

## GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

### MINUTES

Thursday, 16 February 2023

10:00 am – 1:00 pm

A204, Glasnevin Campus

**Present:** Ms Lisa Buckley, Ms Isabelle Caulfield, Dr Maura Coulter, Prof. Timo Gans, Ms Karen Keating, Dr Pascal Landais, Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary), Mr Muhammed Mubashar Saeed, Prof. Sharon O'Brien, Dr Niamh O'Sullivan, Dr Sally Smith, Prof. Joseph Stokes (Chairperson) and Dr Lisa Van der Werff

**Apologies:** Prof. Edel Conway, Dr Tim McCormac and Ms Siúin McManus.

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The Chair noted that Ms Siuín McManus' term as the Representative of the Faculty Administration Peer Group has concluded. He expressed his thanks to Ms McManus for her contribution to Graduate Research Studies Board (GRSB) throughout her term. The Chair also welcomed Prof. Timo Gans to GRSB as the Associate Dean for Research for the Faculty of Science and Health.

### SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

**1. Adoption of the agenda**

The agenda was adopted.

**2. Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2023**

The minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2023 were **approved**.

**3. Matters arising from the minutes**

Matters arising from the meeting of 19 January 2023 were **noted** as follows:

	<b>Item no. from 19 January 2023</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Details of decision/actions</b>	<b>Status</b>
3.1	3.3 (Original Ref. Item 13.3, 20 October 2022)	PGR4, 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.	Ongoing  Awaiting nomination of an alternative External Examiner and submission of revised PGR4 Form.
3.2	3.1 (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 <i>viva voce</i> examinations are conducted and provide candidates with the necessary information on the three permitted formats.	Complete  Included on Agenda for meeting of GRSB on 16 February 2023, Item 6
3.3	3.2 (Original Ref. Item 12.15, 20 October 2022)	PGR3, 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.	Complete  Approved by Chairs Action on 10 February 2023
3.4	3.4 (Original Ref. Item 11.1, 1 December 2022)	PGR13, DCU Business School	Decision Deferred. It was noted that the communication schedule needs to be revised to ensure communication between the candidate and supervisors occurs on a minimum monthly basis and that a face-to-face meeting between the candidate and	Complete  Approved by Chairs Action on 23 January 2023

			<p>supervisors is scheduled during Y2. Clarification on the following queries is also required: (i) the frequency of meetings with the local supervisor within the schedule as it is currently every 2 months, (ii) how training that meets the candidate's needs will be provided given that on-line delivery is not fully available, and (iii) what supports (training or otherwise) will be provided to the candidate by the host institution. Confirmation is also required if the student will engage with the external University in a research capacity other than supervision, how the on-site insurance will be accommodated and that the candidate will have no visa issues travelling to Ireland to meet the supervisors in-person. Electronic signatures provided on the PGR13 Form should be in acceptable format. The revised PGR13 may be considered by Chairs Action.</p>	
3.5	8.2	PGR4, School of Biotechnology	<p>Decision Deferred. It was noted that an updated PGR4 Form was submitted to Registry with a change to the Independent Chairperson. It was further noted that there is an outstanding reciprocal arrangement query regarding the nominated External Examiner. The rationale for this nomination should be provided by the Head of School or a revised PGR4 Form submitted with an alternative External Examiner nomination. This matter will be considered under Chairs Action.</p>	<p>Complete Approved by Chairs Action on 10 February 2023</p>

Ms. Isabelle Caulfield informed members that Item 3.5 is ongoing rather than complete. A potential conflict of interest between the nominated External Examiner and the External Supervisor was identified. The Head of School has been asked to provide assurance as to how a conflict of interest will be mitigated or, if not possible, to nominate an alternative External Examiner.

## **SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES**

### **4. Graduate researcher development**

There were no items for discussion.

### **5. AI-generated Assessment Submissions**

The Chair informed members that this paper was originally presented to Education Committee by the Dean of Teaching and Learning, Dr Monica Ward, on 25 January 2023.

