GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday, 20 October 2022
10:00 am – 1:00 pm

A204, Glasnevin Campus

Present: Ms Isabelle Caulfield, Prof. Edel Conway, Dr Maura Coulter, Ms Karen Keating, Dr Pascal Landais, Prof. Christine Loscher, Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary), Dr Tim McCormac, Ms Siúin McManus, Mr Muhammed Mubashar Saeed, Prof. Sharon O'Brien, Dr Niamh O'Sullivan, Prof. Joseph Stokes (Chairperson) and Dr Lisa Van der Werff

Apologies: Ms Lisa Buckley and Dr Sally Smith

In Attendance: Ms Niamh McMahon

The Chair welcomed the new members of the Graduate Research Studies Board: Mr Muhammad Mubashar Saeed, the Postgraduate Student Officer; Dr Niamh O'Sullivan, Representative of the Associate Deans for Teaching and Learning/Education; and Dr Lisa Van der Werff, Director of Doctoral Studies, DCU Business School.

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1.   **Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

2.   **Minutes of the meeting of 18 August 2022**

The minutes of the meeting of 18 August 2022 were **approved**.

3.   Matters arising from the minutes

Matters arising from the meeting of 18 August 2022 were **noted** as follows:

	Item no. from 18 August 2022	*Item*	*Details of decision/actions*	*Status*
3.1	3.4 (Original Ref. Item 5, 26 May 2022)	Change to PGR4 Form / Process - Appointment of internal and external examiners	The PGR4 Form will be updated to prompt the discussion between the candidate and his/her supervisor(s) regarding his/her preferred format of examination. A guidance document will also be developed, which will outline the standard practices for how *viva voce* examinations are conducted and provide candidates with the necessary information on the three permitted formats.	**Ongoing** Chair and Registry to update PGR4 Form during the 2022/23 academic year in preparation for its implementation in September 2023, while the guidance document will be developed and provided to candidates during the 2022/23 academic year.
3.2	7.20	PGR4, School of Informatics and Creative Arts, DkIT	Decision Deferred. It was noted that there is an outstanding reciprocal arrangement query regarding the nomination of an External Examiner from the Department of Music, Maynooth University.	**Ongoing** Awaiting clarification from the Head of School regarding the reciprocal arrangement query.

3.3	3.3 (Original Ref. Item 7.7, 31 March 2022)	PGR3, School of Electronic Engineering	Decision deferred. It was noted that Section C is not complete. May be considered by Chairs Action.	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 15 August 2022
3.4	7.16	PGR4, School of Health and Human Performance	Decision Deferred. It was noted that an additional External Examiner is required as the candidate has only concluded his period of employment with DCU in the last six months.	**Complete** Included on Agenda for meeting of GRSB on 20 October 2022, Item 13.11
3.5	7.29	PGR4, School of Policy and Practice	Decision Deferred. It was noted that (i) further detail is required regarding the status of the candidate's research to justify early submission, (ii) confirmation of the IPM's support for the early submission and (iii) clarification is required regarding the affiliation of the External Examiner as an Emeritus Professor.	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 4 October 2022
3.6	3.1 (Original Ref. Item 12.1, 21 October 2021)	PGR15, School of Computing	Not approved. It was noted that the form is incomplete and that the required supporting documentation has not been submitted.	**Complete** **Not Approved**. No response from Principal Supervisor. Head of School informed by the Chair on 18 August 2022 that this item will be removed from matters arising.
3.7	6.11	PGR3, School of Communications	Decision Deferred. It was noted that further detail is required in Section B(i).	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 30 August 2022

3.8	6.16	PGR3, School of English	Decision Deferred. It was noted that further detail is required in Section B(i).	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 22 September 2022
3.9	7.29	PGR4, School of Policy and Practice	Decision Deferred. It was noted that (i) further detail is required regarding the status of the candidate's research to justify early submission, (ii) confirmation of the IPM's support for the early submission and (iii) clarification is required regarding the affiliation of the External Examiner as an Emeritus Professor.	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 4 October 2022
3.10	9.9	PGR14, School of Chemical Sciences	Decision Deferred. It was noted that the supervisor is required to complete Section C.	**Complete** **Approved** by Chairs Action on 30 August 2022
3.11	10.1	PGR15, School of Health and Human Performance	Decision deferred. As the request falls under both *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* and *Marks and Standards*, the request requires the support of both GRSB and USC, respectively.	**Complete** **Not Approved**

