Research Degrees Committee

7ᵗʰ June 2022

Confirmed Minutes

Present Members: Professor David Bogle (Chair); Dr Helen Matthews; Elizabeth Halton; Helen Notter; Professor Simon Banks; Professor Jasmina Jovanovic; Dr Ruth Siddall; Professor Alex Mills; Dr Richard Bucknall; Dr Josephine Barnes; Dr Yasminah Beebeejaun; Noora Almarri, Viktoria Makai, Professor Jane Perryman; Dr Benet Salway; Professor Tania Monteiro; Professor Dave Spratt; Dr Andrew Flinn.

Apologies for absence: Professor Jill Norman.

Attendees: Dr Alex Standen (for Professor Sam Smidt); Professor Tim Jordan (for item 4), Mike Rowson (for item 5); Professor Julie Davies (for item 5); Andie Bennett (for item 6); Jeremy Barraud (for item 8); Dominic Allington-Smith (for item 9); Matthew Redmond; Alison Edridge (Acting Secretary).

Part I: Preliminary Business

35   Minutes of the Last Meetings

35.1   **Approved** - the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2022 subject to a correction to Jane Perryman's title to Professor.

36   Matters arising from the minutes

36.1   None.

37   Chair's Business

37.1   The Chair welcomed Matt Redmond, who had joined UCL as Senior Policy Advisor (Academic Policy) on 6 June 2022 and would become the new Secretary to RDC after this meeting.

37.2   The Chair reported that the new Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement), Professor Geraint Rees, was now in post and the Doctoral School fell within his remit.

37.3   RDC would be considering two new research degree programme proposals at this meeting. The Chair reported that he would normally take Chair's action on behalf of RDC to approve new programme proposals but had requested that these proposals be considered at a meeting as they were non-standard.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

38   Recruitment of research students to the Department of Arts and Sciences and a New Programme Proposal – MPhil/PhD Interdisciplinary Societies, Arts and Sciences

38.1   Received – the papers at RDC 4-01 (21-22) presented by Professor Tim Jordan. The Department for Arts and Sciences would formally be established as an academic unit from September 2022. The established BASc would be owned by this new department, a second undergraduate degree was under development at UCL East and a new MASc had also been launched. The development of this MPhil/PhD programme was a natural progression and would enable research expertise to be brought together within the department focusing on interdisciplinarity in the arts and the sciences. It was anticipated that co-supervision with other departments would be required in some cases as there would be a limit to the areas that could be covered by the research expertise of staff within the department. It was noted that the fee and cost-sharing arrangements with other departments undertaking supervision would need to be clarified. The intention was to work collaboratively with other parts of UCL on this.

38.2   A member noted that the proposed seminar series could be of wider interest beyond the Department and queried whether there would be scope for it to be open to students undertaking interdisciplinary work who were not registered on this PhD. It was confirmed that consideration was being given to the seminars being developed into a formal module in the longer term and it was agreed it would be useful to consider opening them to other students. In the short term, however, care needed to be taken to develop and maintain cohort identity on this programme, which might be difficult if large numbers of students from outside the programme were able to access the seminars.

38.3   According to the application for recruitment of research students to the Department, the Arts and Sciences Departmental Teaching Committee would have oversight of research degrees. It was agreed that the Department should consider whether to establish a research committee to have oversight of its research degrees in due course.

38.4 **Approved** – the application for recruitment of research students to the Department of Arts and Sciences and the proposal for a new MPhil/PhD programme in Interdisciplinary Societies, Arts and Sciences.

39. New Programme Proposal and New Title – DBA Health

39.1 Received – the papers at RDC 4-02 (21-22) presented by Mike Rowson and Professor Julie Davies. The Chair noted that RDC was being asked to make a recommendation to Academic Committee to approve a new qualification of Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) as well as to approve a new DBA Health programme to be offered by the Global Business School for Health (GBSH). The approval of the DBA qualification would enable other departments and faculties to develop DBA programmes. Chair's action had already been taken to approve an application for recruitment of research students in the GBSH.

39.2 RDC was informed that the programme had been designed to mirror UCL's existing professional doctorates and would comprise a taught postgraduate element, which had separately already received approval through the Programme and Module Approval Panel (PMAP), a professional practice portfolio and a substantial thesis. Market research had indicated that there was a strong market for a DBA Health. The proposal had the support of the School of Management, which was likely to develop DBAs in other fields of study.

