help to identify potential issues to be addressed with the assistance of the academic mentors.
- 5.1.9 The Committee noted that the requirement that all students must have an academic mentor had been superseded since January 2013 by the requirement for Departments to make provision to allow research students to interact with their peers and should facilitate the existence of a collegial/scholarly community (Precept 5). To this end, the panel had recommended that the Department should continue to review and support inter-group, inter-division collaboration and networking with the aim of greater exposure and involvement of the PhD students. The panel had observed that for many PhD students inter-research group interaction was limited. The panel suggested a research symposium for research students with the opportunity for poster/oral presentations as an example of how this might be achieved. In response the Department had recently begun a series of initiatives to improve inter-research group interactions which included the provision of a fairly substantial budget to the Postgraduate Staff-Student Committee to organise social and research-related events open to the whole postgraduate student community. The Department was also further pursuing the recent initiative by the Graduate School Deputy Director (Professional Skills) to actively explore the possibility of implementing cohort-based activities. The Department was also investigating the option of formally establishing a Departmental research symposium. Various potential formats that would be appropriate to the size of the postgraduate community and variety of research areas to be covered had been proposed. Some would be trialled during 2014.
- 5.1.10 The panel had observed that the Department had undergone substantial refurbishment over the last few years, resulting in the relocation of research groups and facilities during the process. The panel noted that the impact of these changes had significantly affected the postgraduate experience and that the substantial and prolonged changes were likely to have been destabilising and disruptive. Additionally, the issue of the lack of communal space for research students had been a persistent comment. The panel recommended that the Department consider this issue as its refurbishment programme proceeded. The Committee noted from the Department's response that senior academic and administrative staff had interfaced with the College/Faculty regarding future plans to ensure that the substantial changes did not affect the postgraduate experience and undermine the activities of the research groups directly affected by the works to be carried out. Heads of Division had been asked to review the specific requirements of their groups during the next refurbishment phase to identify potential issues and possible solutions to emerging space/facilities problems. The Committee further noted that a

postgraduate common room had been made available on the 7th floor of the building from October 2013. Provision had also been made for postgraduate students to be provided with significantly improved space after the building works had been completed.

- 5.1.11 In relation to Precept 4 (postgraduate student handbook) the panel had recommended that the Department consider including explicit statements on plagiarism, ethical research, disability and supervisor/student expectations. The Department had accepted the panel's recommendation and confirmed in its response that these statements would be added to the revised version of the handbook.
- 5.1.12 The panel had observed that the percentage of students who had completed the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) within the 9 month deadline and the percentage of students who had completed the Late Stage Review (LSR) assessment within the 24 month deadline were extremely low. The panel had noted that the two precepts (9 and 10) were still bedding in and observed that ongoing refurbishment issues may have contributed to the poor statistics. The Department was aware of the low completion rates for the two milestones and a series of measures had been put in place to effect a significant improvement in the completion rates during the 2013-14 academic year. Those measures included: streamlining the reports submission process; monitoring and improving the ESA and LSR processes, including a more formal and organised system for notifying and reminding both the students and their supervisors. The importance of the ESA and LSR completion rates had also been emphasised at a recent Departmental staff meeting.
- 5.1.13 It was agreed that the report would be presented to Senate with the recommendation that the Department of Mechanical Engineering be invited to report to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee in 12 months' time on its progress with the establishment and implementation of a Postgraduate Committee. The Department of Mechanical Engineering would otherwise be invited to report to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee on developments since the periodic review as part of the next precept review in three years' time.

5.2 Review of Research Degree Training in the Department of Chemistry

- 5.2.1 The Committee considered the periodic review of research degree training in the Department of Chemistry, including the reports of the assessors, the internal Chairman's completed Reviewer's Comments Form and the Department's response to the assessors' comments.