The Chair provided an update on Item 3.11, informing members that the request from the School of Health and Human Performance for a DCU student to transfer from Year 1 of the MSc in Elite Sport Performance to Year 2 of the Professional Doctorate in Elite Performance was **not approved**.

This request was considered by the University Standards Committee (USC) at its meeting on 25 August 2022. There was consensus between GRSB and USC that this request should not be approved for the following reasons:

- It would set a substantial precedent for other programmes in the University.
- It would constitute a significant divergence from sectoral practices and regulations.
- There is a clear difference between the admission criteria for a Level 9 taught programme and a Level 10 research programme.

- The academic standards of the Professional Doctorate award would potentially be undermined by allowing advanced entry to a research programme based on credits earned and learning outcomes achieved as part of a taught programme.

It was **noted** that *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* will be reviewed and revised as necessary to clarify that advanced entry to a research programme based on credits earned and learning outcomes achieved as part of a taught programme is not permitted.

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4.   Graduate researcher development

There were no items for discussion.

5.   Guidance in Respect of Research Student Appeals

Noted subject to the following changes being made (~~deletions~~, <u>additions</u>):

- **(1. Context)** The *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* stipulate that a research student has the right to appeal a negative recommendation ~~made by the supervisory panel in respect of his/her continued registration~~ <u>regarding progression</u> (Section 8.1.4); a decision not to ~~transfer him/her to or to confirm him/her on the PhD register~~ <u>confirm or transfer a student to the PhD register</u> (Section 8.2.5); or the outcome of an ~~award~~ examination (Section 11.6.3).
- **(3.2 Notification of Decision)** Date of electronic submission of PGR2 Form (Annual Progress Report) to Registry. The student can view the <u>completed</u> PGR2 Form via DCU Loop.
- **(3.2 Notification of Decision)** Date of GRSB meeting at which the decision not to confirm/transfer student on/to the PhD register is approved. The student is informed of this decision by Registry ~~immediately~~ <u>as soon as possible</u> after the meeting of GRSB.

6.   Report on activities of Graduate Research Studies Board (2021/22)

The Chair commended the Board on the quantity of work completed during the 2021/22 academic year and called attention to the number of PGR14 Forms considered by the Board during this period, which increased threefold since 2017/18. The Chair explained that this increase is largely due to the period of Covid-19 restrictions, which directly impacted candidates' ability to complete their programme within the maximum registration period.

The Chair called particular attention to when the majority of PGR14 Forms were considered by the Board during the 2021/22 academic year. The Chair reiterated the importance that these forms are submitted to Registry according to the deadline for consideration at the meeting of GRSB at the end of Semester 2, normally May or June, as late submission can have implications regarding registration and the issuing of stipends to candidates. Furthermore, the late submission of PGR14 Forms often results in multiple extensions being granted according to the individual decision of the Chair rather than consensus decision of the Board.

Noted subject to the following change being made:

● **(Graduate Training Elements (GTE) Modules)** Differentiate between the two module codes for Postgraduate Tutoring Principles and Practice, GS602/A.

7.   Graduate Studies Office (GSO) Activities Report (2021/22)

The Chair thanked colleagues in the Graduate Studies Office (GSO) for their work in supporting the development and delivery of postgraduate research studies during the 2021/22 academic year.

