

LTC12D103

Title: Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group, September 2012 to March 2013
Author: Dr Vivien Easson, Head of Postgraduate Research Students Service
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Issue

An update on the activities of the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group (PRPPG) over the first half of the 2012-13 session.

Recommendation

To receive the attached report

Resource Implications

Resource implications have been considered for each of the items by the PRPPG.

Risk Implications

Risk implications have been considered for each of the items by the PRPPG, including issues of quality assurance (items 1, 3, 5 and 6) and fulfilling the conditions of UKBA Highly Trusted Sponsor status (item 7).

Equality and Diversity

No specific issues.

Timing of decisions

No decisions required.

Further Information

Contact Dr Vivien Easson, v.easson@uea.ac.uk, extension 1835, with any queries about this report.

Background

The Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group meets three times per year. Its next and final meeting of the academic session 2012–13 is on 3 May 2013.

The Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group (PRPPG) has met twice this session so far, on 23 November 2012 and 25 January 2013. The main items discussed are summarised below.

1. Processes to transfer MPhil to PhD

A review of the MPhil to PhD transfer was initiated at the meeting of the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group on 26 June 2012. The objective of the review was to develop a unified transfer process across UEA for those doctoral students registering initially on the MPhil, i.e. all students registered in Schools other than BIO, CHE, ENV and PHA. There are currently 10 different processes across the University: six in SSF, one in HUM, one in FMH and two in SCI. It was agreed by PRPPG and subsequently by LTC (at its meeting on 27 June 2012) that there should be one University set of guidelines and a single transfer report form.

A draft paper was sent out for consultation before being presented to the PRPPG meeting on 25 January 2013 including discussion of: timing of the transfer process; composition and organisation of the Transfer Panel; the Transfer Report; format of the transfer process; recommendations from the transfer process; post Transfer Panel process; proposed revisions to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. Schools' responses to the consultation were broad-ranging and the conclusion at the January PRPPG meeting was that a further paper would be presented at the next PRPPG meeting in May, incorporating Schools' responses and the January PRPPG discussion. This would then come to the June 2013 LTC.

2. Postgraduate Research Showcase Update

The Postgraduate Research Showcase will be held on 6th June 2013 in The Forum, Norwich, and will form part of UEA's 50th anniversary celebrations. A small working group chaired by Dr Nick Watmough is taking forward the actions and reporting back to the main PGR Showcase subgroup of PRPPG.

3. Misconduct in Research

Changes to the University Misconduct in Research Procedures and Section 5 of the Research Degree Policy Documents were approved. These changes are to maintain consistency with procedures for staff.

4. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2013

PRPPG members submitted their own and student representatives' suggestions for additional, institutional questions. These have been included in UEA PRES 2013, which started on 5th March and runs until 16th May.

5. New Academic Model

Dr Adam Longcroft updated PRPPG on the New Academic Model. Members were asked to send comments to him on: (a) resource costs associated with allowing PGR students to access 20-credit modules; (b) whether professional doctorates should have mandatory level-7 components and how these would be assessed.

6. Electronic Theses and Examiners' Reports Submission

Proposals for changes to the Calendar Rules and Research Degree Policy Documents were approved, requiring submission of an electronic copy of the thesis for the Library unless a student specifically opted out.

7. Attendance and Engagement Monitoring

PRPPG agreed an interim approach for continuous monitoring of international research students on Tier 4 visas for whom we have issued a Certificate of Acceptance to Study, pending further SITS development. The Postgraduate Research Students Service will contact all Tier 4 students every three months and ask them to return an Interim Engagement Monitoring form signed by themselves and their primary supervisor – or another member of the supervisory team or if necessary the School PGR Director – to the Postgraduate Research Office in the Elizabeth Fry Building (Room 2.30). The first of these engagement forms was sent out on Friday 1st March. Students who fail to return a form during the monitoring month (March, June, September, December) will have their engagement records checked and may put themselves at risk of being reported to the UK Border Agency if they have missed too many meetings that they were expected to attend.

Title: Annual Review of Research Student Progress: Interim Update on 2011–12 Review
Author: Vivien Easson
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Issue

This paper gives an update on the Annual Review of Research Student Progress 2011–12. Full Review documentation is expected to be submitted to the May 2013 Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group and then to the June 2013 Learning and Teaching Committee.

