

21st May 2009

University of Birmingham

Annual Report from the Progress and Awards Board

The most recent meeting of the Board on 31st March 2009 was attended by:

Professor Stephen Shute, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality & Students) (Chair), Mr Ralph Bailey (College of Social Sciences), Professor Kevin Chipman (College of Life & Environmental Sciences), Professor Ken Dowden (College of Arts & Law), Ms Claire Evans (Academic & Student Administration), Mr Paul Fantom (Academic & Student Administration), Professor John Gordon (College of Medical & Dental Sciences), Dr Ray Jones (College of Engineering & Physical Sciences), Ms Vicki Phillips (Academic & Student Administration), Professor Chris Thomas (Graduate School)

1. Terms of Reference

The Progress and Awards Board's Terms of Reference sets out its role:

1	To determine recommendations made notwithstanding regulations (where special or mitigating circumstances have not been considered by the School) received from Boards of Examiners for taught programmes.
2	To approve a request for a change to the minimum period of study (i.e. a reduction in the minimum period of registration).
3	To identify quality issues relating to examination processing and to report, as appropriate, to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).
4	To identify academic policy and regulatory issues and to report, as appropriate, to the Academic Policy & Regulatory Committee (APRC).
5	To receive annually: Reports of Schools' examination procedures including those for special or mitigating circumstances and information provided by Schools to students on mitigations. Anonymised summary data on special circumstances or mitigations considered by Schools. Summary data on Primary Appeals Committee cases referred back to Boards of Examiners. Examination processing guidance and requirements. Summary data on those students who do not receive the intended qualification. Summary data on postgraduate research programmes and student achievement.
6	To consider data on withdrawal and completion rates and, as appropriate, to report to QAEC and APRC.

2. Recommendations from the Progress and Awards Board to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

APRC is requested to **consider and approve:**

- (a) Proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel, which are set out in the attached Appendix A (insertions underlined, deletions struck through).
- (b) The following amendment to University Regulation 7.4.7 (e) to ensure consistency with the above-mentioned proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel:

Where the Registered Student is required to make minor/major corrections, the Registered Student is permitted one opportunity to complete the corrections to the satisfaction of the examiners. The award of the degree is withheld until a 'Certificate of Correction' is provided by the internal examiner for minor corrections and by all examiners for major corrections. ~~With the approval of Senate or delegated authority, a Registered Student may be permitted to carry out further minor corrections. Any further corrections must be included in the examiners' original list of corrections.~~

3. Reports from the Progress and Awards Board

Since its inauguration in the autumn of 2008, when it replaced the former Progress and Awards Board of Senate, there have been two meetings of the Progress and Awards Board, on 17th November 2008 and 31st March 2009 respectively.

- (a) The Board **reports** that the following items of business were transacted at its meeting on 17th November 2008:

- (i) Terms of Reference and Membership of the Progress and Awards Board

Amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Board and to Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel were proposed and were then considered by APRC at its meeting on 3rd February 2009.

- (ii) Chair's Action

The Board considered and approved a summary of Chair's action on recommendations notwithstanding Regulations taken by members on behalf of the Board for the period September to November 2008.

- (iii) Reports to the Board

The Board received reports on:

- Students failing to receive intended qualifications and on examination irregularities.
- Decisions made by Boards of Examiners.
- Recommendations from Boards of Examiners, notwithstanding Regulations, where no circumstances had been presented.
- Reports on minutes received.

- (b) The Board **reports** that the following items of business were transacted at its last meeting on 31st March 2009:

(i) Terms of Reference and Membership of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel

Further amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel having been made at the 3 February 2009 meeting of APRC, were considered by the Board. Additional amendments were proposed for APRC's consideration, which are set out in point 2 above.

(ii) Reports to the Board

The Board received reports and an analysis of data concerning students on undergraduate, postgraduate taught programmes and postgraduate research programmes who withdraw or are awarded an alternative lower qualification, a report on postgraduate research submission data and a report on primary appeals.

(iii) Chair's Action

The Board considered and approved a summary of Chair's action on recommendations notwithstanding Regulations taken by members on behalf of the Board for the period November 2008 to March 2009.

