Title:	**Report from Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group**
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A report on matters under consideration by the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group

The Policy Group met last on Friday 6th November 2009. The notes that follow summarise the position reached by the Policy Group.

1. Supervisor training

The Policy Group discussed this issue at length and agreed three principles:

1. All new supervisors (i.e. those who have no experience of supervision at UEA or elsewhere) must attend the full day Developing Best Practice in Research Supervision CSED course. (This is already covered by the Code of Practice p15 Section 7 iii). This should be managed at School level and training should take place within the first six months of first supervising.

2. Experienced supervisors who are new to UEA must attend training but this should be a shortened version of the full day course, with a focus on UEA Regulations and the Code of Practice for Assuring the Quality of Research Degrees.

3. There should be an induction session for supervisors new to supervising international students.

The Policy Group commended as good practice the supervisor training session held in summer 2009 for all academic staff in CMP and HUM's use of refresher sessions for updating the supervisors of new students starting in October 2009.

2. Delegation of PGR concessions to Faculties

The Policy Group noted that the appointment of examiners for non-staff candidates and concessions for transfer from full-time to part-time or versa and registration on non-quarter dates had been delegated to Faculties with effect from 1st November 2009. The postponed CSED training session on October 2009 had been rescheduled for 26th November 2009.

3. International PGR recruitment and admissions

Mark Barlow, Head of Recruitment and International Office attended the meeting for this item. The Policy Group discussed the QAA Audit recommendation that the University reviews the policies, procedures and published information relating to the admission of postgraduate research students, to establish clarity of requirement.

It was agreed that all School and Faculty PGR websites would include English language requirements and that the International Office website wording would be clarified to reflect that certain courses have a higher requirement than the general admissions requirements..

It was acknowledged that PGR students are increasingly using the web for searching for PhD opportunities. The need to optimise Faculty web pages to appear optimally in search engine pages was stressed and in particular the profile of supervisory opportunities using key words. It was suggested that examples of previous students and theses should be included on Faculty pages.

4. Skills Training and Roberts funding

The Policy Group received the Roberts allocations to Faculties/CSED for 2009-10 (see agenda item A7 (1)) and reiterated its support for Faculty-centric funding. The next Policy Group meeting would consider how Roberts funding might be used differently in the future and how the University would sustain generic skills training post Roberts.

The Policy Group also discussed the QAA Audit recommendation that the University should formalise the expectations for the training and ongoing support for postgraduate research students who teach, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role. Whilst is a requirement in most Schools that all PGRs who teach should attend the CSED Teaching Skills programme it is not mandatory in all Schools.

The Policy Group recommended that all research students who teach must receive appropriate training where they have not had equivalent training or teaching experience previously.

It was stressed that PGRs who teach should be included in any peer review of teaching and should receive appropriate mentoring and support within Schools.

5. Review of external examiners' reports 2008-9

The Policy Group received a summary report on issues arising from the review of Examiners' reports for research degrees (see LTC agenda item A7 (2)). It was noted that the comments were again generally positive and standards were deemed to compare favourably with other research intensive universities.

As last year issue raised in a sizable minority of examiners' reports was that some candidates' work contained a large number of typographical, presentational and/or grammatical errors. Other issues raised were problems with referencing and the understanding of copyright rules. The Policy Group agreed that it was necessary to include further information on these issues in Faculty research student handbooks and to refer to them in supervisor training.

6. Code of Practice for the External Examiner system

The Director of Research Degree Programmes approved under Chair's action an update to the Code of Practice for the External Examiner system (Research Degrees) to reflect the delegation to Faculties of the appointment of examiners.

7. PGR Skills Training Steering Group

The Policy Group received a report from the PGR Skills Training Steering Group (formerly PGR Transitions Steering Group) which had met on 3 November 2009. That meeting had received the Transitions Programme Annual Report for 2008-9 and an update on Faculty and CSED PGR skills training programmes in 2009-10. It was noted that the CSED Transitions Programme had changed its name to the CSED Programme of Personal and Professional Development for Postgraduate Researchers, and was running a reduced programme of generic courses for all PGRs across the university. Faculty training programmes, which this year embedded transferable skills within discipline specific training, had been well received by students. The Faculty training programmes would be evaluated by students as part of the annual review of progress.

It was noted that the 2008-9 report to RCUK on the use of career development and transferable skills training (Roberts) funding was due by 30th November 2009 and examples of new developments were provided to be included in this report.

The Steering Group also received details of the consultation process regarding the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (which expands upon and will replace the RCUK Joint Skills Statement). The deadline for responding to the survey is Friday 11 December 2009 and Vitae are interested to hear from both researchers and supervisors. Further details can be found at:

http://vitae.ac.uk/policy-practice/161261/Researcher-development-framework.html

The Chair noted that Imelda Race had resigned from her post as PGR Personal and Professional Development Programmes Director and the Policy Group thanked her for her considerable contribution to PGR training over a number of years.

8. Update on the E-theses Initiative project

The Policy Group recommends to LTC that research students be permitted the choice of submitting the Library copy of the thesis either electronically or in hard copy. The copies used for examination and that held by the School would remain in hard copy. (see LTC agenda item A7 (4)).