

Report on 2015/16 Research Degree Annual Programme Evaluation exercise

Summary

The following report provides a summary of the key observations arising out of the 2015/16 research degree annual programme evaluation exercise.

The Graduate School Committee is asked to:

1. **note** the contents of the report

Report on 2015/16 Research Degree Annual Programme Evaluation exercise

The following report provides a summary of the key observations arising from the 2015/16 research degree annual programme evaluation exercise. The key observations identified during the exercise are summarised in Appendix 1 under the following headings:

- Strengths
- Actions to address completion rates
- Destinations/employability
- 2016/17 actions
- Additional comments/wider developments

The completion of the evaluation of research degree programmes within SHS and SASS is pending with a number of reports still outstanding. Certain research APEs in SASS were deferred due to the planned Periodic Review of PhD programmes, but this Review has now been delayed.

This year the review has also included a spot check on the minutes of the BoS meeting where the research APEs were considered.

Outcomes and General Observations

1. Innovations, good practice and strengths

Notable strengths in research degree provision that have been noted by students and staff include:

- The structured training programme delivered in the first year of the (Cass PhD)
- High quality support from a dedicated professional team (Cass PhD)
- Seminars and workshops to support student employability (Cass PhD, Law PhD)
- Tailored training and PhD student annual conference (Law PhD)
- Value to the students of opportunities to be involved in teaching activities (Law PhD)
- Collaborative and proactive approach of the programme team in managing student progress and meeting student needs (SASS DPsych)
- Tailored support to ensure students are presenting at conferences and publishing work (SASS DPsych and Cass PhD)
- The important role of professional doctorates such as the DPsych in promoting the reputation of City, University of London within the professions and with accrediting bodies. Professional PhD programmes balance academic rigour and high academic standards with and excellent professional training
- Access to a School conference attendance fund for all PhD students (SMCSE)
- Good overall student satisfaction (all programmes)

2. Completeness of the reports

Observations on the completeness of reports include:

- Most APEs demonstrate a good level of reflection on the overall health of the programme(s).

- Several APEs have not yet been provided to Student and Academic Services. These have been chased. It is not clear from the minutes whether BoS are proactive in noting and following up where APEs for research programmes are missing.
- BoS minutes do not always reflect a sufficient level of detail from discussion of the research APEs and this might present an assurance risk. Priority actions are rarely captured and reporting is often separate from consideration of wider work on completion rates (and School Completion Rate Action Plans).
- It is not always clear on the APE forms whether documents have been reviewed by Student or Programme Committees, or how student views on APEs and actions have been captured. Student views and feedback would be a useful enhancement to the APE process in many cases.
- There is a significant difference in the level of detail captured by the APEs. This is most obvious when a single APE considers a large number of programmes (and students).
- The APEs should include a list of approved Category A and Category B supervisors. This was often missing from the versions provided for review by S&AS. CLS used the APE as a useful way of monitoring their supervisors; including those Category A supervisors who had current exemptions and those who would need exemptions in the near future (this is provided as an example of strong practice – see appendix A).

3. Data provided and used

- The link between completion rate data and action planning should be clearer. However, APEs might have spared additional details here because of the further requirement for Schools to operate a separate action plan for completion rates. The APE action plan and the School action plan for completion rates need to be more closely aligned.
- Some APEs commented on data regarding employability and destinations, but not all programmes included this. The DLHE data is not used consistently. The University should define what data should be collated and used to reflect on PhD graduate employability.
- To support strategic priorities for research degree provision, the APE should capture information about student publications.

4. Challenges and areas for enhancement

- All Schools are progressing actions to improve completion rates. Most programmes reported that current cohorts of students are on target to complete.
- It was noted that some areas of the institutional framework require further clarification and refinement. Revised guidance may also be beneficial as guidance for staff is out of date. In particular, SMCSE noted a lack of clarity about what should happen when a student reaches the maximum period of candidature, and how to manage and support students who have not met progression milestones.
- The retention of research excellent staff who are Category A supervisors is essential to facilitate improved completion rates. Several Schools/Departments have noted challenges with academic staff departures, and the consequent impact on students (changing supervisors) and remaining academic staff (increased supervisory workloads).

- It is clear that students do not benefit from consistent access to high quality training, across the institution, to equip them with the skills to succeed in their studies. Opportunities vary considerably across Schools.

5. Actions planned

Actions identified by programmes include:

- Review of training provision (Cass PhD)
- Closer management of student progress by supervisors (Law PhD)
- Compulsory supervisor training (DPsych – BPS requirements)
- Increase training provision and encourage research culture (SMCSE)
- Managing completion rates (all)

6. Institutional themes and trends

Where the APE process is managed effectively the document can provide a useful reflection on the PhD programmes. Full consideration of these documents and proactive management of actions and reporting by BoS will provide Senate with assurance on the health of research degree provision. However, a review of the BoS minutes has highlighted that there is not sufficient evidence of discussion of matters related to research degrees and actions to address issues that are raised in the APEs. Where this discussion has taken place at a sub-Committee of the BoS a summary of relevant matters should be captured.