(iv) Report on Special and Mitigating Circumstances

The Board received and approved the recommendations of the meetings of two Reasonable Diligence Panels.

(v) Examinations Guidance 2008/09

The Board received the Examinations Processing Guide for 2008/09.

Paul Fantom
Policy Officer, Academic Policy
(Secretary to the Progress and Awards Board)
(p.a.fantom@bham.ac.uk/ 48471)

**Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel
(a Sub-Panel of the Progress and Awards Board)**

Secretary: Dr Chris Twine (Academic and Student Administration)

Terms of Reference

1		To determine decisions within Postgraduate Research Degree Programme regulations:
	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ratify examiners' recommendations where the recommendation is To reject the thesis To award an alternative qualification To request the student to revise and resubmit their thesis
	1.2	To approve a request for a waiver of the oral examination
	1.3	To approve a request for a change to the minimum period of study (i.e. a reduction in the minimum period of registration).
	1.4	To approve a request to backdate registration.
	1.5	To approve a request for a leave of absence.
	1.6	To approve a request for an extension to the maximum period of study.
	1.7	To approve early submission of theses (i.e. within the minimum period of study).
	1.8	To ratify decisions around students required to withdraw
	1.9	To approve the non-standard appointment of examiners, supervisors and chairs (Code of Practice: Supervision and Monitoring Progress of Research Students (section 2)).
	1.10	To approve the transfers of students between programmes (excluding the transfer of a student from MPhil to PhD).
	1.11	To approve a request for a thesis or report to be submitted in a language other than English.
	1.12	To consider and approve cases where a postgraduate research student is studying on a split location basis and a local academic adviser is not appointed.
	1.13	To consider and approve requests by postgraduate research students to change their mode of study part-way through their period of research, i.e. from or to study on a split location basis.
2		To determine decisions concerning the progress and status of individual research students and the eligibility of to consider requests for courses of action to be taken as matters notwithstanding University Regulations.

Composition and Membership

Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students) in the Chair	Professor Stephen Shute
Fifteen academic members of staff, three from each College, nominated by the relevant Head of College*:	
Arts & Law	(1) Professor Susan Hunston (2) Ms Sonia Harris-Short (3) Professor Leslie Brubaker
Social Sciences	(1) Dr Chris Corcoran (2) Dr Tim Freeman (3) Dr Jo Duberley
Life & Environmental Sciences	(1) Dr Jan Oyeboode (2) Professor Joan Duda (3) Professor John Bryson
Engineering & Physical Sciences	(1) Dr Alison Davenport (2) Dr Roy Johnston (3) Dr Peter Hancox
Medical & Dental Sciences	(1) Professor Colette Clifford (2) Professor David Luesley (3) Dr Dick Shelton

Following decisions by examiners, where clear and consistent recommendations had been made and there was no evidence of irregularity in the conduct of the examination, these and other unproblematic cases would be referred to one member of the Sub Panel.

More complex cases, cases notwithstanding Regulations and cases where the member is unable to confirm the recommendation of the examiners, or is unable to approve a request under Section 1 of these Terms of Reference, will be referred to three members of the Sub Panel, including the Chair, who will normally consult via email and only meet in the event of a failure to reach a full decision. dealt with under the following arrangements:

- (i) The case to be referred to two members of the Sub-Panel, who will normally consult via email, and who will communicate their ~~decisions~~ recommendations to the Assistant Student Records Manager (Research Programmes), Academic & Student Administration.
- (ii) The case and the decisions of the two Sub-Panel members will be referred to the Chair for consideration, the Chair's decision being communicated to the Assistant Student Records Manager (Research Programmes), Academic & Student Administration.
- (iii) ~~In the event of a failure to reach a decision, a~~ A meeting of the Chair and two Sub-Panel members ~~to~~ may be convened by the Assistant Student Records Manager (Research Programmes), Academic & Student Administration.

Reporting frequency

Reports to the March meeting of the Progress and Awards Board (PAB):

- Annual report on Sub-Panel decisions
- Annual report on submission rates
- Annual report on examiners' recommendations
- Annual report on exceptional appointment of examiners
- Annual report on decisions notwithstanding Regulations

Reporting relationship

Reports to PAB and, via PAB, to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC) and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).