The Chair called particular attention to the use of oral examinations as a means of assuring the academic integrity of students' work and that there is a potential risk regarding Master's Degree by Research candidates, who are not required to complete an oral examination. As per Section 1.2 of *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*, "a *viva voce* examination is not mandatory [for Master's Degree by Research candidates] but can be requested by the examiners" (pp. 4).

The Chair explained that there is not sufficient information at this stage regarding the use of artificial intelligence by students for assessment submissions to make oral examinations mandatory for all postgraduate research students. It was noted that the academic regulations can be amended to make oral examination the default form of examination if and when the need arises.

**Noted**

## 6. Update to PGR4 Form (Conducting a viva voce online or using videoconferencing facilities)

### 6.1 Follow-up on Matter Arising (GRSB2022/A5/5)

The Chair informed members that additional information needs to be included in *Procedures for Conducting a viva voce Online or Using Videoconferencing Facilities* in order to provide the necessary reassurance to GRSB that candidates and their supervisors are fully informed when discussing the different formats of *viva voce* examination.

The Chair proposed that *Procedures for Conducting a viva voce Online or Using Videoconferencing Facilities* is updated to include information on the three different formats of *viva voce* examinations, the circumstances within which each is permitted and the specific responsibilities of the principal supervisor, the candidate and the different members of the examination panel relative to each format.

**Approved** – It was noted that this information will either be embedded within the document or included as an appendix.

The Chair informed members that, as per *Procedures for Conducting a viva voce Online or Using Videoconferencing Facilities*, requests to conduct a *viva voce* examination fully online must be approved by GRSB. The Chair proposed on behalf of Registry that these requests should be submitted to Registry, which will present them to GRSB for consideration as per all other issues relating to examinations for postgraduate research candidates.

**Approved** – It was noted that Registry will create a Drupal Form for the Principal Supervisor(s) to request for the *viva voce* examination to be conducted fully online. This form will be hosted on the Registry website and a hyperlink will be included in *Procedures for Conducting a viva voce Online or Using Videoconferencing Facilities*. It was further noted that urgent requests to conduct a *viva voce* examination fully online can be considered under Chairs Action.

### 6.2 Updated PGR4 Form

The Chair proposed on behalf of Registry that the following declarations are added to the PGR4 Form so that GRSB can be assured that an appropriate conversation has taken place between the candidate and their supervisor(s) regarding the arrangements for *viva voce* examinations and that both are aware of the academic regulations pertaining to these.

- **A. Candidate Details & Declarations:** “I confirm that an initial discussion has taken place with my Principal Supervisor(s) about the arrangements for the viva voce (where applicable), and that I am aware of the academic regulations pertaining to that process (Sections 8.4.3 and 11.3.3) as well as the approved procedures for conducting a hybrid or fully online viva voce examination”.
- **B. Supervisor(s) Acknowledgement and Declarations:** “I/We confirm that an initial discussion has taken place with the Candidate about the arrangements for the viva voce (where applicable), and that I/We are aware of the academic regulations pertaining to that process (Sections 8.4.3 and 11.3.3) as well as the approved procedures for conducting a hybrid or fully online viva voce examination”.
- **D. Head of School Declaration:** “Note: Examiner appointments are made based on an assumption that the nominee plans to come to DCU for the oral examination. I am fully informed of the academic regulations (Sections 8.4.3 and 11.3.3) pertaining to the arrangements for the viva voce as well as the approved procedures for conducting a hybrid or fully online viva voce examination”.

The Chair also proposed that the following footnote is included with each of the above declarations, “Procedures for conducting a viva voce online or using videoconferencing facilities must be followed where exceptional circumstances arise to conduct a hybrid or fully online examination”.

#### **Approved**

The Chair proposed that the PGR6 Form is updated to allow the Independent Chairperson to indicate if the *viva voce* examination took place in-person, in a hybrid format or fully online. The Chair explained that this will allow for data on the frequency of the different types of *viva voce* examination to be captured and reported on by Registry.