The Chair called particular attention to the issue of non-attendance at non-accredited training courses, which has significant cost implications for the GSO and prevents interested students from participating in their desired courses. The Chair reiterated the importance of students attending training courses they have registered for, as in-person activities have capacity limits unlike online activities and some activities require a minimum number of participants. The Chair informed members that the GSO will monitor this issue during the 2022/23 academic year and requested members of GRSB to recommend solutions to this issue, which has been ongoing since the period of Covid-19 restrictions. **Noted**

8.   DkIT Annual Report to Graduate Research Studies Board

Tim McCormac, Head of Research and Graduate Studies, DkIT, introduced the report. He explained that admissions to postgraduate research programmes are concentrated in the School of Health and Science and the School of Informatics and Creative Arts, with the majority of students aligned with specific research centres and supervisory teams.

Decision Deferred - DkIT is asked to make the following changes to the report, which should be resubmitted to GRSB for noting at its next meeting:

- Clarify the distinction between the completion rate and time-to-completion, i.e. number of students who complete within 4 (FT) / 6 (PT) years and number of years taken to complete research degree
- Separate withdrawals and completions (pp. 3) as these are two distinct outcomes
- Remove transfers from withdrawal figure (pp. 8-12)
- Indicate the reason for each withdrawal where available (pp. 14)
- Include information on appeals where available (pp. 20)
- Change the title of "Supervisor Training Activities" (pp. 21) or add the title for "Student Related Training", and include chairperson training and academic integrity training in the list of training activities.

9.   DCU-DkIT Graduate School

9.1   Peer Review Group Report

The Chair thanked Dr Tim McCormac, Head of Research and Graduate Studies, DkIT; Dr Brendan Ryder, Head of Academic Planning and Quality Assurance, DkIT; and their DkIT colleagues, for the work completed as part of the review process and called particular attention to the commendations of the peer review group.

Noted – The Chair informed members that the review of DCU-DkIT collaborative partnership was conducted in February 2022 as required by the University's CINNTE Review.

9.2   DkIT Response and Enhancement Plan

The Chair informed members that GRSB will monitor the implementation of the agreed actions outlined in DkIT Response and Enhancement Plan through the existing DkIT annual report mechanism.

Dr Tim McCormac thanked the Chair and Aisling McKenna, Director of Quality Promotion and Institutional Research, DCU, for their assistance in preparing for the review process, which was a positive experience for all DkIT stakeholders involved.

Noted – As the review of the DCU-DkIT collaborative partnership was undertaken as part of the University's CINNTE Review, the Response and Enhancement Plan will be submitted to the DCU Quality Promotion Committee, University Executive and Governing Authority for noting as required.

10.   Research Students Involved in Teaching Support

The Chair informed members that this is a follow-up to "Principles for provision of teaching experience to research students" (GRSB2022/A5/7) and thanked them for the feedback provided on draft versions of the documentation presented below.

10.1   Principles in Relation to Research Students Involved in Teaching Support

Noted – The Chair informed members that these high level principles were approved by the Irish Universities Association (IUA) on October 10th 2022.

10.2   Good Practice in Relation to Research Students Involved in Teaching Support

The Chair explained that the decision to outline good practices was taken to allow for the required degree of flexibility across the faculties. He also clarified that, while all circumstances relating to research students involved in teaching support cannot be accommodated or pre-empted, diverging completely from the good practices outlined in this document should be avoided.

The Chair informed members that faculties have autonomy to determine differences in payment rates for research students involved in teaching support. However, faculties have to clarify the payment rates for the different types of teaching activities and ensure these are consistently applied to all research students.

Noted subject to a final review of the document by GRSB members coordinated by the Chair.

11.   Procedures for conducting a *viva voce* online or using videoconferencing facilities

The Chair informed members that this is a follow-up to "Guidance on the use of videoconferencing for viva voce examinations" (GRSB2022/A5/5) and that the procedures for conducting a *viva voce* online or using videoconferencing facilities now reflect input from Information Services Systems (ISS). The procedures make a distinction between conducting the examination online and using videoconferencing facilities and clarify ISS' ability and capacity to support the latter.

The Chair informed members that current practices will continue to apply for Semester 1 of the 2022/23 academic year but that requests to conduct the *viva voce* fully online will require approval by GRSB from Semester 2 onward.

