

**Graduate School Committee minutes, 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2018**

**Summary**

The March meeting of Graduate School Committee received updates on a number of strategic issues, including work to populate the institution's PGR completion key performance indicator, and discussions relating to Research Students who Teach. A meeting of a Committee sub-group on this issue had taken place in early March, with a summary paper presented to the Executive Committee, and separate meetings with Human Resources convened to progress contracting arrangements.

A number of policy changes were considered and discussed, including the removal of maternity/paternity/adoption leave in calculation of suspension limits, and the principles governing policies relating to transfers of registration (upgrade, annual progression, writing-up). In light of discussion, these policies would be redrafted and received by a future committee meeting or submitted to School Boards of Studies for consultation and approval, as appropriate.

No actions required.

**Recommended Action**

Senate is asked to **note** the attached minutes. Where Schools contest proposed policy revisions, these will be brought back to Graduate School Committee, and if necessary Senate, for discussion and approval.

**Publication: Open**

**CITY GRADUATE SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
MEETING 23 HELD ON 22<sup>nd</sup> MARCH 2018  
UNCONFIRMED MINUTES**

**Attendance List**

Name of Member		Meeting 20 20/09/2017	Meeting 21 14/11/2017	Meeting 22 19/01/2018	Meeting 23 22/03/2018
Staff members	Professor Ken Grattan (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professor Steve Cottrell	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professor Davide Ravasi	✓	A	✓	A
	Dr Giovanni Cespa	A	A	N/A	N/A
	Dr Andreas Tsanakas	N/M	A	A	N/A
	Professor Gary Morgan	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Professor Chris Hull	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Dr Youyou Yan	A	✓	✓	A
	Ms Stephanie Wilson	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Professor Panos Koutrakos	✓	✓	A	A
	Professor Susannah Quinsee	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Professor Pam Parker	A	A	✓	✓
	Dr Jessica Hancock	N/M	N/M	✓	✓
	Professor Andrew Jones	N/A	A	N/A	✓
	Professor Charles Baden-Fuller (Senate representative)	N/A	S	S	A
Student Members	Malek Arab (Students' Union, Vice-President Education)	✓	A	A	A
	Aurora Herrera (student representative)	✓	✓	✓	A

In attendance: Richard Alderman (Secretary), Alison Edridge, Claire Packham, Holly Toms

Attendance key:

- ✓ Present
- A Apologies received
- N/A No apologies received
- N/M Period when not a member
- S On Sabbatical leave

**Part One – Preliminary Items**

**1. Apologies and welcome**

The Chair opened the meeting and **welcomed** members; apologies **received** and **noted**.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the City Graduate School Committee held on 19 January 2018 were **approved** as an accurate record.

**3. Matters Arising**

The Committee **noted** the Matters Arising.

The Chair reported that a second tranche of funding of approximately £27k had been made available from the University of London, via Development and Alumni Relations, to provide PGR conference travel bursaries. These would be advertised shortly.

**Action: Chair, Secretary**

#### **4. Chair's Business**

The Deputy Director of Learning Enhancement and Development reported that the bid to the HEFCE Catalyst Fund had been unsuccessful, but that PGR wellbeing would still be looked at as part of activity relating the broader Universities UK 'Stepchange' campaign concerning student mental health.

### **Part Two – Reports from Student Members**

#### **5. Update from Students' Union**

This update was provided as part of discussion relating to Item 8

#### **6. Update from Graduate School student representative**

This update was provided as part of discussion relating to Item 8.

### **Part Three – Report from Vice-President (Research and Enterprise)**

#### **7. Update from Vice-President (Research and Enterprise)**

The Vice-President reported that the review of research student support was currently undertaking external benchmarking, which would then be drawn together in a report to the University. This would be received by the July Graduate School Committee meeting.

Work has continued on improving City's suitability to join Doctoral Training Centres, particularly additional subject pathways in the current SENSS DTC and four applications as part of the recent EPSRC call – PhD training may be facilitated through the Alan Turing Institute.

The current annual planning round has asked Schools to look at strategic actions relating to PhD recruitment, progression and completion, and employability; the planning round would also consider recommendations for PhD vibrancy per REF Unit of Assessment.