#### **Approved**

It was noted that all updated documentation and processes relating to this item, e.g. PGR4 Form, PGR6 Form, Drupal Form, etc., will be submitted to GRSB for noting at its next meeting.

## 7. Updates to Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis 2023/24

### 7.1 Changes to Academic Regulations (2023/24)

The addition of the following new academic regulations was considered by GRSB:

- a) 4.8 - Advance entry is permitted into the University, but subject to specific entry requirements during application and subject to the approval of Graduate Research Studies Board. Advanced entry to a research programme based on credits earned and learning outcomes achieved as part of a taught programme is not permitted. A student who is admitted via advanced entry to a programme is governed by the Academic Regulations in place at the time of their admission, including research integrity requirements as per 2.3.

**Decision Deferred** – It was noted that this academic regulation, as it is currently presented, prevents transfer/advanced entry to Professional Doctorate programmes. This academic regulation will be revised and considered at the next meeting of GRSB.

- b) 6.9 – Where a student does not register or has no current registration, or a student who has withdrawn from the University, may apply to the Graduate Research Studies Board for re-admission to the programme. Re-admissions should normally be granted in keeping with DCU Marks and Standards, and only in exceptional circumstances. A student who is re-admitted to a programme is governed by the Academic Regulations in place at the time of their re-admission.

**Approved** subject to the following changes being made:

- i. Inclusion of the underlined text: “Where a student does not register or has no current registration, or a student who has withdrawn from the University, they may apply to the Graduate Research Studies Board for re-admission to the programme”.
- ii. Retitling Section 6 to “Deferrals, Withdrawals and Readmissions”.

The following amendments to *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* were **approved** for the 2023/24 academic year:

- a) Replace all gendered pronouns with gender neutral pronouns, i.e. change “he/she” to “they” and “his/her” to “their”, and correct consequent grammatical errors.

**b) 2.3** – Addition of the underlined text:

“Students must comply with the University's regulations governing graduate research degrees and are obliged to adhere to the University's Code of Good Research Practice, the University's Export Control Policy, its research ethics guidelines, the DCU Code of Practice on Authorship and the DCU Academic Integrity and Plagiarism Policy. Students registered for graduate research degree programmes must also adhere to the National Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland, adopted by the Irish Universities Association and aligned with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.”

**c) 4.6** – Addition of the underlined text:

“Such arrangements are also subject to the requirements and principles detailed in Section 7.15”.

**d) 7.15** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“Where a research candidate is resident outside Ireland for 6 months or more over the period of registration, and the registration is not subject to a co-supervision or joint award agreement with an external institution, the Graduate Research Studies Board ~~should~~ must be informed as per regulation 4.56. Where a research candidate is resident outside Ireland for the full period of registration, and the registration is not subject to a co-supervision or joint award agreement with an external institution, approval from the Graduate Research Studies Board is required, as per regulation 4.56. The following principles for remote supervision with respect to residing abroad should be adhered to”.

**e) 8.2.4** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“Transfer between professional doctorate and PhD registration is not ~~common and, for the benefit of both awards, approval by the Graduate Research Studies Board is subject to examination of the rationale and criteria underpinning any such recommendation, reference to a framework for transfer (where relevant) as well as satisfactory progress and an appropriate basis for further research as outlined in~~ 8.2.2 permitted”.

f) **8.3** – Addition of the underlined text:

“Through the principal supervisor(s), a student must provide three months’ notice to the Registry of their intention to submit for examination and provide a typed 300-word abstract of their work”.

g) **10.2.9** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“External Examiners ~~should normally~~ are expected to have the following qualities and competencies”.

h) **10.2.9** – Separating the following text into two separate clauses:

“Experience in supervising research students to completion at the level of the award being sought and experience in the examination process of research students at the level of the award being sought”.