PRQC/2013/30

- 5.2.2 The review was presented by Professor Simon Taylor-Robinson, the internal Chair for the review. Professor Tom Welton, the Head of Department and Professor Sophia Yaliraki, Postgraduate Tutor, together with Ms Valerie Wong and Mr Ross Webster, the student representatives from the Department of Chemistry, attended to present their responses to the review.
- 5.2.3 The reviewers had rated the Department of Chemistry "compliant" with each of the eleven precepts and "compliant" overall. The Committee was pleased to note that the review panel considered the quality of research in the Department to be very high and that postgraduate students, in particular those registered for a PhD degree, were given every opportunity to carry out a significant piece of research that would prepare them well for a research career either in industry or academia. The Committee congratulated the Department of Chemistry on its excellent review and noted that all points raised by the review panel had been satisfactorily addressed by the Department in its response.
- 5.2.4 The review panel members had been impressed with the research degree programme in the Department of Chemistry and had highlighted a number of examples of good practice. The panel considered the mentoring and student "buddying" schemes to be excellent. The academic and pastoral mentoring system was working very well with a very approachable Postgraduate Tutor and Director of Postgraduate Studies. The panel also highlighted the regular Friday discussion forum as an example of good practice. This initiative was highly praised by students who felt that it was a valuable opportunity to make connections and think beyond the sphere of their own research. The panel commended the Department on its feedback system, whereby the Head of Department

acted upon student suggestions, which was praised by staff and students alike. The panel further commended the Department on its Athena SWAN initiative, which it considered particularly laudable.

- 5.2.5 The panel observed that some students felt that some of the Graduate School courses were too generic to be applicable to students in Chemistry, particularly in terms of careers advice. The review panel therefore recommended that supervisors should assist students in choosing Graduate School courses that were appropriate in order to learn or confirm transferable skills. In its response the Department reported that the Graduate School was working with the Department to make the transferable skills programme as useful as possible for students. Students were able to provide feedback to the Graduate School at the end of each course and it was reported that, generally, feedback received on individual courses had been very positive.
- 5.2.6 The panel had also observed that some students felt that they would like the opportunity to attend PhD discussion forums in other parts of the College or in other research groups within the Department, but did not know of any mechanism to find out when these were taking place. In response, the Department confirmed that it welcomed all students at departmental, sectional and cross-departmental research seminars. All were advertised to staff and students via regular e-mail and public notice boards. Additionally, the Graduate School website contained links to seminars in other parts of the College. <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/graduateschool/events/researchseminars>
- 5.2.7 In relation to Precept 3 (induction programme) the panel had noted some concern that students who did not start in October had found “starter” information more difficult to access than those who started in October when a full induction fair took place. In its response the Department confirmed that it would ensure that the small number of students who started after October would receive the same level of induction as students commencing in October. This would be achieved through small group and individual induction meetings with the Director of Postgraduate Studies, the Postgraduate Tutor and the Postgraduate Administrator. From October 2013, all late starters had been required to attend a one-to-one induction meeting with the Postgraduate Tutor. This was explicitly stated in the student handbook which students were given upon arrival in the Department.
- 5.2.8 In relation to Precept 4 (postgraduate student handbook) the panel noted that students would also like to receive a non-academic handbook with information on how to register for a GP, how to use the NHS, how to obtain a National Insurance number, etc. In response the Department had reported that much of the information was available via the International Office, the Graduate School and the Imperial College Union as well as other sources. The Department undertook to ensure that the availability of this information was highlighted in introductory presentations and the postgraduate handbook. The Department confirmed that the welcome pack now included information on Medical Services and National Insurance.
- 5.2.9 In relation to Precept 9 (Early Stage Assessment) the panel had observed that a significant percentage of students had not completed the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) within the 9 month deadline. The panel had also noted that some supervisors did not see the importance of on-time ESA completion, given that there were no penalties for late completion. The panel recommended that the Department seek to improve its record on meeting the ESA deadline and impress upon supervisors the importance of completing the ESA in a timely manner. In response the Department committed to making every effort to improve on-time completion of the ESA as well as meeting other deadlines, and had reinforced the importance of adhering to these at a recent departmental staff meeting. The Department further reported that whilst a significant percentage of students did not complete the ESA by 9 months, the vast majority of students had completed within the first 10 months. A significant factor affecting the timeliness of ESA completion was reported to be the heavy workload experienced by staff who were involved in undergraduate teaching and marking commitments at the same time as the ESA was due to be completed. The Department had taken further measures to alleviate this issue by introducing a more efficient ESA format. Initial results had been encouraging and the Department reported that the process would continue to be reviewed during the 2013-14 academic year.