The following institutional themes are worthy of note:

- Many programmes are working hard to deliver a high quality of student experience, engaging with students and taking steps to manage student progress.
- There is a considerable degree of inconsistency in the experience of research degree students – the training that they receive/can access and the research environment within their School/Centre/Department.
- Action planning and follow up processes are not as robust. It is not clear how the oversight of the BoS ensures that these plans are enhanced to address all matters arising in the programme. There was no clear cross reference between programme APEs and School Action Plans for Completion Rates.
- The APE template for research programmes does not clearly align with the relevant strategic priorities – training provision, research environment, timely completions, graduate destinations etc.

The Graduate School Committee is asked to:

1. **note** the contents of the report.

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Student and Academic Services

June 2017

School/Programme	Strengths (including those highlighted by students and examiners)	Actions to address completion rates	Destinations/employability	2016/17 Actions	Additional comments/wider developments
<p>Cass Executive PhD</p>	<p>Flexible curriculum that can be shaped to accommodate the research interests of students.</p> <p>Flexible support for candidates who are part time and senior professionals.</p> <p>The cohort is small and so student feedback is collected as SSLC meetings and through evaluations that are completed at the end of residential weeks. Levels of student satisfaction appear to be good.</p>	<p>Taking in to account students who have suspended their studies, the Programme team reports that candidates are on target to complete on schedule.</p>	<p>Candidates are usually already in full time employment.</p>	<p>The Executive PhD is due to terminate in 2020. Students have been consulted (and reassured) about exit negotiations and ongoing support through to completion.</p> <p>Other issues include: locate suitable teaching rooms for the residential weeks, introduce training in presentation skills and include additional quantitative methods workshops.</p>	
<p>Cass MPhil/PhD programme</p>	<p>External examiners have reported that students are doing very good research and performing strongly in examinations.</p> <p>The Cass MPhil/PhD programme has a structured, taught component in the first year that gives students a solid foundation for their</p>	<p>Admissions procedures ensure that the School recruits the strongest possible candidates.</p> <p>The APE reports that completion rates are strong and that majority of students appear to be on track to complete within the required timescales.</p>	<p>Proactive measures have been developed to support student employability; these include seminars to prepare students for the academic jobs market, mock interviews and early assessment of student's potential to attend the international academic job market.</p>	<p>Re-instate the MRes as an exit award.</p> <p>Holistic review of the Year 1 training provision (with a view to the Periodic Review of the programme).</p> <p>Re-development of the PhD brochure.</p>	<p>The School note the challenges created by the loss of University funded Studentships.</p>

	<p>research. Students report that they are satisfied with the level of training provided.</p> <p>Students have also commended the high quality of support that they have received from the PhD Office.</p> <p>Cass encourage a vibrant research culture by ensuring students have access to academics from across the school; includes weekly lunches where students can learn about the current research activities of staff.</p>	<p>Students and supervisors are reminded to use RaP to monitor student progression.</p> <p>The School encourages a culture of supervisors and students meeting more frequently than recommended.</p>	<p>To support students' skills development the School has aimed to ensure that all students assist in some teaching related activity.</p> <p>Specific seminars are offered on support with publishing research and positioning work. Additionally, supervisors support students to develop papers that have improved chances at publication.</p>	<p>Complete student profile page.</p>	
School/Programme	Strengths (including those highlighted by students and examiners)	Actions to address completion rates	Destinations/employability	2016/17 Actions	Additional comments/wider developments
City Law School	<p>Students have commended the CLS internal specialised research training programme and PhD conference.</p> <p>Quality of support and supervision.</p> <p>Opportunities to be involved in teaching</p>	<p>Close monitoring of student progress by supervisors and the STR.</p> <p>Rigorous admissions procedures including interviews have helped to maintain the high quality of the programme.</p>	<p>CLS specialised training includes several sessions on career development and employability.</p>	<p>Closer monitoring of students by supervisors.</p>	

	<p>activities.</p> <p>Good overall student satisfaction.</p> <p>Monitoring of approved research supervisors inc. exemption details. Useful tool monitoring and tracking this aspect.</p>				
School/Programme	Strengths (including those highlighted by students and examiners)	Actions to address completion rates	Destinations/employability	2016/17 Actions	Additional comments/wider developments
SASS Professional Doctorate (DPsych) in Counselling Psychology	<p>Quality of feedback on assessed work.</p> <p>Collaborative approach of programme team and responsiveness to the students' needs and suggestions in redesigning aspects of the curriculum.</p> <p>The introduction of Specialist Supervision in Year 3</p> <p>Good overall student satisfaction</p> <p>Support to ensure that students are presenting at conferences.</p>	<p>Statistics suggest good completion rates</p> <p>Rigorous selections process.</p> <p>Proactive course management – including regular review of student progress towards completion and action where necessary.</p>	<p>Statistics indicate that 86.4% of students are in employment.</p> <p>Several students find employment with placement providers.</p> <p>A curriculum review has focused on embedding employability; as part of this initiative, new modules have been developed and specialist supervision is now offered to students in Year 3 to consolidate their clinical practice.</p> <p>BPS training sessions to support career planning.</p>	<p>Introduction of compulsory supervisor training (BPS requirement). Training materials have been developed, workshops have been delivered. Target is for all supervisors to have completed training by 2017/18.</p> <p>Development of a quality assurance process for supervisors and placement providers (BPS requirement). The BPS has approved the Programme Team's plan which they are now working to implement and refine.</p>	<p>Due for Periodic Review in 2019</p> <p>Challenges for programmes that do not secure a strong enough response rate to ensure the release of PRES data.</p>

