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LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Research Degrees Sub-Committee: 9th October 2019

- PRESENT:** Professor A Nagar (in the Chair), Dr G Juhasz, Miss Z Marshall, Dr D Roche, Dr J Speake, Dr C Walsh
- By invitation:** Dr W Blazek, Dr B Briliute, Dr S Marwood,
- Apologies:** Ms K Jewell (PGR representative), Professor M Mac an Ghail, Mrs S Meir, Ms C Tapia,
- Secretariat:** Mr Marc Jones

1. Terms of Reference and Membership

Members had received the updated draft Terms of Reference and membership. Drawing members' attention to section 4 (ii), the Chair requested that 'Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Development)' be changed to 'Chair of the University Research Committee'.

ACTION: Mr Jones to update ToR, as above.

Turning to the section relating to the Sub-Committee's working groups, Ms Marshall voiced the opinion that CRAG has served its purpose and that any important matters which would formerly have been raised at CRAG could be brought to the weekly Tuesday morning meetings. The Chair concurred with this suggestion.

The Chair informed members that the Vice Chancellor had asked him to review the PGR and the status of Research Degrees Sub-Committee. The Chair suggested that the Tuesday morning meeting be reconstituted as a PGR Management Group and noted that annual monitoring of PGR students already takes place at the meeting. The Chair noted that Research Degrees are a standing item on Research Committee agendas. The Chair suggested that relevant colleagues from partner institutions be invited to attend the meetings of Research Committee at which ARE reports are under discussion. Dr Walsh asked where issues around regulations would be discussed in the absence of Research Degrees Sub-Committee. The Chair responded that these would be discussed at Research Committee. Ms Marshall suggested that a running list of action points from the Tuesday morning meetings be maintained and shared with Research Committee. The Chair concurred with this suggestion.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 1st May 2019 were received and **APPROVED** as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

(i) International students (actum 2i)

Mr Jones confirmed that he had obtained a statistical report on international students from Student Administration and distributed it to members.

(ii) Equality impact audit (actum 2v)

Dr Walsh informed members that data relating to rejected to PGR students is unavailable, adding that unsuccessful applicants are not entered into SITS. However, the PGR online system may have

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data that can be used for analysis. The Chair agreed to review the PGR online system to extract this data.

(iii) MPhil to PhD transfer process – word equivalence (actum 4i(a))

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

(iv) MPhil to PhD transfer process – satisfactory progress (actum 4i(b))

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

(v) MPhil to PhD transfer process – pontifical degrees (actum 4i(c))

Dr Walsh confirmed that she had discussed this matter with Dr Juhasz, adding that a student with a pontifical degree had recently enrolled at the University.

(vi) Maximum durations MPhil and PhD (actum 4ii)

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

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

(i) MPhil to PhD transfer process

Members had received Dr Walsh's paper detailing proposed amendments to the PGR (Hope and Partner) regulations and code of conduct. Dr Walsh drew members' attention to the wording added to M1.2: 'An MPhil student requesting to transfer registration to PhD will be demonstrating outstanding potential for doctoral research.' Dr Walsh added that the revised Code of Practice emphasises the need for students wishing to transfer from MPhil to PhD to discuss the matter with their Director of Studies (M1.2 'Before submitting their request, the student is expected to discuss the matter with their Director of Studies.') Dr Walsh also drew members' attention to the wording added to M1.3: 'OR: thesis chapters or academic publications, with a supporting narrative, of equivalence to a 10,000 word report.'

Drawing members' attention to M1.4, the Chair suggested that 'The oral assessment should normally take place within one calendar month of the submission of the review documentation' be amended to read 'The oral assessment should take place in a timely manner within one calendar month following the submission of the review documentation'.

ACTION: Dr Walsh to update wording, as above. Revised document to be presented at Rectorate Team and next RDSC meeting.

(ii) Maximum durations MPhil and PhD

Members had received Dr Walsh's paper detailing proposed amendments to the PGR (Hope and Partner) regulations and code of conduct. Dr Walsh drew members' attention to the updated section reading: 'The maximum completion period is defined as the time from initial registration to final approval of the award by the PGR Assessment, Progression and Award Board. The maximum completion period for any research degree programme is the maximum duration defined above plus three academic years. The submission of the dissertation must be within the maximum period of study set out in the expected and maximum durations; the overall maximum completion time allows for approved extensions and interruptions during the students period of registration.'