Decision Deferred – It was **noted** that the procedures give the impression that conducting the *viva voce* online or using videoconferencing facilities is not permitted except in certain limited circumstances. If a hybrid model is permitted, which would involve the External Examiner attending remotely, this should be more explicitly reflected in the procedures. An additional review of the procedures will take place, coordinated by the Chair and the updated procedures will be considered at the next meeting of GRSB in advance of implementation in Semester 2 of the 2022/23 academic year.

SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES

12.   Applications for transfer to the PhD Register or confirmation on the PhD Register (PGR3)

12.1   GRSB2022/A7/12.1, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved

12.2   GRSB2022/A7/12.2, School of Biotechnology
Approved

12.3   GRSB2022/A7/12.3, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved

12.4   GRSB2022/A7/12.4, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved subject to verification by Registry of the anticipated thesis format.

12.5   GRSB2022/A7/12.5, School of Communications
         Approved

12.6   GRSB2022/A7/12.6, School of Computing
         Approved

12.7   GRSB2022/A7/12.7, School of Computing
         Approved

12.8   GRSB2022/A7/12.8, School of Health and Science, DkIT
         Approved

12.9   GRSB2022/A7/12.9, School of Informatics and Creative Arts, DkIT
         Approved

12.10   GRSB2022/A7/12.10, School of Health and Human Performance
         Approved

12.11   GRSB2022/A7/12.11, School of Health and Human Performance
         Approved

12.12   GRSB2022/A7/12.12, School of Law and Government
         Approved - It was **noted** that the Board expressed concern about the length of time taken
         for the candidate to transfer to the PhD Register.

12.13   GRSB2022/A7/12.13, School of Law and Government
         Approved

12.14   GRSB2022/A7/12.14, School of Law and Government
         Approved

12.15   GRSB2022/A7/12.15, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health
         Decision Deferred – It was **noted** that (a) section B(ii) of the report should be amended to
         reflect that it is a joint report from both the internal examiner and principal supervisor and
         (b) clarification is required regarding the recommendation in Section D. The updated PGR3
         may be considered by Chairs Action.

12.16   GRSB2022/A7/12.16, School of Physical Sciences
         Approved

12.17   GRSB2022/A7/12.17, School of Physical Sciences
        Approved

12.18   GRSB2022/A7/12.18, School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
        Decision Deferred – It was **noted** that all references to the Independent Panel Member
        should be removed from Section B(ii) and the candidate should sign the form once these
        changes have been made. The updated PGR3 must be considered by GRSB.

12.19   GRSB2022/A7/12.19, School of Electronic Engineering
        Approved

13.   Appointment of internal and external examiners (PGR4)

13.1   GRSB2022/A7/13.1, PhD, DCU Business School
        Approved

13.2   GRSB2022/A7/13.2, PhD, School of Biotechnology
        Approved

13.3   GRSB2022/A7/13.3, PhD, School of Biotechnology
        Decision Deferred - It was **noted** that there is a potential conflict of interest between one of
        the Supervisors and the External Examiner. An alternative External Examiner nomination is
        required or an explanation for how a conflict of interest will be avoided. The updated PGR4
        must be considered by GRSB.

13.4   GRSB2022/A7/13.4, PhD, School of Communications
        Decision Deferred - It was **noted** that the External Examiner does not meet the
        requirements as per Academic Regulation 10.2.9, "experience...in the examination process
        of [research] students at the level of the award being sought". An alternative nomination is
        required and the updated PGR4 must be considered by GRSB.

13.5   GRSB2022/A7/13.5, PhD, School of Communications
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 8 September 2022.

13.6   GRSB2022/A7/13.6, PhD, School of Computing
        Approved

13.7   GRSB2022/A7/13.7, PhD, School of Computing
        Approved

13.8   GRSB2022/A7/13.8, PhD, School of Computing
        Decision Deferred - It was **noted** that there is a reciprocal arrangement issue with the
        nominated External Examiner. An alternative nomination is required as the rationale
        provided by the Head of School is insufficient. The updated PGR4 must be considered by
        GRSB.

13.9   GRSB2022/A7/13.9, PhD, School of Engineering, DkIT
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 21 September 2022.

