University of St Andrews

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 2pm
in the Senate Room

Present
Professor L Milne (Proctor) (Convener); Professor K De Troyer; Dr C Allison, Dr J Palmer; Mr O Hajda; Dr R Bavaj, Dr E Buckley Professor M Buehl, Dr M Costa-Gomes, Professor J Davila, Dr I Duncan, Professor N Hanley, Dr D Hanlon, Dr I Jentzsch, Professor T Neukirch, Dr P Reynolds, Dr K Rudy, Dr G Slomp, Dr G Turnbull.

In attendance
Mr D Farrell (for item one), Ms E Freamster, Dr H McKiggan-Fee, Dr L Meischke, Mrs N Milton, Dr A Sandeman.

Apologies
Professor A Dearle, Professor D Woollins; Professor B Gaut, Professor T Meagher, Dr A Reed, Dr M Singer, Ms T Struetzel, Mr J Tantillo.

1. Presentation: Senate Efficiency Review Projects

The Proctor welcomed Daniel Farrell (Assistant Registrar) who gave a presentation on the various Senate Efficiency Review projects associated with the administration of the student lifecycle. An overview was given of each project, what SER has accomplished so far, key contacts and deadlines for delivery. It was noted that the projects were being delivered in a series of waves with the wave one projects (assigned in summer 2014) expected to finish by the end of June 2015 (and ‘go live’ by 1 July 2015). These included: UKVI Compliance Auditing; Enhanced Record Card; Student Funding Administration; Enterprise Service Desk; Replacement of the Current in-house Docman system; and Curriculum Approvals and Collaborative Academic Partnership Database. Details of the showcase sessions (planned for mid-late June) would be circulated to members as would the presentation slides.

Information was also given about the preparation for the wave two projects which would include: new Advising System; Paperless Admissions; Automated workflows for Student Requests; and a replacement for i-Saint.

There was some discussion at the meeting about the technical relationship between the current Paperless Admissions system and MMS. (Update: since the meeting, confirmation has been received that Paperless Admissions although now running on a different web server, shares the same database and permissions system with MMS. The whole system is based on MMS from the way permissions are granted to the presentation layer that the users interact with).

2. Minutes of 18 February 2015 and 10 October 2014

The minutes of the previous meetings were accepted as correct records subject to some minor typographical errors in the list of attendees for the February meeting.

The Proctor took the opportunity to welcome all members and advised colleagues on how the Committee would be operating from next session. This information would be circulated to all members.

3. Enhancement-Led Institutional Review

PGRC received the preliminary outcome report from the recent ELIR visit which was held in February/March 2015 and noted that the University had now received the draft Technical Report. The Proctor reported that the visit had been very successful and the University was
happy with the list of commendations and recommendation some of which related to PGR business and would require discussion at PGRC over the coming year. One key recommendation was for the University to ensure that all postgraduates who teach receive support from their Schools for undertaking their role, in addition to the training already provided centrally by CAPOD.

There was a brief discussion about the PGR Tutoring Workshop which had been held on 6 May 2015. At this event, Directors of Teaching, Module Coordinators and PGR tutors had discussed the support provided to PGR students prior to taking on tutoring and demonstrating responsibilities. A recent student survey had highlighted widespread inconsistency across Schools with regard to the time that tutors spend preparing and marking, and receiving training and support. The Workshop focussed on gaining a better understanding of arrangements within Schools and gave an opportunity to share some examples of best practice. It was agreed that the examples of good practice should be circulated to PGRC members and that perhaps one of the speakers could attend the next PGRC meeting.

An overview was given of the compulsory training provided by CAPOD which tutors are required to complete prior to undertaking tutoring and demonstrating work (for details of CAPOD’s training see http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/students-postgraduate/postgraduateresearcherswhoteach/)

It was noted that as CAPOD provided generic training for all tutors, content was necessarily broad and consisted of high level principles. It was the responsibility of Schools to supplement this with local training and support. It was agreed to circulate a summary of the types of ‘administrative issues’ that from the start of session 2015/16 must be addressed as part of School-level induction for new PGR tutors. This should supplement the ‘academic issues’ which the School-level induction should cover, for example the use of lesson plans and how much time tutors were expected to spend on preparation and marking. The opportunity was taken to remind Schools that all tutors must have a contract in place before they take up post. It was also agreed that in addition to the formal School-level induction, there should be an ongoing opportunity for tutors to discuss teaching pedagogy within their School.

4. QAA Enhancement Theme

PGRC received information about the new QAA Enhancement Theme ‘Student Transitions’ (see http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/teaching/funding/availablefunding/enhancement/currenttheme/) and the funding opportunities available for student or staff led projects. These projects could focus on student transitions from undergraduate to taught postgraduate study, and also from taught to research postgraduate study. Directors of Postgraduate Studies were encouraged to spread details of these opportunities to both colleagues and students within their Schools.

5. Working Groups

PGRC received a paper proposing the establishment of three new PGRC Working Groups. The three top priority areas for review included: Progress Review; Length of Study/Thesis Completion; and Fieldwork. It was noted that an additional Working Group would be established to consider the introduction of a HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record) for Postgraduate Research students. Following discussion some minor updates were made to the remit and membership for the three Groups.

6. Papers for Information

Location of Studies: the Proctor reminded colleagues that new processes were now in place. Directors of Postgraduate Studies must ensure that colleagues were familiar with and adhered to the new arrangements.
Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES): the Proctor took the opportunity to update colleagues on the latest PRES response rates and reported that work would be undertaken over the next few months to look at ways of improving future response rates. Clarification on the closing date for PRES would be sent to all members.

7. Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at 2pm in Parliament Hall (tea/coffee available from 1.30pm).