Dr Marwood requested clarification as to when a student is defined as having 'started' their course. Dr Walsh responded that when a student has begun to receive supervision they are counted as

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having 'started'. Dr Walsh informed members that she would change the wording of 'The maximum completion period is defined as the time from initial registration to final approval of the award by the PGR Assessment, Progression and Award Board' to 'The maximum completion period is defined as the time from the point of registration to the point of thesis submission.'

ACTION: Dr Walsh to update wording, as above. Revised document to be presented at Rectorate Team and next RDSC meeting.

5. Update on Annual Monitoring of Students Approved by the Progression and Award Board

Ms Marshall informed members that a higher than usual number of students returning from interruption on 1st September had presented a challenge due to staff availability over the summer. The Chair informed members that he is working with IT Services to enhance the annual monitoring process.

ACTION: Chair and Ms Marshall to meet Mr Beecroft re enhancing annual monitoring process.

6. ARE Reports

(i) Maryvale Institute

Members had received the ARE Report for Maryvale Institute. Dr Briliute informed members that there are currently nine PhD students registered for a Liverpool Hope Research Degree at the institute. Dr Briliute added that stronger collaboration between each student, DoS and supervisory team has been established by communicating all comments to all involved in supervision electronically (via e-mail, telephone, Skype and student log comments). Dr Briliute informed members that the extension agreement between Maryvale Institute and Liverpool Hope University was signed on 8th Mar 2019 and is in effect until 31st Dec 2019 with a potential to further extension for another five years. The Chair asked what processes are in place to ensure the student voice was heard. Dr Briliute responded that student representatives attend all relevant meetings. The Chair asked what processes are in place to deal with issues around insufficient engagement with a student by their Director of Studies. Dr Briliute responded that in such a case the colleague in question would not be appointed as Director of Studies to any students in the future.

(ii) Newman University

Members had received the ARE Report for Newman University. Dr Blazek informed members that there are currently 21 PhD students registered for a Liverpool Hope Research Degree at the institute, 21 EdD students and four MPhil students. Dr Blazek noted issues in relation to the length of time taken in the processing of forms and documentation. The Chair asked whether the issues enumerated in Section Four of the report had been resolved. Dr Blazek confirmed that this was the case. The Chair emphasised the importance of paperwork coming via the correct channels and being processed via faculty administration. Dr Blazek requested the Chair provide a flowchart clarifying this process. The Chair noted the five student withdrawals in 2018/19 and asked that this issue be looked into.

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

(iii) St Mary's University

Members had received the update from St Mary's University. Dr Marwood informed members that there are currently 70 PhD students registered for a Liverpool Hope Research Degree at the institute, 22 EdD students and 14 MPhil students. Turning to Section Four of the report the Chair noted issues

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with delays in communicating outcomes of admissions offers and the approval of examiners. Dr Marwood responded that this was due to the number of students at the partner institution registered for Liverpool Hope provision and undertook to work with colleagues at St Mary's University to resolve the issues.

(iv) Liverpool Hope University

Members had received the update from Liverpool Hope. Dr Speake informed members that there are currently 53 PhD students registered for a Liverpool Hope Research Degree at the institute, 36 EdD students and four MPhil students. Dr Speake informed members that the 2018/9 Postgraduate Research Skills Programme ran throughout the academic year with the majority of sessions being repeated to provide additional opportunities for students to engage. Dr Speake informed members that further training for Independent Chairs of Oral Examinations is being provided in light of the rising number of student examinations at partner institutions. The Chair noted a number of instances where applications were on the online application system for an unacceptable length of time and undertook to give Ms Marshall access to this system in order to assist him in resolving this.

7. Student Matters

The Chair asked if there were any matters relating to students; none was raised. The Chair informed members that he is currently working with the Dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Education and Social Sciences to resolve an issue relating to PGR students studying Music.

8. 2019/20 Arrangements for the Training of Students and Supervisors

Dr Speake informed members that training events for supervisors will be added to the online store in the coming week.

9. Any Other Business

The Chair noted that this was Dr Speake's last meeting prior to her departure and thanked her for her contributions to the Sub-Committee.