

Postgraduate Research Quality Committee (PRQC)

**Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2019 at 14:00 in
Skempton Building, Room 064A/B, South Kensington Campus**

Present

Professor Yun Xu (Director of the Graduate School) [Chair]
David Ashton (Academic Registrar)
Dr Ryan Barnett (Mathematics)
Dr Christos-Savvas Bouganis (Electrical and Electronic Engineering)
Ashley Brooks (ICU Deputy President (Education))
Emma Couves (Student Representative)
Dr Abbas Dehghan (School of Public Health)
Mohit Devgan (GSU President)
Dr Antonio Filieri (Computing)
Dr Jo Horsburgh (CLCC/CHERS)
Dr Nesrina Imami (Medicine) [in place of Professor Kevin Murphy]
Laura Lane (Head of Strategy and Operations, Graduate School)
Professor Mike Lovett (NHLI)
Professor Tony Magee (Graduate School Deputy Director)
Robin Mowat (Centre for Academic English representative)
Dr Bill Proud (Physics)
Professor Eduardo Saiz (Materials)
Dr Matthew Santer (Aeronautics)
Professor John Seddon (Faculty Senior Tutor (PGR) representative)
Dr Jem Woods (Centre for Environmental Policy)
Scott Tucker (Deputy Director, Academic Quality and Standards) [Secretary]

In Attendance

Wayne Peters (Research Data Manager, Library Services) [Item 5]
Professor Henry Rzepa (Emeritus Professor of Computational Chemistry) [Item 5]

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

1.1 The Chair welcomed new members of the committee, colleagues in place of existing members and non-members in attendance.

1.2 The following apologies for absence were received:

- Professor Peter Allison (Deputy Director of the Graduate School)
- Professor Simone Buitendijk (Vice-Provost, Education)
- Raya El Laham (Student Representative)
- Dr Saskia Goes (Earth Science and Engineering)
- Dr Kleoniki Gounaris (Life Sciences)
- Dr Hamed Haddadi (Design Engineering)
- Milia Hasbani (Student Representative)
- Hannah Jones (Student Representative)
- Professor Serafim Kalliadasis (Chemical Engineering)
- Dr Angela Kedgley (Bioengineering)
- Professor Kevin Murphy (Medicine)
- Dr Sally Leever (Crick Doctoral Centre)
- Dr Salvador Navarro-Martinez (Mechanical Engineering)
- Dr Enrique Martinez-Perez (Institute of Clinical Sciences and MRC LMS)
- Professor Carrol Propper (Business)
- Professor Michael Seckl (Surgery and Cancer)
- Professor Ahmer Wadee (Civil and Environmental Engineering)
- Dr James Wilton-Ely (Chemistry)

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

2.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 May 2019 [**PRQC.2019.01a**].

2.2 The Committee noted the action list and received updates on the following actions due for completion by October 2019 [**PRQC.2019.01b**]:

(i) PhD Thesis Submission – Procedures (October 2018, 18.1.2)

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) agreed that:

- The College should no longer require hard copies of theses and request electronic versions only
- Both internal and external examiners should be offered hard copies of theses, the costs of which will be covered by the College

The principles above will need to be implemented and new theses submission procedures drawn up before implementation.

The technology to enable electronic submission of theses will not be in place by 1 August 2019. To compensate for the delay, the College will bear the print costs of all thesis submissions (in addition to the price of postage).

2.3 No further updates were required on the remaining ongoing actions.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Student Casework – Research

3.1.1 A Student Casework Research report was tabled in response to the Committee's recommendation that an annual report on student complaints and appeals should be considered.

3.1.2 The Committee noted the following:

- The limited data available for analysis makes proposing recommendations for changes to processes and procedures difficult
- In the light of the low numbers, and anecdotal evidence, it is clear that there is a need to investigate and develop support for students and staff in the research areas, to enable early resolution of concerns and to develop a supportive culture
- It is recommended that data is collated over a longer time period, which will only gradually become available as record keeping improves
- The Casework team have recognised the issue with stage 1 data in the complaints process. It has been agreed by QAEC to address this over the coming year

4. PRQC terms of reference, constitution and membership [PRQC.2019.02]

4.1 The Committee recommended to QAEC, the following revisions for 2019-20:

- One representative from the Centre for Academic English

4.2 The Committee approved the following revisions for 2019-20:

New members added:

- Professor John Seddon (Faculty Senior Tutor (PGR) representative)
- Robin Mowat (Centre for Academic English representative)
- Dr Antonio Filieri (Computing)
- Dr James Wilton-Ely (Chemistry)
- Dr Ryan Barnett (Mathematics)
- Milia Hasbani (Student Representative)

4.3 The Committee recommended that the Faculty Senior Tutor (PGR) representative would be nominated across Faculties each academic year, as follows: 2019-20 Faculty of Natural Sciences; 2020-21 Faculty of Medicine; 2021-22 Faculty of

Engineering; Business School. All Faculty Senior Tutors (PGR) will be included in the PRQC circulation.

- 4.4 The Committee agreed that Professor Kevin Murphy would represent the new Departments in the Faculty of Medicine at PRQC and that this arrangement would be reviewed at the end of the academic year.

5. Persistent Identifiers for Research Data [PRQC.2019.03]

- 5.1 During the last five years, funding councils have increasingly mandated that research data is formally managed, with the final desired outcome being what is referred to as a persistent identifier (PID), an example of which is a DOI to be quoted in published articles describing the research. The Committee considered a case in the form of four recommendations for moving to the next stage by incorporating such identifiers into the College Spiral repository records for PhD theses.