- 5.2.10 It was agreed that the report would be presented to Senate with the recommendation that the Department of Chemistry be invited to report to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee on developments since the periodic review as part of the next precept review in three years' time.

5.3 Review of Research Degree Training in the National Heart and Lung Institute

- 5.3.1 The Committee considered the periodic review of research degree training in the National Heart and Lung Institute (NHLI), including the reports of the assessors, the internal Chairman's completed Reviewer's Comments Form and the Department's response to the assessors' comments.

PRQC/2013/31

- 5.3.2 The review was presented by Dr Simon Archer, the internal Chair for the review. Professor Tony Magee, Director of Postgraduate Studies, and Dr Emma Watson, Research Manager, together with Mr Stefan Piatek and Dr Jaideep Dhariwal, the student representatives from the NHLI, attended to present their responses to the review.
- 5.3.3 The reviewers had rated the NHLI "compliant" with nine of the eleven precepts and partially compliant with the remaining two precepts. The Committee noted from the NHLI's written response that action had been, or was in the process of being, taken to ensure that the NHLI was fully compliant with all of the precepts and therefore agreed that the NHLI was "compliant" overall. The Committee congratulated the NHLI on its excellent review and noted that all the points raised by the review panel had been satisfactorily addressed by the NHLI in its response.
- 5.3.4 The review panel members had been impressed by the research degree programme in the NHLI and had identified a number of examples of good practice. Overall, the panel considered there to be a very strong general level of provision for postgraduate research students, who had the benefits of working in a prestigious environment with a very strong research reputation and with a large number of eminent senior staff. The panel congratulated NHLI staff on organising and administering a particularly effective research education provision. The panel highlighted the postgraduate research day as an example of good practice, noting that it was well received by students and provided them with an environment to present their results and opportunities for networking with other students, particularly those from other campuses where day to day interaction did not routinely occur. The panel also highlighted the use of assistant supervisors as an example of good practice, noting that it had major benefits for the postgraduate experience and also had value in training the next generation of potential supervisors and principal investigators. The panel also considered the congratulatory e-mail sent to students upon graduation, with an invitation to provide confidential feedback on their experience, to be an example of good practice. The panel further praised the NHLI on the excellent student handbook and the impressive completion rates, which were above the College average.
- 5.3.5 The panel had concluded that the Department was partially compliant with Precept 10 (Late Stage Review). The panel had observed that a significant number of students had not completed the Late Stage Review (LSR) within the 24 month deadline. The panel had also observed that on-time completion rates were substantially lower than for the Early Stage Assessment (ESA) and that it appeared that the LSR milestone had not fully registered with supervisors. In response the NHLI had proposed to expand the induction slide relating to the LSR, to send reminders to all students, supervisors and assessors and to send an additional reminder in the ESA confirmation e-mail. The LSR would also be covered again during the Year 2 follow-up 'induction' event. The NHLI was confident that these additional measures would lead to an improvement in the on-time LSR completion rate.
- 5.3.6 The panel had concluded that the Department was partially compliant with Precept 11 (Staff/Student committee). The panel had observed that a Staff-Student committee had been recently re-established but that student attendance and willingness to take a lead had been poor. The panel had further observed that a lack of enthusiasm from students to become involved in quality enhancement initiatives perhaps reflected an already high degree of satisfaction with their educational experience. In response the NHLI took the

view that it was the responsibility of the students to drive the Staff-Student Committee, with extensive encouragement and support, in addition to significant resource, provided by the NHLI. It was further reported that significant progress had been made since the periodic review with more involved and committed students and more regular meetings being held, the minutes of which were routinely submitted to the NHLI Higher Degrees Committee (HDRC). Improved student attendance at the HDRC also enabled greater input to the quality assurance and enhancement of postgraduate research provision.

