

GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES BOARD

MINUTES

Thursday, 20 January 2022

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Present: Ms Isabelle Caulfield, Prof. Edel Conway, Dr Maura Coulter, Ms Karen Keating, Dr Gillian Lake, Dr Pascal Landis, Prof. Christine Loscher, Dr Tim McCormac, Ms Niamh McMahon, Ms Siúin McManus, Prof. Sharon O'Brien, Ms Christina O'Keeffe, Dr Sally Smith and Prof. Joseph Stokes (Chair)

Apologies: Prof. David Collings and Dr Rachel Keegan

In Attendance: Ms Gráinne Curran and Dr David Mc Carthy (Secretary)

SECTION A: MINUTES AND RELATED ISSUES

1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted subject to the inclusion of the following additional items:

- Item 13 Other Student/Applicant Matters
- Item 14 AOB
 - 14.1 Maternal, Paternal and Carers Leave for Postgraduate Research Students
 - 14.2 Payment of Postgraduate Research Students Engaged in Supporting Teaching

2. Minutes of the meeting of 2 December 2021

The minutes of the meeting of 2 December 2021 were approved.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

The following matters arising from the minutes of the GRSB meeting on 2 December 2021 are ongoing:

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Item No. 2 December 2021</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Details of Decisions/Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>
3.1	3.5 (original ref 12.1, 21	PGR15, School of Computing	Not approved. It was noted that the form is incomplete and that the	Ongoing (No Update)

	October 2021)		required supporting documentation has not been submitted.	
3.2	5.1	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 the strict adherence to deadlines.	Ongoing (Guidance expected in February/March)
3.3	5.1	PGR14 (extension request) forms	Review of PGR14 process for students who have undergone a viva voce examination but who are required to register for another academic year in order to complete corrections.	Ongoing (No Update)
3.4	5.2	Consideration of Section C items	Revised approach to be piloted for three months from February. Process to be documented and circulated.	Ongoing (No Update)
3.5	7.6	PGR3, School of Computing	Decision deferred pending submission of a more detailed report in section B(ii).	Ongoing (No Update)

The following matters arising from the minutes of the GRSB meeting on 2 December 2021 are **completed**:

<i>Item No.</i>	<i>Item No. from 2 December 2021</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Details of Decisions/Actions</i>	<i>Status</i>
3.6	3.3 (Original: 8.14, 30 August 2021)	PGR3, School of Health and Human Performance	Decision deferred. It was noted that Section B should be jointly written by the internal examiner and principal supervisor.	Completed
3.7	3.4 (Original: 9.29, 30 August 2021)	PGR4, School of Health and Human Performance	Approved subject to clarification as to why submission is being sought so soon after the transfer examination.	Completed
3.8	7.3	PGR3, DCU Business School	Decision deferred. It was noted that section B(ii) must be completed jointly by the principal supervisor and internal examiner	Completed

3.9	7.5	PGR3, School of Computing	Decision deferred. It was noted that section B(i) has insufficient detail as per instruction a), b) and c). It was noted that the form must be signed by the Head of School or nominee.	Completed
3.10	7.7	PGR3, School of Computing	Decision deferred pending submission of a more detailed report in section B(ii).	Completed
3.11	7.10	PGR3, School of Electronic Engineering	Not approved. It was noted that the report for this new confirmation examination is the same as the previously submitted report. A new report and clarification that a new examination did take place is required.	Completed
3.12	8.4	PGR4, School of English	Approved subject to the nomination of an alternative Chairperson.	Completed
3.13	9.1	PGR13, DCU Business School	Decision deferred. It was noted that the table on page 6 requires further detail on the plans for maintaining regular contact.	Completed
3.14	11.1	PGR15, School of Chemical Sciences	Approved subject to clarification as to whether the student has undergone a successful confirmation procedure prior to registration.	Completed
3.15	11.2	PGR15, School of Chemical Sciences	Approved subject to clarification as to whether the student has undergone a successful confirmation procedure prior to registration.	Completed
3.16	5.1	Guidance on the use of videoconferencing	Guidance to be updated to reflect learnings from recent months.	Completed (Included in Agenda, Item 7)

		for viva voce examinations		
3.17	6	R103 process	Members to consult with Faculty Research Committees on the efficacy of the current approach.	Completed (Included in Agenda, Item 8)

SECTION B: POLICY AND STRATEGY ISSUES

4. Graduate researcher development

There were no items for discussion.

