

**LTC12D017**

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### **Report from the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group**

The Policy Group last met for an extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 26 June 2012. The notes that follow are an update on PGR issues since that date.

#### **1. Research Councils UK Funding Assurance visit**

The RCUK Assurance unit visited the University on 10<sup>th</sup> - 12th October 2012 as part of their assurance programme, whereby the top 60 research organisations are currently visited every three to four years. The RCUK Assurance unit provides assurance to Research Councils and the National Audit Office that research grants including doctoral training grants, fellowships and other funding streams e.g. Roberts' are used as intended and in accordance with best practice.

Questionnaires covering grant and training grant administration, and research training funding were completed by the University in August 2012. The Assurance visit itself consisted of a series of discussions with key staff plus a review of grant files (a mix of pre-notified and surprise files) and transaction listings on a sample basis. This is the first year that Doctoral Training grants have been included in the remit and RCUK examined six Doctoral Training Grants. Informal feedback from the RCUK Assurance consultants was positive.

RCUK Assurance may contact the University with follow up queries up to two weeks after the visit has ended. Providing that all the follow up queries have been addressed, the University will be issued with a draft report 6-8 weeks after the visit. Once reviewed to ensure that it presents a fair reflection of the visit, an agreed draft will be returned to RCUK Assurance. The responses will be reviewed by RCUK and a final report issued, which will include an assurance rating.

There are four possible assurance ratings:

- **Level 1: Substantial assurance** - Reflects evidence of best practice, few issues being identified, and those that are identified have low impact on the Research Councils;
- **Level 2: Satisfactory assurance** - Reflects the situation where some issues are noted of varying severity, but overall do not significantly impact the assurance gained by the Research Councils;
- **Level 3: Partial assurance** - Reflects the situation where there are a number of issues identified, of which some significantly impact the assurance gained by the Research Councils;
- **Level 4: Unsatisfactory** - Reflects the situation where there is significant failure in operating procedures.

Each review will be provided with an overall rating as defined above, the rating will be further divided between administrative and TRAC functions, with a separate consideration of each.

## **2. Amendments to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees**

A small number of revisions have been made to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees including references to the QAA Quality Code: Chapter B11 Research degrees and the new specific PhD Regulations for the Schools of World Art Studies and Museology and Film, Television and Media Studies for Professional Practice PhDs.

The Policy Group will be conducting a thorough review of the Code of Practice for Research Degrees during 2012-13 to ensure that it is in compliance with the new QAA Quality Code.

## **3. MPhil to PhD transfer**

The MPhil to PhD transfer process will continue to be a focus for the Policy Group during 2012-13 with the aim of achieving greater consistency and clarity of procedures.

## **4. Electronic theses submission**

As previously reported at LTC there is a great deal of support from PRPPG members for mandating the electronic copy of the thesis held by the Library. Amendments to the Rules for the Submission of work for Higher Degrees and for the Form of Theses (Research Degrees) and Section 3 of the Research Degree Policy Documents - Research Degrees: Submission, Presentation, Consultation and Borrowing of Theses will be considered at the next PRPPG meeting in November 2012. If agreed it is proposed for the new policy to take effect from January 2013.

## **5. Personal and Professional Development (PPD)**

The Faculty PPD programmes are now available online for students and supervisors. The programmes are clearly mapped against the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and a new development for 2012-13 is that students can now self-enrol on training modules via Evision.

The successful PGR Showcase will be held at the Forum again in June 2013 with a focus on enterprise and employability, and will form part of the University's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Downloadable lenses on the Researcher Development Framework have been developed by Vitae to focus on the knowledge, behaviours and attributes that are developed by researchers and that can be acquired through or used in various contexts such as enterprise, information literacy, intrapreneurship, leadership, public engagement and teaching. Vitae have recently published the 'Employability lens on the Vitae Researcher Development Framework for careers outside of academia'

[http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Employability-Lens\\_May12.pdf](http://www.vitae.ac.uk/CMS/files/upload/Vitae-Employability-Lens_May12.pdf)

This publication highlights the transferable skills typically developed by researchers that are most frequently desired by employers.

## **6. Supervisor training**

Faculties have made considerable progress in ensuring that all supervisors, whether experienced UEA supervisors or new to supervision at UEA, are appropriately training. A number of sessions have had run over the summer and a full programme is planned for 2012-13.

## **7. Improvements to the ZICER PGR training space**

From 2011-12, the ZICER Exhibition space and associated lecture theatre have been used as a base for Science PGR PPD training. The University's Executive Team has agreed that from 2012-13, this space be prominently badged as dedicated PGR PPD training space, although the Faculty of Science will still use the space on occasion, primarily for admissions-related activities. All four Faculty Graduate Schools have access to ZICER. Up to £100k has been set aside for improvements to the area to make it more suitable as a PGR facility, to contribute to the development of a research community ethos and to add to dedicated PGR student space. Associate Deans (PGR), PPD Training Co-ordinators and the PPE Service are working with Estates on this project.

## **8. FMH and SSF Graduate Schools**

The SSF Graduate School launched on 1st October 2012 and the FMH Graduate School will launch formally on Wednesday 9th January 2013. These developments will mean that all Faculties will now have a Graduate School which provides a focus for PGR training and other activities and helps promote a sense of research community.