Recommendation

To receive the attached report.

To note:

The process for Annual Review of Research Student Progress as it applies for 2011–12 reports

Changes planned for the 2012–13 Review

Resource Implications

No resource implications.

Risk Implications

No risk implications.

Equality and Diversity

No specific issues.

Timing of decisions

No decisions required.

Further Information

Contact Dr Vivien Easson, v.easson@uea.ac.uk, extension 1835, with any queries about this report.

Background

The Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group meets three times per year. Its next and final meeting of the academic session 2012–13 is on 3 May 2013.

The full documentation for the Annual Review of Research Student Progress 2011–12 will be submitted to the 3 May 2013 Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group and then to the June 2013 LTC. LTC is asked to **note** the process for this Review as contained in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and as it applied for 2011–12, and changes planned for 2012–13. Excerpts, interpretation and notes are given below.

Code of Practice for Research Degrees 2012, Section 8(i) states:

Each supervisory team is required by University regulations to report student progress to the Board of the School or Graduate Studies Committee of the Institute not less than once each year including during any student's registration-only period (for some professional doctorates this requirement commences with the research project).

Notes: In 2011–12 each student and supervisory team was asked to hold their annual progress review meeting during the months February to June 2012. Supervisory teams were asked to give a formal recommendation on the student's progress. Allowable formal recommendations were Satisfactory, Satisfactory with Reservations or Unsatisfactory. Some parts of UEA also included additional option(s) of Good (SSF) or Excellent/Good (NBI). Where a student's progress was deemed Satisfactory with Reservations or Unsatisfactory, the supervisory team were required to agree an action plan with the student.

The resulting paper forms were submitted to the Postgraduate Research Office (with the exception of students at the NBI, where an electronic system was used) and from there they were disseminated for signature to either the relevant School PGR Director or, for staff candidates, an Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research. These signatories were asked to check the existence of an action plan where required.

Changes: In 2012–13 we intend to replace the four Faculty paper annual progress review forms by a single web form available to students and supervisory teams via the e:Vision web interface to SITS. Review for students based at the NBI will continue to be based on the current electronic system, with the intent to combine these systems in future. Annual reviews will also be staggered around the calendar year so that students are reviewed between six and nine months after initial registration, and every twelve months thereafter, with intercalations delaying reviews by a corresponding period.

Code of Practice for Research Degrees 2012, Section 8(ii) states:

The review of students' progress will be monitored annually on a timetable published by the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group. The process for monitoring is as follows:

- reports will be considered by the appropriate School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality, Institute Graduate Studies Officer or, in the case of staff candidates, Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC), action determined, and a timetable for completion of action confirmed;
- The School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality acting on behalf of the Board, or Institute's Graduate Studies Committee will provide a summary report of the outcome of the Annual Review process to the Faculty LTQC for consideration
- the summary report should include confirmation that the process has been completed for all students, including any action agreed where progress is not being maintained, a summary of issues arising from the Annual Review process (this may be appropriate minutes of committees and commentary on themes or specific issues), and a non-confidential statistical section indicating progress;
- Faculty LTQCs (on behalf of LTC) will monitor and refer back to the School any issues of concern arising from the Annual Review process and any subsequent reports that the Review requires;
- Faculty LTQCs will confirm completion of the process to the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group (on behalf of LTC) and report on any issues or trends that might need to be considered by the University arising from the Annual Review process.

Interpretation: In the above, the role of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality is now normally split into a role responsible for taught programmes and a role responsible for research programmes, the latter being called the School PGR Director and having delegated responsibility for research student issues. Staff candidates' reports are typically considered by a subgroup of FLTQC including the Associate Dean (PGR).

Notes: Student reports from 2011–12 have been considered by Schools and summary reports are currently being produced. Where there is no time for them to be presented at a Faculty LTQC before the 3 May PRPPG, reports will come directly to the PRPPG and will be noted at the next Faculty LTQC.

Changes: The next PRPPG will also consider the timetable for the next Annual Review of Research Student Progress with the intent to bring the timing forward so that it is considered at the January 2014 PRPPG.