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**Request for exemption from the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research
Degree Theses, section 5.2.2, for the MRes Biomedical Research**

Topic and purpose of the paper

1. To request an extension of the existing exemption from the Code of Practice on Assessment of Research Degree Theses, section 5.2.2, governing Oral Examinations in Postgraduate Research programmes for the MRes Biomedical Research, in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences. It is requested that this exemption continues from the expiration date of the current exemption (from 2012/13 session) and remains in effect for as long as the programme shall run.

Consultation

2. This extension has been requested following consultation with MDS and Registry. John Marriot, Director of Education for MDS has approved this request at a College level.

Proposal(s) / recommendation(s)

3. That the MRes Biomedical Research be granted exemption from the following section of the Code of Practice:

5.2.2 The decision on whether to hold an oral examination shall be taken with the agreement of both the internal and external examiners. An oral examination must be held in all cases where examiners are proposing that the thesis be rejected.

4. That instead, all students undertaking the MRes Biomedical Science be required to undertake an oral examination.

Background

5. The MRes Biomedical Research programme (8514) is the programme that students registered in the College MDS on 4 year MRes/PhD (1+3) studentships undertake in their 1st year. The MRes is not offered as a stand-alone programme and is seen very much as the training year before students embark on their PhD (subject to satisfactory completion of the MRes). The completion of two laboratory rotations and the write-up of these two projects into a thesis is the key component of the programme, forming a notional 150 credits of the programme with the remaining 30 credits obtained through taught modules.
6. Under University regulations for M-level programmes, an oral examination may be held at the discretion of the examiners, however, a permanent exemption is being requested from this discretionary element for this specific

programme as the College wish the oral examination to be compulsory for all the students on the programme.

7. In May 2011, Chair's Action was taken on behalf of APRC to approve a temporary exemption for the MRes Biomedical Research, in order to allow students in 2010/11 and 2011/12 to be exempt from 5.2.2 and that the requirement to undertake an oral examination would be mandatory. This was requested on a temporary basis as the programme was due to undergo restructure at the end of the 2011/12 academic session, at which point the exemption was due to be reviewed.
8. It has subsequently been decided that even once the MRes restructure takes place, the requirement for all students to undertake an oral examination will still be needed for the reasons set out below.

Arguments to Support Proposal

9. All students will be informed at the start of term that it will be a requirement for them to undertake an oral examination.
10. With the MRes viewed as a training year for the PhD proper, by making the oral examination a compulsory element of the programme the students are gaining vital exposure, experience and understanding of the oral examination process which will be of substantial benefit when they undertake their oral examination for their PhD. The School wish a student on the programme to be given the opportunity to be in the position where they have to defend their work, discuss their research and explore the ideas and theories proposed within their thesis.
11. It is requested that the reports sent to the examiners of the MRes students indicate that an oral examination is compulsory.

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