i) **10.3.1** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and inclusion of the underlined text:

“~~They must give~~ Notice of intention to submit a thesis must be given to the Registry at least three months’ and provide a typed 300-word abstract of their work in advance of submission as outlined in 8.3”.

j) **10.3.3** – Deletion of the strikethrough text:

“Following completion of the process of consultation referred to above, the supervisor is required to submit the completed form to the Registry ~~within two weeks of initial receipt from the candidate~~”.

k) **10.3.5** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and inclusion of the underlined text:

“Candidates ~~are~~ may be required to submit soft-bound copies of the thesis to the Registry as outlined in 9.2.1 above”.

l) **11.4.5** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and inclusion of the underlined text:

“The candidate, prior to such re-submission for the doctoral award, must have been a registered full-time graduate research student for at least ~~twenty-four~~ thirty-one months (or pro rata for a part-time registered postgraduate student)”.

The following amendments to *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* for the 2023/24 academic year was considered by GRSB:

a) **9.2.1** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“A student may be required to provide the Registry with one soft-bound printed copy of the thesis for each examiner. The binding is deemed to be temporary, pending completion of the examination process. The student must also provide one electronic PDF copy of the thesis for examination. This should be submitted to Registry in a single PDF file entitled ~~with student number and date of submission, which should be saved on a memory key. The PDF should have the wording “pre-examination copy” and the submission date included as a watermark, or as a footer, on each page of the document~~ 'pre-examination copy', along with the student number and date of submission e.g. pre-examination copy 12345678\_010123. The PDF should also include a footer on each page of the document, with the words 'pre-examination copy' and the submission date. A supervisor or students should, in no instance, send the thesis directly to an examiner, either in soft-bound printed or electronic format”.

**Approved** subject to the following changes being made:

i. Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“The student must provide one electronic PDF copy of the thesis for examination. A student may be required to provide the Registry with one soft-bound printed copy of the thesis for each examiner. The binding is deemed to be temporary, pending completion of the examination process. ~~The student must also provide one electronic PDF copy of the thesis for examination.~~ This should be submitted to Registry in a single PDF file entitled 'pre-examination copy', along with the student number and date of submission e.g. pre-examination copy\_12345678\_010123. The PDF should also include a footer on each page of the document, with the words 'pre-examination copy' and the submission date. A supervisor or students should, ~~in no~~ not in any instance, send the thesis directly to an examiner, either in soft-bound printed or electronic format”.

b) **10.2.3** – Deletion of the strikethrough text and addition of the underlined text:

“If the candidate is, or was within the last six months, a member of staff of the University, two External Examiners are appointed to add an additional layer of independent assurance to the process. Where the candidate ~~holds, or~~ within a

period of five years prior to the notification of intention to submit has held, a ~~part-time or short-term~~ contract with the University, the Head of School (or Executive Dean of Faculty where the Head of School is the supervisor) will be requested to determine whether or not ~~he/she~~ the student falls into the category of candidate for whom two External Examiners are required”.

**Decision Deferred** – It was noted that there is confusion regarding what is meant by “member of staff” and “part-time and short-term contract”. This academic regulation will be revised and considered at the next meeting of GRSB.

## 7.2 Proposed Updates to Section 13: Appeals

The Secretary informed members that he is currently reviewing Section 13: Research Appeals of *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis*. DCU’s regulations on research appeals have been benchmarked against those of Irish Universities Association (IUA) members and against *Marks and Standards*. Following this, a number of minor updates have been proposed, which are intended to align DCU’s regulations on research appeals with sectoral norms and to ensure consistency with the most current version of *Marks and Standards*. These proposed updates will be considered at the next meeting of the Graduate Research Studies Board.

## SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES

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

8.1 GRSB2023/A2/8.1, DCU Business School  
**Approved**

8.2 GRSB2023/A2/8.2, DCU Business School  
**Approved**

8.3 GRSB2023/A2/8.3, School of Computing  
**Approved**

8.4 GRSB2023/A2/8.4, School of Computing  
**Approved**

8.5 GRSB2023/A2/8.5, School of Business and Humanities, DkIT  
**Approved**

- 8.6 GRSB2023/A2/8.6, School of Business and Humanities, DkIT  
**Approved**
- 8.7 GRSB2023/A2/8.7, School of Health and Science, DkIT  
**Approved**
- 9. Appointment of internal and external examiners (PGR4)**
- 9.1 GRSB2023/A2/9.1, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences  
**Approved**
- 9.2 GRSB2023/A2/9.2, PhD, School of Communications  
**Approved**
- 9.3 GRSB2023/A2/9.3, PhD, School of Communications  
**Approved**
- 9.4 GRSB2023/A2/9.4, PhD, School of Health and Science, DkIT  
**Approved**
- 9.5 GRSB2023/A2/9.5, PhD, School of Electronic Engineering  
**Approved**
- 9.6 GRSB2023/A2/9.6, PhD, School of Law and Government  
**Approved**
- 9.7 GRSB2023/A2/9.7, PhD, School of Law and Government  
**Approved**
- 9.8 GRSB2023/A2/9.8, PhD, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering  
**Approved** – It was noted that the Independent Chairperson should complete the necessary professional training for chairing a *viva voce* examination.
- 9.9 GRSB2023/A2/9.9, PhD, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies  
**Approved**

9.10 GRSB2023/A2/9.10, PhD, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies  
**Approved** – It was noted that the External Examiner was originally approved by GRSB on 1 December 2022 (GRSB2022/A8/10.13) but that the declared affiliation was incorrect in the original submission. The correct affiliation for the External Examiner has now been provided.

9.11 GRSB2023/A2/9.11, PhD, DCU Business School  
**Noted** – Approved by Chairs Action on 16 January 2023.

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

10.1 GRSB2023/A2/10.1, PhD, School of Health and Human Performance  
**Noted** – Approved by Chairs Action on 300 January 2023.

10.2 GRSB2023/A2/10.2, MPhil, School of Law and Government  
**Approved** - It was noted that this is the fourth extension to the maximum period of registration granted to the candidate. While a final extension to the maximum period of registration was approved by GRSB on 18 August 2022 (GRSB2022/A6/9.20), it was noted that this is a further extension request despite the decision of GRSB. This further extension is approved based on extenuating circumstances but this does not set a precedence for any further extensions to be considered. Therefore, this is the final extension to the maximum period of registration and GRSB will not consider any further requests. It was noted that, as a condition of this final extension being granted, the candidate must submit their thesis for examination to Registry by 19 June 2023.

**11. Any other business**

11.1 The Chair informed members of a non-standard request from DCU Business School to change the External Examiner for a PhD candidate after the examination process commenced. Due to matters discussed, the External Examiner removed themselves from the examination process.

The Chair proposed that the Principal Supervisor is permitted to proceed with nominating an alternative External Examiner and that this nomination can be considered under Chairs Action.

**Approved** – It was noted that the candidate and the supervisor should be informed of the outcome that no examination will proceed without the preliminary reports having to be submitted by the Internal and External Examiners. It was further noted that the candidate

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and supervisor would be made aware of the thesis format query raised via the Independent Chairperson.

- 11.2 Ms. Karen Keating informed members that “Tell It Straight” will take place on 8 March 2023. Fifteen PhD candidates will be presenting and members of DCU Senior Management and representatives from the Irish University Association (IUA) are due to attend. Ms. Keating asked the Associate Deans for Research to promote this event in their respective faculties.
- 11.3 Ms. Karen Keating also informed members that fieldwork for PGR Studentsurvey.ie 2023 will take place from 7<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and asked the Associate Deans for Research to promote the survey in their respective faculties.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of next meeting**

Thursday, 30 March 2023

10.00 a.m.

A204, Glasnevin Campus