	Positive feedback from placement providers about the quality of trainees, with several being offered posts at their placement provider upon completion.				
School/Programme	Strengths (including those highlighted by students and examiners)	Reflection on completion rates	Employability of research students	2016/17 Actions (include ongoing actions from 2015/16)	Additional comments/wider developments
SMCSE Department of Computing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPhil/PhD in Computer Science • MPhil/PhD in Creativity Science • MPhil/PhD in Geographical Information Science • MPhil/PhD in Health Informatics • MPhil/PhD in Human Computer Interaction • MPhil/PhD in Information Science • MPhil/PhD in Software Systems Engineering 	<p>The available data from the PRES survey 2015 indicates that students on the MPhil/PhD Computer Science programme had good levels of satisfaction with the quality of supervision, resources and research culture of the department.</p> <p>New welcome event for PhD students in Computer Science.</p> <p>Access for all students to the SMCSE conference attendance fund (up to £1000 per students). This funding helps to encourage student to publish their research.</p>	<p>There are a significant number of students who withdraw from the programme. Improvement is essential in the context of falling admissions.</p> <p>Some small improvements have been demonstrated in time to completion.</p>	<p>The Department has limited data on the destinations of graduates from the programme. DLHE data for 2014/15 shows that all of those students who responded are in employment.</p> <p>Students have been encouraged to access LEaD and City Careers Service events.</p>	<p>Increase training provision.</p> <p>Address the issue of declining admissions to the PhD programmes.</p> <p>Produce unified procedures for management of doctoral students across the school.</p>	<p>The Department is concerned about falling admissions to the programmes and wider implications for the research community in the department and the environment component and research outputs of the next REF.</p> <p>The School note the challenges created by the loss of University funded Studentships.</p> <p>The Department encourages students to access centrally provided training and workshops. Two departmental inductions per year.</p> <p>PhD students are able to access any relevant</p>

					<p>Masters module in the Department.</p> <p>Student in the Department have regularly raised concerns about access to training provision. A limited number of workshops are now provided, but provision in the Department does not compare well with other Schools or externally.</p>
<p>Department of Engineering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPhil/PhD in Aeronautical Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Air Transport Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Air Transport Management & Safety • MPhil/PhD in Air Safety Management • MPhil/PhD in Automotive Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Mechanical Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Energy Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Civil Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Geotechnical 	<p>PRES outcomes reflect strong levels of student satisfaction with supervision for Civil, Electronic Engineering and Mechanical Engineering and Aeronautics.</p> <p>Access for all students to the SMCSE conference attendance fund (up to £1000 per students). This funding helps to encourage student to publish their research.</p> <p>Students are happy that they have a new microwave.</p>	<p>Completion rates within the Department of Engineering are low.</p>	<p>The department does not have good information available. DLHE information has been provided separately.</p>	<p>Research centres are to be encouraged to have regular meetings with students to enhance the research culture.</p> <p>Ongoing management of the School action plan to improve completion rates.</p> <p>Research skills training for engineering students after the termination of the EPM697 module.</p>	<p>Student satisfaction with resources and research culture within their departments is lower than desirable.</p> <p>There is concern about the departure of a number of senior academic staff and the resulting impact on supervisory arrangements and capacity.</p> <p>The Department encourages students to access centrally provided training and workshops. Two departmental inductions per year.</p> <p>Ad hoc training workshops are provided in response to demand.</p>

<p>Engineering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPhil/PhD in Structural Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Hydraulic Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Applied Physics • MPhil/PhD in Communications Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Control Theory • MPhil/PhD in Control Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Biomedical Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Electrical Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Electronic Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Information Engineering • MPhil/PhD in Measurement & Instrumentation • MPhil/PhD in Mathematical Methods and Systems • MPhil/PhD in Photonics • MPhil/PhD in Systems and Modelling 					
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Appendix A

Template based on CLS example: Approved research supervisors

Please provide a list of approved Category A and Category B research supervisors.

Name and Title	Current PhD supervision category	Exemption	Exemption Details
Names removed for distribution	B		
	A	Y	From B to A
	B		
	B		
	A	Y	From B to A
	B		
	B		
	B		
	B		
	B		
	A	Y	From B to A
	B		
	B		

* Remains Category A supervisor for current doctoral students but a request for an exemption from policy must be sought prior to further Category A supervisory appointments. BOS ensures the continuity and quality of supervision in the event of a change in a supervisor's ARQM GPA score.