- 5.2 PRQC recommended to QAEC:

- Incorporating a recommendation into PhD thesis guidelines encouraging researchers to adopt best practice in data curation, taking the form of creating a registered master DOI data record for their PhD thesis in a suitable repository at the outset of a PhD research cycle. The core metadata associated with this DOI would initially include the PhD student's name+ORCID, department and (working) title of the future thesis.
- Incorporating a recommendation for the deposition of research datasets and collections, where appropriate, as a regular activity during the PhD research, with the registered DOIs obtained from each deposition to be suitably associated in a hierarchical manner with the master DOI data record.
- Incorporating a recommendation citing the DOIs of appropriate datasets and collections in the thesis bibliography where appropriate and to include the master DOI data record.
- Incorporating a recommendation assigning a DOI to the final Spiral thesis publication record, with associated metadata to include the DOI of the thesis master data record and to cite both of these DOIs in journal publications and other resulting research outputs as appropriate.

6. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) [PRQC.2019.04]

6.1 PRES 2019 Results (Scott Tucker)

- 6.1.1 The group received the PRES results and noted that there has been a 9% reduction in the participation rate at the College. However, the 50% response rate remains well above the national participation rate of 42%.

6.1.2 That Departmental PRES action plans will be considered by an appropriate committee in each Faculty (usually FEC), with a Faculty summary presented to the PRQC on 13 May 2020 and QAEC on 3 June 2020.

6.2 Imperial College Union PRES 2019 Response [PRQC.2019.05]

6.2.1 The Committee considered the report, produced by the ICU Deputy President (Education) and GSU President, which set out a number of recommendations for both the College and the ICU.

6.2.2 The Committee praised the report and welcomed the map of interconnected issues. The map illustrated that supervision is linked to almost all other areas and, therefore, addressing issues in this area should lead to improvements in others.

6.2.3 Following discussion, the Committee agreed that the following areas should be prioritised in a College response to the reconditions:

- Quality of supervision
- Wellbeing of research students
- Research culture and the research environment

6.2.4 The Committee recommended to QAEC that a working group of PRQC is established to address the recommendations set out in the Imperial College Union PRES 2019 Response and the Graduate School PRES 2019 Response.

Action: Secretary and Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School)

6.2.5 The report will be submitted to QAEC for consideration.

6.3 Graduate School PRES 2019 Response (Laura Lane) [PRQC.2019.06]

6.3.1 The Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School) presented a PRES response. PRES survey responses were examined for explicit mentions of the Graduate School, which were extracted and reviewed. Comments were then grouped into theme areas as follows:

- Workshop Topic concerns
- Integration of training with research area
- Mental Health and Disability concerns
- Supervisor concerns
- Networking & Connecting with other students

6.3.2 It was encouraging to read 14 positive comments finding the Graduate School provision helpful and supportive. There were 2 serious comments concerning Mental Health and Disability Awareness. The Head of Postgraduate Professional Development is organising training for the tutoring team in partnership with the College's Disability Advisory Service. Further, the Graduate School will make available all its course material ahead of workshops to improve support for

students with disabilities.

6.3.3 The Committee welcomed the analysis and felt that the recommendations should feed into the work undertaken by the working group as recommended in 6.2

6.3.4 The report will be submitted to QAEC for consideration.

7. Best Practice in Supervision

7.1 Departmental Focus on Best Practice in Supervision Workshops, Annual Report 2018/19 [PRQC.2019.07]

7.1.1 The Head of Strategy and Operations (Graduate School) presented the Annual Report 2018/19. It was noted that PRQC has established a Framework for the Support and Development of Supervisors which stipulates that the College will continue to provide mandatory training for all new supervisors. Supervisors with limited prior experience of supervising PhD students will continue to be required to undertake the mandatory full day face-to-face workshop "Introduction to PhD Supervision at Imperial College" delivered by the Educational Development Unit (EDU). Experienced supervisors who join the College are able to take the online version of the course.

It was queried how the College monitors engagement with the workshop. This is undertaken through periodic and precepts review. The Student representatives felt that the requirement to complete the workshop every 6 years seemed very light touch. It was confirmed that this was a College decision taken to account for the workload of academic staff.

8. College Precepts 2019-20 [PRQC.2019.08]

8.1 It was noted that College precepts will remain the same as 2018-19. However, it was agreed that there is no longer a need to separate 'College precepts' and 'College collaborative precepts' as these are essentially the same.

9. Pastoral Care [PRQC.2019.09]

9.1 The Committee received a Summary of Departmental Pastoral Care Structures. It was noted that the Faculty of Natural Sciences is conducting an internal review of pastoral care structures, the outcome of which will be reported to PRQC in order for other departments to consider their own arrangements in relation to any findings.

10. PGR Periodic Review

10.1 Item to follow in line with any changes to College data reporting mechanisms (e.g. Power BI).

11. PRQC subcommittees

11.1 To note: Minutes of the Postgraduate Professional Development Committee held on 27 March 2019 [**PRQC.2019.11**]

11.2 To note: Minutes of the CDT DTP Governance Committee held on 6 February 2019 [**PRQC.2019.12**]

12. Date of next meeting

12.1 Wednesday 12 February 2019, 14:00 – 16:30, G01, Royal School of Mines, South Kensington campus

13. Special cases reports

13.1 The Committee noted the following reports on special cases considered by the special cases panel for doctoral programmes:

(i) PGR Special Cases (Examiner Approvals) - October 2019 [**PRQC.2019.13**]

(ii) PGR Special Cases (Late Cases Thesis) - October 2019 [**PRQC.2019.14**]