5. Graduate Studies Office (GSO) Annual Report (2020/21)

The Graduate Studies Office Annual Report for the 2020/21 academic year was **noted** by the GRSB. The Chair called attention to the inclusion of a new section at the beginning of the report, which outlines the continuity planning for graduate research studies due to Covid-19 restrictions and the funding provided to the University by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to cover costed extensions for research activities that were considered at risk due to interruptions caused by Covid-19 restrictions.

The Chair contextualised the data provided in Section 5.4.2 relating to the completion rates of the Online Research Integrity Module by faculty.

The report was commended by members for the information provided regarding registrations, graduations and engagement with graduate training events. It was suggested that the report could be disseminated beyond the membership of the GRSB. The Chair will consider sharing the report at a University level, like Heads and Deans, as there is no data therein that is sensitive to the operations of the GSO or limited by the terms of reference of the GRSB.

6. Statement on Proofreading

The “Statement on Proofreading” (2016) published by the University of Cambridge was **noted** by the GRSB. The Chair informed members that the provision of a standardised statement on proofreading was considered at the most recent meeting of the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group, which would provide clarity for supervisors and consistency for students across all member universities.

Prof. Sharon O’Brien queried the inclusion of “professional proofreaders” in the statement as it violates the University’s regulations. The Chair agreed that, as per *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* (2021), “the use of external professional individuals or organisations for proofreading or copy-editing of theses on a paid basis is not permitted” (9.4.3) and that the above statement would have to adhere to the university policies/regulations.

The Chair **agreed** to continue engaging with the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group regarding this matter and will inform the GRSB of any relevant updates when they arise.

7. Procedures for conducting a *viva voce* using videoconferencing

The updated procedures for using videoconferencing (VC) and its technology in *viva voce* examinations was **noted** by the GRSB. The Chair explained that the updates to existing procedures are aligned with practices introduced during the period of Covid-19 restrictions to facilitate the completion of such examinations wholly online and that the main difference between the original procedures and the updated procedures is that the latter incorporate the flexibility afforded by VC platforms and the increased availability and accessibility of VC facilities on campus. The Chair will consult with ISS on the supports required operationalising videoconferencing (VC) and its technology prior and during *viva voce* examinations.

The Chair asked members to discuss the updated procedures with relevant colleagues and to prioritise the quality of the student experience and bear in mind the value of a physical, face-to-face meeting to the examination process. He explained that a hybrid or fully online *viva voce* examination should not become the norm and that any request for a hybrid or fully online *viva voce* examination would remain as exceptional, like that of the 2014 procedures and the guidance adopted during the pandemic.

The Associate Deans for Research (ADRs) **agreed** to discuss the updated procedures with their respective Faculty Research Committees (FRC). The ADRs present noted the benefits of VC technology to the examination process as it made securing the most appropriate External Examiners easier, thereby adding to the value of the *viva voce* experience for students. They asked for these benefits to be considered when any decision is made regarding a return to in-person *viva voce* examinations.

The Chair confirmed that this item will be included in the next GRSB meeting to allow for further discussions by members following consideration of the updated procedures by the Associate Deans and their respective faculties. No decision regarding the implementation of the updated procedures will be made prior to further consideration and approval by the GRSB.

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

The Chair welcomed feedback from ADRs regarding the R103 process in their respective faculties. He acknowledged concerns regarding the sharing of personal information contained in the R103 form and the capacity of FRCs to make informed decisions regarding changes of supervisory and/or panel member arrangements. He clarified that oversight of this process was devolved from the GRSB to Faculty Research Committees and that as per *Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis* (2021), proposed changes “must be submitted to the Faculty Research Committee for approval” (7.7.4). The Chair noted from the responses, varying practices in regards to the Approving of R103 by FRCs and that the committees should have sight of the forms to appropriately provide oversight and thus approve when necessary.

