CONFIRMED

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Research Degrees Sub-Committee: 21st May 2020

PRESENT: Professor A Nagar (in the Chair), Dr G Juhasz, Miss Z Marshall, Dr D Roche, Dr C Walsh, Dr O Barden, Ms K Jewell (PGR representative)

By invitation: Dr W Blazek, Dr B Briliute, Mr C Leyland, Dr S Marwood

Apologies: Professor M Mac an Ghaill, Ms C Tapia (members by invitation)

Secretariat: Mr Marc Jones

1.   Terms of Reference and Membership

Members had received the updated draft Terms of Reference and membership. The Chair drew members' attention to updates to the document's terminology reflecting the University's adoption of a structure based around Schools and Departments. Ms Marshall noted the removal of CRAG from the Terms of Reference, following that group's dissolution, and asked whether her presence at RDSC was still required. The Chair confirmed that this was the case as Registrar and nominee are included in the membership. Dr Hodkinson noted that the document refers to 'Faculty Research Degree Administrators'. The Chair undertook to update this terminology prior to the document's submission to Senior Executive Team.

ACTION: Chair to update ToR, as above.

2.   Minutes of Previous Meeting

Members had received minutes of the meeting held on 29th January 2020. Drawing members' attention to the item relating to the Data Schedule, Dr Hodkinson informed the group that of the two VC scholarship holders in Education, one passed and one was unsuccessful, as opposed to both having been unsuccessful as state in the minutes. Mr Jones undertook to correct this.

ACTION: Mr Jones to correct minutes, as above.

Pending this change, the minutes **APPROVED** as a correct record.

3.   Matters Arising

(i)   PGR Handbooks (actum 3a)

The Chair confirmed that work in this area is ongoing.

(ii)   Changes to TRE Process (actum 3b)

The Chair informed members that this would be dealt with under agenda item five.

(iii)   Dedicated Study Space for PGR Students (actum 4)

Mr Leyland confirmed that study space continued to be available for PGR students during times at which the University's campuses are fully open.

(iv)   Process for Approval of Research Supervisors and Independent Chairs (actum 5)

The Chair confirmed that work in this area is ongoing.

4. Annual Monitoring of PGR and Impact of Covid-19

The Chair advised members that any PGR student whose studies have been impacted by Covid-19 should undertake the annual monitoring (AMR for PGR) process. The Chair added that PGR students who were close to finishing their studies had expressed the wish that their progress not be delayed.

Ms Marshall informed members that a new process has been introduced for annual monitoring of PGR students whereby the partner institution's panel has been replaced by a University panel. Ms Marshall added that moderators will need to collate the annual monitoring reports.

The Chair emphasised the importance of PGR student completions going through boards in July in order for them to be included in the REF/HESA returns. The Chair added that the REF cut-off date has not changed and is still 31st July 2020.

Ms Jewell informed members of a potential communications issue in relation to PGR students, saying that the majority of the University's communications to students during the pandemic are focused on undergraduate students. The Chair asked Mr Leyland to look into this.

ACTION: Mr Leyland to look into ways to improve communications to PGR students during the pandemic.

Ms Jewell asked whether a 'no detriment' policy would be put in place for PGR students in the current situation. Dr Walsh replied that such policies normally apply to undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses, but that the University is working to ensure students are not disadvantaged.

Ms Jewell asked whether PGR study space would be available on campus during the summer. The Chair undertook to raise this with the group tasked with overseeing the reopening of the University's campuses.

ACTION: Chair to raise PGR study space with Reopening Group, as above.

Ms Jewell informed members she had been unable to contact fellow PGR students due to difficulties in obtaining their contact details. Dr Walsh suggested the Registry contact all PGR students, making them aware of Ms Jewell's role on the sub-committee and giving her contact details, a suggestion with which Ms Jewell concurred.

ACTION: Ms Walsh to contact PGR students, as above.

5. Revisions to PGR Regulations, Codes of Practice, and Associated Procedures

Members had received Dr Walsh's report on the Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Process (PhD from MPhil). Dr Walsh drew members' attention to the fact that the new process starts with a recommendation from the student's supervisor, rather than coming from the student. Dr Walsh added that in their submission the supervisor is required to detail (i) The student's engagement with supervisory meetings and other required processes, and (ii) The progress made by the student during their MPhil studies, including thesis chapters produced and/or work of publishable quality. Dr Walsh added that the panel would make a yes/no decision, with no reassessment opportunity available. Dr Marwood asked whether the submission would be made by the Primary Supervisor or Director of Studies. Dr Walsh replied that the term 'Director of Studies' would soon no longer be in use. Dr Hodkinson asked when the new regulation comes into force. Dr Walsh replied that the new regulations are now in place and that a panel taking place on 26th May 2020 is the first under the new system. Ms Jewell welcomed this change to the regulations.

The new Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Process that replaces the TRE process has been appended to these minutes.

6.   Consideration of PGR Data Schedule

Dr Hodkinson requested that PGR data be tracked in terms of race, class and gender. Dr Walsh concurred, adding that this data would be of use to the Equality & Diversity Sub-Committee, and undertook to discuss this with the Student Data Group.

ACTION: Dr Walsh to contact Student Data Group, as above.