13.10   GRSB2022/A7/13.10, PhD, School of English
        Approved

13.11   GRSB2022/A7/13.11, PhD, School of Health and Human Performance
        Approved

13.12   GRSB2022/A7/13.12, EdD, School of Policy and Practice
        Approved

13.13   GRSB2022/A7/13.13, EdD, School of Human Development
        Approved

13.14   GRSB2022/A7/13.14, EdD, School of Policy and Practice
        Approved

13.15   GRSB2022/A7/13.15, EdD, School of Policy and Practice
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 18 August 2022.

13.16   GRSB2022/A7/13.16, MA, School of Informatics and Creative Arts, DkIT
        Approved

13.17   GRSB2022/A7/13.17, MA, School of Informatics and Creative Arts, DkIT
        Approved

13.18   GRSB2022/A7/13.18, MSc, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
        Decision Deferred - It was **noted** that the title of the award sought should be "MEng". It was
        further **noted** that the External Examiner does not meet the requirements as per Academic
        Regulation 10.2.9, "experience in supervising research students to completion at the level of
        the award being sought". An alternative nomination is required and the updated PGR4 must
        be considered by GRSB.

13.19   GRSB2022/A7/13.19, MA, School of Policy and Practice
        Approved

13.20   GRSB2022/A7/13.20, PhD, School of Policy and Practice
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 6 September 2022.

13.21   GRSB2022/A7/13.21, MSc, School of Psychology
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 6 September 2022.

13.22   GRSB2022/A7/13.22, MA, School Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education
        Approved

14.   Notice of Intention to Reside/Carry out Research Abroad (PGR13)

14.1   GRSB2022/A7/14.1, DCU Business School
        Decision Deferred – It was **noted** that this is the second PGR13 submitted by the candidate
        (GRSB2022/A3/9.2). Clarification is required regarding what GRSB is being notified of,
        intention to reside abroad for 2022/23 academic year or intention to reside abroad for
        duration of studies. If the latter, arrangements for a supervisor at a local institution need to
        be specified and a schedule for attending DCU agreed with the candidate. Clarification is also
        required regarding, where appropriate, the fees paid by and the stipend paid to the
        candidate. The schedule of communication also needs to be revised for either the 2022/23
        academic year or for the duration of studies as appropriate. The supervisors are advised to
        liaise with Professor Edel Conway regarding this request to reside abroad. The updated
        PGR13 must be considered by GRSB.

14.2   GRSB2022/A7/14.2, School of Biotechnology
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 30 August 2022.

15.   Request for Extension to Maximum Registration Period OR Re-admission to the Research Programme (PGR14)

15.1   GRSB2022/A7/15.1, PhD, School of Arts Education and Movement
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 30 August 2022.

15.2   GRSB2022/A7/15.2, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 30 August 2022.

15.3   GRSB2022/A7/15.3, EdD, School of Inclusive and Special Education
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 4 October 2022.

15.4   GRSB2022/A7/15.4, PhD, School of Policy and Practice
        Noted – Approved by Chairs Action on 6 September 2022.

15.5   GRSB2022/A8/15.5, Research Students in Examination & Max Registration to Register for 2022/23
        Noted – Extensions to the maximum registration period for 37 students in examination to allow for registration in the 2022/23 academic year were approved by Chairs Action on 5 September 2022.

16.   Any other business

Prof Sharon O'Brien raised a concern about incoming international PhD students who are required to pay two months' rent and a deposit to secure their accommodation for January 2023. This issue has been raised with the relevant Heads of School and Faculty Research Committees but Prof O'Brien enquired if GRSB can liaise with DCU Student Accommodation to reduce this upfront payment as students will not be in receipt of their stipend at this time. The Chair advised that this issue cannot be resolved by GRSB but should instead be raised via DCU Students Union and the Postgraduate Officer as it is a university-wide issue that requires a collective solution.

The Chair informed members that the GRSB Appeals Standing Committee will meet on 1 November 2022 to consider research appeals.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Date of next meeting

Thursday, 1 December 2022

10.00 a.m.

Room: GLA A204