39.3 Subject to approval of the DBA qualification by Academic Committee, it was agreed that regulations would need to be developed for the DBA prior to DBA Health students starting in 2023/24. This should include a statement outlining the characteristics of a DBA qualification at UCL. A working group, which could include members from faculties interested in developing DBA qualifications, would be established to oversee the development of the regulations. In the medium term, a single set of regulations for all professional doctorates should be developed rather than having separate regulations for each type, but this was unlikely to be achievable prior to 2023/24.

Action – RDC Secretary to coordinate the establishment of the working group to develop regulations for the DBA.

39.4 **Approved** – that RDC should recommend approval of the DBA qualification to Academic Committee.

39.5 **Approved** – the proposal for a new DBA Health programme, subject to the approval of the DBA qualification by Academic Committee.

40 **Doctoral Mandatory Training**

40.1 Received – the paper at RDC 4-03 (21-22) presented by Elizabeth Halton and Andie Bennett seeking RDC's approval for a training programme proposal for doctoral candidates prior to final endorsement at University Management Committee (UMC). RDC was informed that only the completion of research integrity training was currently checked by the research log but there were a number of other training requirements that were mandatory for postgraduate research (PGR) students. The proposal sought to bring these requirements into one list and was also related to a PGTA continuous improvement project for which clarity was required in relation to the mandatory training that PGTAs were required to undertake as members of staff.

40.2 Whilst compliance reporting capability was not within the scope of this proposal, reporting capability to monitor compliance was being explored over the coming months. It was noted that it was preferable for mandatory training to be on a consistent platform to facilitate compliance reporting. Work was being undertaken to improve all mandatory training products in clusters and e-learning modules would be in place for 2022/23.

40.3 RDC discussed training that individual departments may require for their students. It was noted that at institutional level, mandatory training was defined as training content that had financial, legal or regulatory compliance risks. Departments and faculties could determine other training that they required as relevant to their disciplines, but this would need to be in addition to the list of mandatory training for all students. The relevant faculty should have oversight of approval of department and faculty-specific training.

40.4 **Approved** - the paper at RDC 4-03 (21-22). It was agreed a paper providing more details about the implementation of the training programme should be received by RDC at its next meeting.
Action – Elizabeth Halton and Andie Bennett to provide an update on implementation arrangements at the next meeting of RDC.

41 **Proposal for Structuring a Multi-layered Induction in UCL Departments**

41.1 Received – the paper at RDC 4-04 (21-22) presented by the Postgraduate Research Student Officer, Noora Almarri, which proposed a more structured, personalised and department based multi-layered induction for PGR students. Feedback from students indicated that the approach to induction between departments was inconsistent, and students were often overloaded with information at the start of their programme meaning that information could be missed.

41.2   Members reported on work that was taking place in their departments and faculties on induction. It was noted that where the quality of induction departments was already good, students often still had limited awareness of key information that had been covered during induction. Consideration therefore needed to be given to how to better engage students and deliver induction in a way that improved retention of information. It was agreed that whilst there may be difference in induction needs locally, greater consistency within each Faculty would be desirable.

Action – Faculty Graduate Tutors to discuss induction arrangements at Faculty Research Degrees Committees using paper RDC 4-04 (21-22) to inform the discussion, with the aim of achieving great consistency within their Faculties.

41.3   It was noted that a lot of information was held on the Doctoral School website but that it would be useful to consider how this could be better organised.

Action – RDC members to send suggestions to the Director of the Doctoral School on how the Doctoral School website welcome page can be improved along with links to Faculty webpages that should be included.

42   Fieldwork Governance and Guidance

42.1   Received – the paper at RDC 4-05 (21-22) presented by Jeremy Barraud. RDC was informed that a Fieldwork Framework Group had been established during the pandemic to develop and communicate guidance for fieldwork. Although pandemic restrictions had now been eased, an institutional framework was still required from which discipline-specific approaches could be developed and to enable a coordinated approach, for example to equality issues and requirements of funders. Following consultation with the Governance team, it was proposed that RDC have oversight for the framework within the governance structure. Research Integrity would maintain a watching brief on matters that needed to brought to the attention of RDC.