ACTION: Chair to produce and disseminate flowchart clarifying process of paperwork from partner institute to panel.

7.   Updates from partner institutions (moderators) and Hope PGR-leads

(i)   Maryvale Institute

Dr Briliute reminded members that as Maryvale's face-to-face teaching is currently restricted to a two week residential during the summer, the Institute's activities have been little affected by the pandemic. Dr Briliute informed members that the majority of the Institute's AMR documents have been submitted, and that three vivas are taking place in the near future.

(ii)   Newman University

Dr Blazek informed members that the University's AMR process is working efficiently. Dr Blazek added that a viva is taking place via Skype in the near future and asked if any guidance was available for students undertaking vivas under such conditions. Dr Walsh responded that training materials in relation to online vivas are available and undertook to send these to Dr Blazek.

ACTION: Dr Walsh to send information to Dr Blazek, as above.

(iii)   St Mary's University

Dr Marwood cited a number of technical issues relating to online vivas. The Chair noted these, and suggested that those conducting online vivas with candidates based overseas attempt to find out at which points of the day internet traffic was at its quietest, and attempt to schedule the viva in accordance with this.

8.   Any Other Business

The Chair informed members that PGR skills sessions have resumed online and added that Ms Anton is in the process of creating a Moodle page collating these materials for ease of sharing.

Dr Barden raised the question of professional doctorates, asking to which programme students should be admitted. Dr Barden informed members that students admitted to a masters degree and transferring to a doctorate are unable to access the post-doctoral loan. Dr Hodkinson noted that the entry criteria for Professional Doctorate are lower than for PhD and suggested the University devise a CRE-equivalent process to facilitate, where warranted, this transfer.

Dr Barden raised an issue with the online applications system, informing members that notifications for EdD applications are going to Dr Bamber and Ms Meir rather than him. The Chair undertook to discuss this with IT Services.

ACTION: Chair to contact IT Services, as above.

Appendix: RD 030

The Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Process (PhD from MPhil)

1   A Request to Transfer

The Primary Supervisor must present an appropriate case to the Board of Examiners for Postgraduate Research Students in which they detail:

- The student's engagement with supervisory meetings and other required processes:

- The progress made by the student during their MPhil studies, including thesis chapters produced and/or work of publishable quality.

To avoid unnecessary delay the Chair of Research Degrees Sub Committee may also act under Chairs authority to determine whether the request to change registration from MPhil to PhD is justified.

If the Board of Examiners/Chair of the Board recommends that a request to transfer is justified the follow process ensues.

2   Appointment of a Transfer Panel

The Head of School/Department [or nominee] at Hope, or the Moderator for Partner Institutions, will appoint a Panel comprising the Supervisory Team and an independent reader, who will act as Chair of the Panel. The reader need not necessarily have expertise in the area of the research, but should normally have been formally approved as a potential supervisor by the Pro Vice Chancellor [Research], and shall have prior experience of successful supervision to completion of research at doctoral level; in exceptional circumstances, the reader may not be an employee of the University. The Panel can be the same as the student's Annual Monitoring Panel.

3   The Student Submission

The Chair of the Panel will invite the student to submit a formal Proposal, presenting a case to demonstrate that their work indicates that they are capable of carrying out research at doctoral level. The requirements will be broadly consistent with the following guidelines, but the detailed requirements may legitimately vary across academic disciplines. It is expected that the submission will take the form of

- Draft thesis chapters,

- Published work with accompanying narrative, or

- Publishable work developed into a written report of approximately 20,000 words. The Supervisory team should advise the student of the content of any written report required; it would be expected that the submission would take the format of a standard journal article in the discipline including a literature review, the aims of the research, a methodology, the interim findings from the study and a bibliography.

- An appropriate performance with supporting narrative as relevant to the discipline. The detail of the performance and the length of the narrative should be stipulated by the Panel.

4   Assessment of the Transfer Request, and Production of the Recommended Outcome

4.1   Initial Scrutiny of the Submission

The Panel will scrutinise the Submission, and form an initial judgement, with reference to the University's

expectations for doctoral research, about the applicant's potential to complete their research to doctoral level within the required timescale.

- The Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Interview (MPhil to PhD)

    The interview with the applicant will normally take place within one month of the submission and will aim to explore with the applicant any issues arising from that submission,

4.3 The Panel's Recommendation, approval of the outcome and Communication to the Student

      4.3.1   The Panel will make one of two recommendations:

          [a]   Progress justifies transfer: *all subsequent annual registrations to be for a PhD; normal PhD monitoring to begin.*

          [c]   Progress does not justify transfer to a PhD: *all subsequent annual registrations to be for MPhil; normal MPhil monitoring to continue.*

The panel should complete the Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Report Form; this should include a short justification for the decision including a brief summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the research project, the written submission and the student's performance. The form should be submitted within one week of the interview to the Faculty Research Administration staff, or the administration office in a partner institution. The Panel's recommendation will be notified to the next Progression and Award Board for Postgraduate Research Students; the Board will confirm the outcome for each student.

Student Administration will formally communicate the confirmed outcome to the student while the Primary Supervisor will ensure the receipt of a copy of the completed Confirmation of Doctoral Registration Interview Form and will provide an opportunity for the student to receive feedback.