- 5.3.7 The panel had concluded that there was a need for students to have access to a source of advice that was perceived to be separate from and completely independent of supervisors. The panel had noted that academic mentors were intended to provide this role, but that they were often appointed by supervisors and so were not seen as independent. In preparing its response the NHLI had consulted with the Graduate School and had been advised that, since January 2013, it was no longer compulsory for postgraduate research students to have an academic mentor. Students would, in future, be given the choice as to whether or not to have an academic mentor, and if they chose to do so, they would be given some input to the selection process. The person appointed to act as mentor would not be a close colleague of their supervisor(s). The NHLI would also be providing training workshops for mentees and mentors and the mentor role would be detailed at the postgraduate research induction.
- 5.3.8 The panel had observed that some students would appreciate more detailed feedback from academic staff on their work. It was noted that certain supervisors and/or assessors could be more explicit in the detail of their comments about student work. The panel considered it important that written feedback was sufficiently adequate to be of value to students and that it was either recorded on the relevant forms or as an appendix to the work. In response the NHLI had put in place various measures to address these issues. Forms had been revised with more space added for feedback. Assessors had also been reminded of the importance of feedback. The NHLI continued to work with students to set clear expectations in terms of feedback.
- 5.3.9 In relation to Precept 1 (induction) the panel had observed that the induction days seemed to work well but that there was potential for students to be overloaded with information. The panel had also suggested that changes to the format of the induction that would make the information more accessible would be valuable, noting that the role of tutors and mentors in particular did not seem to be fully appreciated by students. In response the NHLI had undertaken to improve the postgraduate research inductions by organising the dates in advance, restructuring the slides giving clear headings, further clarifying the roles of mentor, tutor and supervisor and by introducing a Year 2 follow-up event to remind students of the relevant requirements at that stage.
- 5.3.10 In relation to Precept 6 (postgraduate committee) the panel had observed that some further work was required towards completing the committee terms of reference. The panel also suggested that, due to multi-site working, some innovation in scheduling might be needed to ensure good attendance. In response the NHLI confirmed that the terms of reference for the NHLI Higher Degrees Committee (HDRC) had been approved by the Head of Department and the HDRC. The installation of video-conferencing facilities to enable remote participation and the rotation of meetings between major sites would ensure good attendance. In addition, a new role description was being written for the Head of Section which would include responsibility and accountability for the HDRC.
- 5.3.11 It was agreed that the report would be presented to Senate with the recommendation that the NHLI be invited to report to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee in 12 months' time on its progress with the development of the Staff/Student Committee. The NHLI would otherwise be invited to report to the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee on developments since the periodic review as part of the next precept review in three years' time.

6. Collaborative Doctoral Programme Supervision

- 6.1 The Committee received and noted the proposed modifications to the procedures for: the Approval, Renewal and Review of Partner Research Institutions; Approval and Review of Split PhDs; and Approval of Imperial Recognised Locations.

PRQC/2013/32

- 6.2 The Committee approved the modifications to the procedures as presented.

7. Procedure for Consideration of Representations by Candidates for Research Degree Examinations

- 7.1 The Committee received a paper proposing amendments to the procedure for consideration of representations by candidates for research degree examinations. It was noted that the amendments related to the constitution of the Appellate Committee, specifically that the Chair would, in future, be a Consul and that the third member of the committee would normally be drawn from the membership of the Postgraduate Research Quality Committee rather than the Graduate School.

PRQC/2013/33

- 7.2 The Committee approved the amendments to the procedure as presented and agreed that the amendments would be recommended for Senate approval.

8. Cohort Building Activities

- 8.1 The Committee received and considered a report from the Graduate School on cohort building activities.

PRQC/2013/34

- 8.2 The Committee noted that the report outlined the work that the Graduate School had carried out to-date to raise the profile of cohort building and in providing guidance and support to Departments across the College.

