

GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday, 17 February 2022
9:30 am – 11:45 am

Zoom Meeting

Present: Ms Isabelle Caulfield, Prof. David Collings, Prof. Edel Conway, Dr Maura Coulter, Ms Karen Keating, Dr Rachel Keegan (Secretary), Dr Pascal Landis, Prof. Christine Loscher, Ms Niamh McMahon, Dr Jennifer McManis, Ms Siúin McManus, Prof. Sharon O'Brien, Ms Christina O'Keeffe, Dr Sally Smith and Prof. Joseph Stokes (Chair)

Apologies: Dr Gillian Lake and Dr Tim McCormac

In Attendance: Dr David McCarthy and Mr Waqar Ahmed

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2022

The minutes of the meeting of 20 January 2022 were approved subject to the correction of a typographical error on page 6.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1 The Chair provided a brief update on item 14.2 (payment of postgraduate research students engaged in supporting teaching). He informed members that the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science has issued a directive to higher education institutions, calling for equity in the payment of research students involved in teaching and other related activities. It was noted that the Faculties will shortly commence planning for teaching for 2022-23 and so the full details of this directive will need to be communicated to relevant colleagues. It was also noted that the directive may have implications for the number of DCU-funded scholarships that can be offered.

The Chair reminded members of the existing DCU guidelines for payment mechanisms for research students involved in teaching and other related activities. It was agreed that these will be circulated to members after the meeting. It was also agreed that the details of any

new directive will be shared with the Associate Deans for Research. It was agreed that this matter will be further discussed at a future meeting of the GRSB.

Other matters arising from the meeting of 20 January 2022 were noted as follows:

	<i>Item no. from 20 January 2022</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Details of decision/actions</i>	<i>Status</i>
3.2	3.1 (original ref. 12.1, 21 October 2022)	PGR15, School of Computing	Not approved. It was noted that the form is incomplete and that the required supporting documentation has not been submitted.	Ongoing
3.3	3.2 (original ref. 5.1, 2 December 2021)	Guidance on the electronic completion and submission of GRSB papers	Guidance to be documented and circulated. To include acceptable signature formats, the submission of fully completed forms and strict adherence to deadlines.	Ongoing. It was noted that this guidance will be circulated to research supervisors in due course.
3.4	3.5 (original ref. 7.6, 2 December 2021)	PGR3, School of Computing	Decision deferred pending submission of a more detailed report in section B(ii).	Completed
3.5	3.4 (original ref. 5.2, 2 December 2021)	Consideration of Section C items	A revised approach to be piloted for three months from February 2022. The process is to be documented and circulated by the Secretary in advance of the February meeting of the GRSB.	Completed
3.6	3.3 (original ref. 5.1, 2 December 2022)	PGR14 (extension request) forms	The PGR14 process is to be reviewed for students who have undergone a <i>viva voce</i> examination but who are required to register for another academic year in order to complete corrections.	On agenda (item 6)
3.7	8	R103 process	Members to consult with Faculty Research Committees on the efficacy of the current approach.	On agenda (item 5)
3.8	7	Guidance on the use of video-conferencing for <i>viva voce</i> examinations	Guidance to be updated to reflect learnings from recent months.	On agenda (item 7)

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4. Graduate researcher development

There were no items for discussion.

5. R103 process – change of supervisory and/or panel member arrangements

The Chair summarised previous GRSB discussions on the R103 process, the change of supervisory and/or panel member arrangements. He reminded members that this process is covered by regulation 7.7.4 which states that supervisor and/or panel member changes should be submitted to the Faculty Research Committees (FRCs) for approval.

The Chair invited members to share any further feedback from the FRCs on the efficacy of the current approach and views on whether this process should be devolved to the School level.

It was **noted** that FRC oversight can prove useful, particularly where there are complex issues in supervisory panel arrangements. However, varying practices were also noted and it was highlighted that some FRCs do not have immediate access to existing supervisory panel details. It was furthermore **noted** that some FRCs sign off on initial supervisory panels, making the process of approving subsequent changes more straightforward.

It was **noted** that the R013 forms submitted to Registry contain a significant number of errors and this can significantly delay the process.

In considering all the feedback, the Chair proposed that regulation 7.7.4 should remain unchanged for the 2022/23 academic year but that the process should be reviewed again in advance of the 2023/24 academic year, with FRC implementing the procedures outlined in regulations (7.7.4). Members **agreed** to this proposal.

6. PGR14 – Extension request forms - post-examination requirements

The Chair reminded members of the current process whereby PGR14 forms are required for students who have completed their *viva voce* examination but who must register for the next academic year in order to complete corrections. He noted that the majority of these forms are submitted just before the start of the semester and so require a decision by Chair's action to facilitate registration.