### **Part Four – Items for Discussion**

#### **8. Research Students who Teach**

As agreed at the previous Committee meeting, a sub-group had been convened and met in early February, including the Director of Human Resources, to discuss ongoing concerns relating to supporting Research Students who Teach. A paper was submitted to Executive Committee (ExCo) on the 27<sup>th</sup> March summarising issues raised, including the following actions:

- To write to all international research students engaged in teaching, outlining actions to be taken by September 2018
- With the support of the ExCo, for the Deputy Director of Human Resources to progress systems changes required to separate studentship and teaching contracting
- To work with Schools on standardising contracting arrangements (e.g. offer letters, separation of teaching and studentship payments)

Whilst Graduate School Committee will continue to have oversight of the issues raised, the remedial actions would now have to be progressed principally through Human Resources. Schools reported that they had been required to set up contracts themselves, and that rates of pay vary both within Schools as well as between Schools - it was desirable to move to a single GTA contract. ExCo was in agreement that pay should be equal for the same work, and where City-funded studentships are presented as a stipendiary studentship, that they should mirror Research Councils UK rates and terms and conditions.

It was **agreed** that once Human Resources actions had progressed and a consistent University position was agreed, that the Students' Union and trade unions would be involved, following the principles noted.

**Action: Chair, Human Resources**

#### **9. Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave for Research Students and interrelationship with policy on Application for Period of Suspension**

The Committee received a paper summarising recent student cases where the policy on Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave (granting a suspension of up to 12 months) could be seen to conflict with the policy on Application for Period of Suspension (imposing a 24 month maximum without exceptional approval). Circumstances may arise where multiple pregnancies, for instance, were treated inequitably when other suspensions have also been approved, in contravention of equalities legislation.

Having considered other institutions' policy, the committee **agreed** to revise the suspensions policy to consider cases of maternity, pregnancy and adoption outside the limit imposed for other suspensions, as part of the consultation to be received by Boards of Studies shortly. As part of this policy revision, the Committee **noted** that the treatment of other protected characteristics as part of the Equality Act 2010 should be reviewed, as well as implications of cumulative suspensions beyond 24 months for Tier 4 visa holders.

**Action: Secretary**

#### **10. Completion Rates**

The Committee received a summary of work undertaken by Schools and Strategic Planning and Performance Unit to record the first submission of thesis date in City's student records system, to allow more accurate reporting of the University's completion rate as a key performance indicator.

Once the retrospective input of historic data is completed, it is hoped that the four/seven year completion rate will be reported in the summer, and then reviewed by the Committee on a regular basis.

#### **11. Research and Progress (RaP) review**

The Committee received a brief report on work undertaken to date on identifying a replacement postgraduate research progression monitoring system. The licence for Research and Progress has been renewed to September 2019, but it is hoped that a replacement system can be agreed by October 2018.

Committee members were keen that the replacement options are presented to the Schools once identified for consultation, as well as feedback on the current system.

**Action: Secretary**

#### **12. Policy and Guidance Revisions**

The Committee considered a discussion paper on policies relating to transfers of registration (upgrade, annual progress review, transfer to writing up, intention to submit) and the principles that should underpin their review.

The committee discussed current approaches to upgrade and progress review, noting that issues of student progression initiate difficult conversations, and that practices (consistent approaches to assessment) are in many instances the challenge rather than the policies that underpin. Committee members took the view that automatic transfers of registration (e.g. to writing up status after three full-time years) should not be implemented, but that expectations (e.g. maximum, finite periods of registration) should be more prominent.

Revised policies would be drafted and received by the Committee in light of the discussions.

**Action: Secretary**

### 13. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Action Plan

The committee **noted** the action plan and progress on actions to date.

### Part Three – Items for Information

### 14. AoB and date of next meeting

The committee **agreed** to consider Annual Leave for research students at the May meeting.

**Action: Secretary**

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May from 11.30am to 1.00pm in Room AG02 (College Building, Northampton Square)

Richard Alderman  
Assistant Registrar (Research Degrees)  
March 2018