- 8.3 The paper contained three key questions for consideration by the Committee and these were the focus of discussion. It was noted that there was evidence of good practice taking place in relation to cohort building within CDTs and that it was important to learn from these experiences and for CDTs to share them more widely. The Committee further noted that there was a concern that there was insufficient budget available to support staff in arranging cohort building activities. There was a limited budget available through the Graduate School to fund cohort building activities but there had been no take up so far.

9. Joint PhD Examination Regulations

- 9.1 The Committee considered proposed regulations for the Joint PhD programme with the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore.

PRQC/2013/35

- 9.2 The Committee approved the regulations as presented and agreed to recommend them for Senate approval.

10. Crick PhD Programme

- 10.1 The Committee received the code of practice for the Crick-LRI/Crick-NIMR PhD programme.

PRQC/2013/36

- 10.2 The Committee noted that the Frances Crick Institute was a partnership between the Medical Research Council, Cancer Research UK and the Wellcome Trust, and Imperial, UCL and King's College London. It was further noted that the HEIs and Crick staff had worked together over the past year to develop a set of key principles for delivery of the Crick PhD programme which would align with the regulations of the three HEIs involved and ensure that all students on the programme received a comparable experience. The first PhD students would be starting in September 2014.

- 10.3 Following discussion the Committee agreed to approve, in principle, the code of practice, as outlined in the paper. It was further agreed that Chair's Action could be taken to approve further minor amendments as necessary and to recommend the document for Senate approval.

ACTION: Graduate School Director

11. Enrolment Numbers

- 11.1 The Committee received and noted postgraduate enrolment numbers for 2013-14 compared with the data for the previous two years.

PRQC/2013/37

- 11.2 The Committee noted that the total number of full-time postgraduate students had increased by 9.8%, with the number of postgraduate research students increasing by 2%. The Committee further noted that there had been a small decline in the number of female postgraduate research students over the past two years whilst the number of male students had increased by a small amount during the same period.

12. Postgraduate Professional Development Committee: Update

- 12.1 The Committee received and noted the minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee held on 5 December 2013.

PRQC/2013/38

ITEMS FOR REPORT

13. Doctoral Proposition

- 13.1 The Committee noted an update on progress in the development of the Doctoral Proposition from the Doctoral Proposition Working Party.

PRQC/2013/39

- 13.2 In discussion it was noted that the draft proposition did not make reference to the quality of research carried out by students. It was further suggested that the proposition should align with the College mission to deliver world-class scholarship, education and research. Committee members were invited to submit feedback on the draft proposition by completing an online survey, no later than 10 February 2014.

14. Research Degree Precepts

- 14.1 The Committee received the revised research degree precepts. The precepts had been updated to include a new precept [Precept 16 – Writing Up Stage] as a result of changes to writing up status which were agreed at the 25 October 2013 meeting.

PRQC/2013/40

- 14.2 The Committee approved the revised research degree precepts as presented and agreed to recommend them for Senate approval.

Post meeting note: Subsequent to the meeting, action was taken by the Chair and Deputy Chair to approve minor amendments to Precept 16 to allow departments to decide the format of the timetable of remaining work which students are asked to submit at 36 months.

15. Reports from key College Committees

- 15.1 **Senate:** Members noted that the latest executive summaries from Senate were available [here](#)
- 15.2 **Quality Assurance & Enhancement Committee:** Members noted that the latest executive summaries from the QAEC meetings were available [here](#)

16. Any Other Business

- 16.1 No other items of business were noted.

17. Date of next meeting

Friday 30 May 2014 – *deadline for papers Friday 16 May 2014*

The meeting will start at **10.00am** and will take place in the **Council Room, 170 Queen's Gate**, South Kensington Campus.

18. Reserved Business (not circulated to student members)

18.1 Special Cases Reports

- 18.1.1 The Committee received reports on special cases considered by the special cases panel for doctoral programmes.

Special Cases for Admissions – PRQC/2013/41
Special Cases for Examiners – PRQC/2013/42
Special Cases for Late Entry – PRQC/2013/43