The Chair informed members that Registry colleagues have proposed a new process that will remove the requirement for a PGR14 form in these circumstances. This new process will see the PGR6 forms being used to identify those students who need to register for an additional year in order to complete corrections and will not require a change to the academic regulations. It was **agreed** that the revised process will be trialled for the 2022-23 academic year and that the details of these extensions will be captured and reported to GRSB for consideration.

It was **noted** that the change in process will be communicated to students and supervisors through Registry's normal communication channels.

7. Procedures for conducting a viva voce using videoconferencing

The Chair asked members for any further feedback on the updated procedures document which was circulated at the previous meeting.

He reminded members that the procedures stipulate that an external examiner may attend a *viva voce* examination remotely, with prior approval of the relevant Head of School. In instances where a student is attending remotely, GRSB approval is required. He noted that the procedures intend to keep the student at the centre of the process and hence, students must indicate their agreement to any hybrid/remote arrangements in advance of the examination taking place.

The Chair noted that it is still unclear when we will fully return to normal face to face operations but that hybrid/remote *viva voce* examinations will become the exception. He informed members that IUA members/institutions have agreed this at a sector level, with hybrid options being retained on an exceptional basis with appropriate approval mechanisms.

It was **noted** that the hybrid model does bring benefit in widening the pool of potential examiners and this has proven useful, particularly in more niche disciplines. However, research evidence on the benefits of holding face to face examinations for candidates was also presented and it was reiterated that the candidate under examination would be the priority of any discussions.

It was **agreed** that this item will be revisited at a future meeting of the GRSB.

It was **noted** that the PGR4 form could be a useful point to check where a hybrid approach is being suggested for a *viva voce* examination. It was **agreed** that this will need further consideration at a subsequent meeting.

8. Updates to Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis 2022-23

A number of proposed amendments to the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis were considered by the GRSB:

- 4.3 - no change to the text, moved up from Section 5
- 7.16 - minor updates to reflect current DCU policy titles
- 9.2.1 - revised text so that softbound printed copies of the thesis will only be required from students if this is requested by an examiner/examiners.
- 9.2.3 - will be updated to replace references to CD-ROM and DVD with 'in digital format/electronic format'
- 11.3.2 - will be updated to clarify that all candidate and examiner correspondence during the examination period should be through the supervisor(s) and the Independent Chairperson

It was **agreed** that finalised wording for the above changes to the regulations would be incorporated into the draft 2022-23 Academic Regulations for consideration at the next meeting of the GRSB.

SECTION C: INDIVIDUAL STUDENT ISSUES

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

9.1 GRSB2022/A2/9.1, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies

Approved

9.2 GRSB2022/A2/9.2, School of Electronic Engineering

Approved

9.3 GRSB2022/A2/9.3, School of Health and Human Performance

Approved

9.4 GRSB2022/A2/9.4, School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education

Approved

9.5 GRSB2022/A2/9.5, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies

Approved

10. Appointment of internal and external examiners (PGR4)

10.1 GRSB2022/A2/10.1, PhD, School of Biotechnology

Approved

10.2 GRSB2022/A2/10.2, PhD, DCU Business School

Approved

10.3 GRSB2022/A2/10.3, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences

Approved

10.4 GRSB2022/A2/10.4, PhD, School of Communications

Approved

10.5 GRSB2022/A2/10.5, PhD, School of Computing

Approved

10.6 GRSB2022/A2/10.6, PhD, School of History and Geography

Decision deferred. It was noted that the proposed examination panel does not include a gender mix.

10.7 GRSB2022/A2/10.7, PhD, School of Language, Literacy and Early Childhood Education
Approved

10.8 GRSB2022/A2/10.8, PhD, School of Law and Government
Approved

10.9 GRSB2022/A2/10.9, PhD, School of Physical Sciences
Approved

10.10 GRSB2022/A2/10.10, PhD, School of Policy and Practice
Approved

10.11 GRSB2022/A2/10.11, PhD, School of Law and Government
Noted. Approved by Chair's action on 26 January 2022.

10.12 GRSB2022/A2/10.12, PhD, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health
Approved

10.13 GRSB2022/A2/10.13, PhD, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved

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

11.1 GRSB2022/A2/11.1, PhD, DCU Business School
Approved for 2021-22.

11.2 GRSB2022/A2/11.2, MA, School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Approved to 1 May 2022. It was noted that the examination process has been completed but that copies of the hardbound thesis have not been submitted.

11.3 GRSB2022/A2/11.3, PhD, School of Nursing, Psychotherapy and Community Health
Noted. Approved by Chair's action for 2021-22 on 14 January 2022.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting

Thursday, 31 March 2022
at 9.30 a.m.
Zoom meeting