The Chair **agreed** to include this item on the agenda for the next GRSB meeting and **requested** ADRs to have further discussions with their respective FRCs to determine compliance with the regulation governing the R103 process and to consider the efficacy of the process itself. ADRs were asked to consider if a standardised approach across the University is feasible and if it is

practicable for the Head of School to assume responsibility for oversight of this process. If required, requisite changes to the regulations can be suggested 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/A1/9.1, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved
- 9.2 GRSB2022/A1/9.2, School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies
Approved
- 9.3 GRSB2022/A1/9.3, School of Biotechnology
Approved
- 9.4 GRSB2022/A1/9.4, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved
- 9.5 GRSB2022/A1/9.5, School of Communications
Approved
- 9.6 GRSB2022/A1/9.6, School of Computing
Approved
- 9.7 GRSB2022/A1/9.7, School of Computing
Approved
- 9.8 GRSB2022/A1/9.8, School of Electronic Engineering
Approved
- 9.9 GRSB2022/A1/9.9, School of Health and Human Performance
Approved
- 9.10 GRSB2022/A1/9.10, School of History and Geography
Approved
- 9.11 GRSB2022/A1/9.11, School of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering
Approved
- 9.12 GRSB2022/A1/9.12, School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Approved
- 9.13 GRSB2022/A1/9.13, School of Theology, Philosophy and Music
Approved

10. Appointment of Internal and External Examiners (PGR4)

10.1 GRSB2022/A1/10.1, MSc, School of Chemical Sciences
Approved

10.2 GRSB2022/A1/10.2, PhD, School of Communications
Approved

10.3 GRSB2022/A1/10.3, PhD, School of Computing
Approved

10.4 GRSB2022/A1/10.4, PhD, School of Computing
Approved

10.5 GRSB2022/A1/10.5, PhD, School of Computing
Approved

10.6 GRSB2022/A1/10.6, EdD, DCU Institute of Education
Approved

Resubmission due to expiry of PGR4 approved at GRSB2020/A3 (16 April 2020)

10.7 GRSB2022/A1/10.7, PhD, DkIT School of Informatics and Creative Arts
Noted

Approved by chairs action on 13 December 2021.

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

11.1 GRSB2022/A1/11.1, School of Human Development
Noted

Permission to reside abroad is valid until 31 December 2023. An additional notice of intention to reside abroad will have to be submitted to GRSB if the candidate intends to reside abroad beyond 31 December 2023.

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

12.1 GRSB2022/A1/12.1, School of Physical Sciences
Noted

Approved by chairs action on 17 December 2021.

13. Other Student/Applicant Matters

13.1 GRSB2022/A1/13.1, School of Human Development, Memo re Language Requirement Waiver

Approved

Members agreed that the candidate's IELTS score from 2018 should be accepted as sufficient evidence of his English language competency and that the candidate should be admitted to the PhD track programme. Members also agreed that accessing specific additional language supports should not be a condition of the candidate's admission to the programme.

14. Any other business

14.1 Maternal, Paternal and Carers Leave for Postgraduate Research Students

The Chair informed members about the Irish Research Council's (IRC) *Policy on Leave for Parents and Carers*, which came into effect on 1 November 2021. This policy applies to all postgraduate and postdoctoral awardees of the IRC and is designed to ensure that supports provided to postgraduate research students in receipt of a stipend are aligned with the statutory entitlements of salaried researchers. The Chair acknowledged that the implications of this policy extend beyond the remit of the Graduate Studies Office and will require consultation with the Finance Office and DCU Human Resources to determine how students in receipt of IRC funding or a DCU scholarship will be managed when they request to avail of maternity, paternity, adoptive, parent's, parental or carer's leave.

The Chair highlighted that such leave options will have implications for DCU Internal Scholarships/financial budgets.

The Chair confirmed that this topic will be discussed further at the next IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group meeting and agreed to update the GRSB subsequently.

14.2 Payment of Postgraduate Research Students Engaged in Supporting Teaching

The Chair informed members about developments regarding the payment of research students engaged in supporting teaching at their institution, which will require a standardised approach across all IUA members. At present, students in receipt of a school scholarship generally are expected to support teaching as part of their professional development and only receive payment above 144 hours per annum, whereas externally funded students generally receive payment for all teaching activities. Upon discussions between the IUA Deans of Graduate Studies group, with the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and Engagement, all students have to be paid for teaching activities, regardless of them being in receipt of a stipend or being externally funded.

The Chair **agreed** to include this item on the agenda for the next GRSB meeting and **requested** ADRs to discuss this change to current practice with their relevant colleagues. The Chair acknowledged the implications this change to current practice will have in relation to school budgets and the allocation of resources and welcomed further queries from members regarding this matter.

The Chair confirmed that this topic will be discussed further at the next IUA Deans of Graduate Studies Group meeting and agreed to update the GRSB subsequently.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Date of next meeting

Thursday, 17 February 2022
at 9.30 a.m.
Zoom meeting