42.2   It was proposed that a sub-group of RDC should be established to take responsibility for the fieldwork framework replacing the current group. RDC agreed that this should ideally be chaired by a Faculty Graduate Tutor and that the membership should include colleagues for whom fieldwork was critical and who would have an understanding of the issues and needs. It was noted that it would be important for there to be a joined-up approach by the sub-group to fieldwork undertaken within undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. There was also an overlap with applications for study leave permitted under old regulations.

42.3   **Approved** – the recommendations in Paper 4-05 (21-22).

43 **Open Access, Copyright and Related Responsibilities for Doctoral Students and Supervisors**

43.1 Received – the paper at RDC 4-06 (21-22) presented by Dominic Allington-Smith, Open Access Publications Manager. It was noted that PGR students were required to submit an electronic copy of their thesis to the Library in order to be awarded their degree. The process was managed by the Open Access team, with conditions of access set by the student who could apply to embargo access for a specific length of time or permanently. Students were also responsible for the presence of third party copyrighted material and personal material, and any access conditions that should be applied. All thesis submissions were checked manually by the Open Access team with regards to copyright and personal material. It was noted, however, that an exemption existed for academic access which covered most material.

43.2 RDC was informed that the Open Access team would occasionally receive queries from supervisors about a thesis that was open access, requesting that access be restricted. This might be because there was a copyright concern or the research was part of a bigger research project which was still ongoing. It was possible to change access retrospectively but only at the author's request. RDC's advice was being sought on how to encourage issues regarding access to be raised and addressed between the student and supervisor in advance of thesis submission.

43.3 RDC discussed whether it would be appropriate for the supervisor to be notified before a thesis was put online so that they were aware of the access conditions proposed by the student. The default position was that the copyright was with the student and the decision on access rested with them. A process enabling the supervisor to veto what a student had decided would therefore not be appropriate. Active notification to the supervisor could also create difficulties, particularly where there was a conflict between the supervisor and the student.

43.4 It was agreed that discussion should take place between relevant colleagues before this issue was brought back to RDC for further consideration.
Action – Elizabeth Halton and Helen Notter to clarify requirements with the Open Access team prior to further discussion with a sub-set of Faculty Graduate Tutors.

44 **Academic Manual amendments**

44.1 The Director of the Doctoral School reported that due to staffing capacity and turnover in Registry, it had not been possible to complete the work that had been planned for major changes to the regulations for research degrees in the Academic

Manual for the next academic session. Some minor amendments would be made to the Academic Manual for 2022/23 to reflect decisions that RDC had made during the year. It was planned to seek additional resource within Student and Registry Services to enable progress with reviewing the regulations to be made during 2022/23 and this would be discussed further with the Chair of the RDC Regulations Working Group.

45   Student Protection Plan

45.1   **Received and approved** – the paper at RDC 4-07 (21-22) presented by Hannah Swallow setting out a revised Student Protection Plan to align with the Office for Students (OfS) template and legal advice. The document would also be considered by Education Committee, Academic Committee, Council and the Students' Union prior to submission to the OfS. It was noted that further changes were planned for 2023-24 to make the document more student friendly.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

46   Student Appeals Procedure and Amendments to Student Complaints and Student Disciplinary Procedures

46.1   Received - the papers at RDC 4-08 (21-22) which had recently been considered by RDC by circulation in order that they could be submitted to Council for approval in time for implementation in 2022/23. RDC members had provided feedback on the proposed appeal panel membership, and this had been addressed by the Head of Regulations and Casework in the latest draft.

46.2   RDC noted that it was unclear in the appeals procedure the point at which the 10-day timescale within which a student could submit an appeal would commence. It was suggested that it should be from the date of the official letter of notification of results. **Action – Director of Academic Services to raise this with the Head of Regulations and Casework**

47   Approval of Global Business School for Health as a department permitted to admit Research degree students

47.1   Received - the paper at RDC 4-09 (21-22).

48   Anonymised Suspension of Regulations Report (since March 2022)

48.1   Received - the paper at RDC 4-10 (21-22).

49   New and Amended Programmes and Qualifications Approved by RDC Chair's Action

49.1   Received - the paper at RDC 4-11 (21-22)

50   MRes-MPhil-PhD Application and Admissions Update

50.1   Received – the paper at RDC 4-12 (21-22).

51   Any other business

51.1   None.

Alison Edridge

Acting Secretary to RDC

Interim Head of Academic Policy and Quality Assurance

Academic Services

28 June 2022