

University of Birmingham

**Terms of Reference and Membership of the Progress and Awards Board
and of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel**

Topic and Purpose of this Paper

1. The Progress and Awards Board is a Sub-Committee of APRC and, in turn, the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel reports to the Progress and Awards Board. Accordingly, approval of amendments to the Terms of Reference and membership of both the Progress and Awards Board and the Sub-Panel should be determined by both APRC and the Progress and Awards Board.
2. For APRC to **consider** and **approve** both the Terms of Reference and membership of the Progress and Awards Board and the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel, attached as Appendices A and B respectively, together with the amendment to the Sub-Panel's Terms of Reference and, for consistency, a complementary amendment to the University's Regulations.

Proposal

3. That the following new clause be added to the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel, as 1.14:

To approve a request from the examiners for postgraduate research students to carry out one further set of minor modifications to their thesis.

4. That University Regulation 7.4.7 (e) be amended as follows (additional text underlined) in order to ensure consistency with the additional clause 1.14 above:

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. In exceptional circumstances and with the approval of Senate or delegated authority, a request having been made by the examiners, a Registered Student may be permitted to carry out one further set of minor corrections to their thesis. Unless these further minor corrections arose from the Registered Student having undertaken major corrections, then they must have been included in the examiners' original list of corrections.

Background and Context

5. During the 2008/09 academic session, meetings of APRC and the Progress and Awards Board gave consideration to the issue of whether Registered Students should be permitted to carry out further minor corrections to their thesis. It was resolved that rather than adding this function to the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel, determination of these matters should be matters dealt with under Section 2 of the Terms of Reference for the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel. In practice, this has often required consideration by two members of the Sub-Panel before referral to the Chair of the Sub-Panel, the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students).
6. However, as this arrangement has proven to be administratively cumbersome, with the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor receiving a large and increasing number of such requests for consideration. It is proposed, therefore, that a more efficient manner of undertaking this responsibility could be achieved via a revision of the Terms of Reference of the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel and that an amendment be made to the University Regulations, as detailed above. The Chair of the Sub-Panel has recently circulated a note clarifying the procedures for corrections and requests for further minor corrections.

Argument in Support of the Proposal

7. The proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference will ensure that a second attempt at corrections is granted only in exceptional circumstances and will continue to allow the Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel sufficient scope to effectively exercise its functions as a Sub-Panel of the Progress and Awards Board. The proposed amendment to University Regulation 7.4.7 (e) ensures consistency of approach and in the interpretation of the Terms of Reference and Regulations on this matter

Paul Fantom
Academic Policy and Curriculum Development Officer
Academic and Student Administration

Progress and Awards Board
(A sub-committee of Academic Policy and Regulations Committee)

Secretary: Clare McCauley (Academic and Student Administration)

Terms of Reference

Taught Programmes

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 ensure that the recommendations of Boards of Examiners have been made in accordance with Regulations and relevant Codes of Practice, including the Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable Diligence.
3	To determine cases where a procedural irregularity has been made during the proceedings of Boards of Examiners and a decision has been made contrary to Regulations.
4	To identify quality issues relating to examination processing and to report, as appropriate, to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).
5	To identify academic policy and regulatory issues and to report, as appropriate, to the Academic Policy & Regulatory Committee (APRC).
6	To approve a request for a change to the minimum period of study (i.e. a reduction in the minimum period of registration).
7	To receive annually: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 cases heard under the Code of Practice on Student Attendance and Reasonable Diligence. - Summary data on Primary Appeals Committee cases referred back to Boards of Examiners. - Examination processing guidance and requirements.

Research Programmes

See attached terms of reference for Research Progress and Awards Sub-Panel (Attached Appendix A)

Composition and Membership for 2008/09

Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students) in the Chair	Professor Jeff Bale
Two representative from Heads of Schools	(1) Professor Kevin Chipman, College of Life & Environmental Sciences. (2) Professor Ken Dowden, College of Arts & Law
One representative from Head of Academic Programmes or equivalent	Dr Ray Jones, College of Engineering & Physical Sciences
One representative from College Directors of Graduate Schools/ Directors of Research and Knowledge Transfer	Professor John Gordon, College of Medicine & Dentistry
One representative from the Exams Officers	Mr Ralph Bailey, College of Social Sciences

In attendance as appropriate

Student Records Manager (Taught Programmes), Academic & Student Administration

Meeting frequency

The Board shall meet up to 4 times per year:

- March (if required) - to review examination processing guidance and requirements.
- June - to consider issues arising from the Main Summer examination period.
- September - to consider issues arising from the Supplementary examination period.
- November - to consider issues arising from the Taught Postgraduate final examination period.

Reporting relationship

Reports to Academic Policy and Regulations Committee on policy and regulatory issues arising from Boards of Examiners and can provide reports to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on the examination process and on general issues that may arise.

Appendix B

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

Secretary: Mrs Claire Evans (Academic and Student Administration)

Terms of Reference

1		To determine decisions within Postgraduate Research Degree Programme regulations:
	1.1	To ratify examiners' recommendations where the recommendation is: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.
	<u>1.14</u>	<u>To approve a request from the examiners for postgraduate research students to carry out one further set of minor modifications to their thesis.</u>

2	To determine decisions concerning the progress and status of individual research students and the eligibility of requests for courses of action to be taken as matters notwithstanding University Regulations.
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Composition and Membership

Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Students) in the Chair	Professor Jeff Bale
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 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) A meeting of the Chair and two Sub-Panel members 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).