

SEN13D004

Title: Governance of Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes
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Issue

The Senate is asked to consider the following recommendations for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of governance of postgraduate research degree programmes as proposed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Engagement) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Recommendation

Recipients are asked to approve the following:

1. The authority for decisions on postgraduate research programme matters will be delegated from the Learning and Teaching Committee to the Postgraduate Research Executive with immediate effect (i.e. from 7 November 2013).
2. Relevant reports from Postgraduate Research Executive will be submitted to the Learning and Teaching Committee under Section C rather than under Section A/B as at present. As per normal University practice, items reported under Section C can be moved to Section A if requested in writing.
3. That these arrangements be reviewed in June 2015.

Resource Implications

None

Risk Implications

There is a risk that decisions taken for taught programme and research students will tend to diverge. This risk will continue to be mitigated by close operational working and policy discussion between the Heads of the Learning and Teaching Service and the Head of the Postgraduate Research Service and the involvement of Heads and Managers from both Services in Quality Code implementation groups and other working groups.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that any of the recommendations will impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Timing of decisions

This change will take immediate effect if the recommendations are approved.

Further Information

Contact Dr Vivien Easson, Head of Postgraduate Research Service (ext. 1835, v.easson@uea.ac.uk) for enquiries about the content of the paper.

Background

Recipients are asked to note:

1. The increase in volume of items on the Learning and Teaching Committee agenda has led to a consequent reduction in time to discuss complex items relating to postgraduate research programmes. The membership of the Learning and Teaching Committee reflects the fact that the majority of its business relates to taught programmes – for example it includes all four Faculty Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching but not the Faculty Associate Deans for Postgraduate Research.
2. The Postgraduate Research committee structure as currently formed is overly complex with the Postgraduate Research Students Executive and Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group both with large membership and much overlap of business. Combined with the restructure of postgraduate research administration into Research and Enterprise Services, this is an opportune time to examine postgraduate research governance and consider how the University assures itself that postgraduate research issues are being appropriately and efficiently governed.
3. It is also planned that the Postgraduate Research Students Executive and Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group will merge, with an overall reduction in the numbers of those attending. At present the membership of the PRPPG, which serves as an advisory group to the Academic Director, runs to some thirty people, which does not seem efficient. Staff members who were previously members of either committee will be given an opportunity to feed into policy development in a variety of ways, including via the Faculty Graduate School Executives, working groups on specific issues, a new training network for those involved in doctoral training and the existing monthly quality assurance meetings for professional staff within the Postgraduate Research Service.
4. The merged Postgraduate Research Executive will be chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Engagement) and serviced by the Postgraduate Research Service. The Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes may act as Chair if the Pro-Vice-Chancellor is unable to attend.
5. The Postgraduate Research Executive will meet at least six times per annum, thus ensuring sufficient time for the volume of business. Neither the Postgraduate Research Students Executive nor the PRPPG is a formal committee of Senate.
6. Students will be represented on the Postgraduate Research Executive directly by the President of the Graduate Students' Association / UUEAS Postgraduate Officer and are also represented on each Faculty's Graduate School Executive and where relevant on an Institute Graduate Studies Committee, which report to the Postgraduate Research Executive.
7. The membership of the Postgraduate Research Executive will comprise:
 - Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Enterprise and Engagement (Chair)
 - Academic Director of Research Degree Programmes
 - Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
 - Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
 - Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
 - Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
 - Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee, John Innes Centre
 - President of the Graduate Students' Association / UUEAS Postgraduate Officer
 - Director, Research and Enterprise
 - Director, Admissions, Recruitment and Marketing
 - Head of Postgraduate Research Service (Secretary)

8. The Postgraduate Research Executive will have the right to co-opt other representatives from the University or partner organisations on a regular or ad-hoc basis as appropriate.
9. The suggested Terms of Reference for the Postgraduate Research Executive are:
 - To devise, consider, implement and keep under review a University-wide strategic framework for postgraduate research provision for students, including development of excellent research environments.
 - To contribute to the development, implementation, review and update of the University's Corporate Plan with specific reference to postgraduate research provision for students.
 - To keep abreast of opportunities arising from external developments and influences on postgraduate research provision, including the Research Councils and related bodies, and to receive regular reports concerning doctoral training and other partnership provision involving students at the University.
 - To have delegated authority from Senate via the Learning and Teaching Committee to make decisions on postgraduate research programme matters, and to report any such decisions to the Learning and Teaching Committee under Section C (Items for Report) of its agenda.
 - To develop, implement, update and review relevant regulatory frameworks, the Code of Practice: Research Degree Programmes, policies and procedures relevant to postgraduate research programmes.
 - To keep under review matters of principle, policy and/or practice emerging from academic appeals, academic complaints and allegations of misconduct in research by postgraduate research students.
 - To maximize funded opportunities for expansion of postgraduate research student numbers consistent with the strategic framework and the University's Corporate Plan.
 - To develop and promote strategies for the employability of postgraduate research students.
 - To maximise and promote equality of opportunity for postgraduate research students.
 - To receive regular reports from and liaise closely with the Faculty Graduate School Executives and Institute Graduate Studies Committees.
 - To liaise closely and to engage co-operatively with the Research Executive, the ARM Executive, the Enterprise Executive and the Engagement Executive and with other Committees and Groups as appropriate and relevant.
 - To liaise with and involve the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic), Faculty Executive Deans and other Academic Directors promptly in any matters of mutual concern.