Graduate School Office Supervisor Update
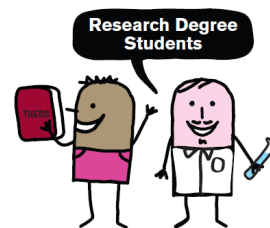
Regulation Amendment

Gaining Internal Examiner Experience

Following feedback from Faculties regarding the challenges staff face in gaining experience as an internal examiner at viva voce examinations; a new regulation has been approved by Research Degrees Committee and Academic Board.

Regulation 16.7:

Proposals for Examination Arrangements will normally identify only one Internal Examiner who must have previously **observed** or participated in at least two research degrees and 'self certified' their experience with the Graduate School Office. In addition h/she must have attended the Certificate in Research Supervision.

A 'new internal examiner' is one who is gaining experience in the processes but has not yet reached the standing of experienced internal examiner. Normally, after **observing** or participating in two examinations a new internal examiner shall be eligible to become an experienced internal examiner.

The 'observing' member of staff will not act as a full member of the examining team but it is envisaged would meet with the internal examiner at the point of completing the 'pre-viva' report to understand the purpose the report and the type of issues that would normally be recorded on it. The observer would also attend the examiners meeting ahead of the actual viva in order to witness how the examiners agree the type and order of questions to raise with the student during the exam and then the viva itself, including the examiners discussion of outcome.

Once a member of staff has acted as an observer on two separate occasions, a 'Self Certification of Internal Examiner Experience' form needs to be completed and submitted to researchstudents@dmu.ac.uk which can then be formally recorded.

GSO Staffing News

Farewell to our CKT!

Research Student Officer Claire Kaylor-Tilley is leaving the GSO on 2nd May to take up the post of Senior International Partnerships Officer in Educational Partnerships.   Claire joined the GSO team in February 2012 and has played an instrumental role in enhancing our scholarship administration and developed new approaches to improving our communication with student reps and has also taken the lead with the ADH Faculty in the 'Midlands3Cities' Consortium administration.

Claire Kaylor-Tilley

"It has been a privilege to have worked in the GSO; the staff are hard working and dedicated and I would like to acknowledge that here and thank them all, behind the scenes they do a great job of keeping the wheels on and I have really enjoyed working with the team.   Whilst I will be sad to leave such a supportive team behind I am very much looking forward to making my new role a success and am also relishing a new challenge"

The GSO team wish you the very best of luck Claire.

Student Voice: Library & Learning Services

Communication with Research Students

The GSO, through the Research Training Committee, funded a 12 month research project initiated by staff in Library and Learning Services (LLS) which aimed to explore communication approaches between the library and research degree students; the project concluded in December 2013.   The Project Group was drawn from teams across the Directorate of Library and Learning Services which all offer research support services:

* Alan Cope   Repository Officer, Archives and Resource Management
* Dr Katie Fraser   Assistant Librarian, Academic Liaison
* Julie Lowe   ELT Project Officer, (CELT)
* Dr Melanie Petch   Senior Lecture in Writing Development, (CLaSS)
* Nathan Rush   Assistant Librarian, Academic Liaison.

The group's previous experiences suggested that the Directorate's services were under-utilised by research degree students as a community, even though individual researchers were committed and enthusiastic users. The project therefore took an action research approach to identify avenues where LLS could improve communication approaches and ensure that future training and support was tailored to their needs.

A literature review identified potential areas where communication could fall down. This was followed by two empirical studies. In order to avoid preconceptions about what the key issues might be the project took a broad approach, aiming to gain a better understanding of the experience of being a doctoral researcher at DMU. The aim was to place researchers' interaction with LLS in the context of their *whole* PhD. Focus groups and questionnaires were used. Particular themes which arose in the focus groups, and were corroborated in the questionnaires were:

☐ that PhD researchers had distinct needs which could be better reflected in the Directorate's communications and provision of services, including supporting their identity as researchers, and facilitating communities of support
☐ that LLS needed to convey better its relevance to PhD researchers, and ensure that this group received a clear and consistent message across all aspects of its provision
☐ that precise timing of messages was critical to the receptiveness of researchers to LLS communications, and to the usefulness of its provision.

With these major themes in mind, the following recommendations are made:

☐ To ensure all communication with PhD researchers acknowledges their status as members of the research community, including the use of language (*doctoral researchers* preferred to *research students*), the services on offer, and the active marketing of these services.
☐ To increase the sense of community among PhD researchers by coordinating the timing of formal and informal training opportunities and extending existing networks online, where possible. This can build upon the GSO's progress in delivering online versions of modules on the Researcher Development Programme.
☐ To ensure full integration of LLS in the research lifecycle by collaboration with other key stake-holders in the PhD process, particularly supervisors and the GSO, and improvement of the timeliness of communications and interventions aimed at PhD researchers.
☐ To ensure that PhD researchers are given a clear, consistent and persistent message about LLS by the development of a marketing and communication strategy targeted to researchers in general, considering doctoral researchers as a subgroup with their own additional needs and requirements.

These recommendations aim to generate better take up of LLSs' current offering, support that better reflects the real journey of researchers studying for a PhD at DMU, and communication that is both relevant and effective.   Enquiries about the project can be directed to Katie Fraser at kfraser@dmu.ac.uk.

Student Experience: Research Degree Poster Competition

Are we going to be Moocers Soon?

Why not find out by asking one of our PhD students at the Research Degree Poster Competition on **9th April,** online Moocs is just one of the many subjects covered!

We are delighted to announce that this year we have received a record 39 poster entries from research students for the poster competition, the highest number since the event began 7 years ago. By Faculty, the following entries have been received:

Faculty of Art, Design and Humanities	5
Faculty of Technology	22
Faculty of Business and Law	3
Faculty of Health and Life Sciences	9

The event will take place in the Campus Centre, room 2.01 between 10.30-4.00, with winners announced around 3.30.

Do come along and support your research students, we look forward to seeing you there.

Under Consultation: Changes in PhD Thesis Format

Changes in PhD Thesis Format

The Research Degrees Committee is currently considering a change in the format of PhD thesis submissions to allow the inclusion of publishable papers in place of traditional chapters. Recently, a number of Universities have adopted this format in which chapters of the thesis may be replaced by papers submitted or prepared for publication in a recognised academic journal. This format tends to be used more by science and technology research students.   Faculties have been asked to consider this and feedback to RDC.

This change in thesis format would not replace the current PhD thesis format; it is proposed that in addition to the standard 'chapter' format of thesis submission, the composition of the research degree thesis could take the form of papers of publishable standard accompanied by a critical, theoretical overview and concluding discussion. In considering the proposed regulations the committee agreed that papers included in such a thesis should be presented in a format compatible with submission to a peer reviewed journal.

RDC has decided against a 'hybrid' thesis comprising chapters and publishable papers as this was deemed to create too much confusion for both doctoral researchers, supervisors and examiners.

Particular points to be discussed further include the minimum number of publishable papers required, it was agreed there should be reference to this and a preliminary recommendation that this would normally be at least three papers.

> RDC is inviting a broader discussion with other groups/committees in the University and Faculty Heads of Research students will be leading consultations within your Faculty. You can also contact the Director of the Graduate School, Professor Martin Elliott, with your views.

Student Feedback: PRES Outcomes

The Research Degrees Committee meeting of January 2014 considered the results of the PRES evaluation that was concluded in the Autumn of 2013. The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey is carried out in the HE sector nationally with all currently enrolled PGR students every two years.

The PRES results allows a comparison of DMU data to pre-defined comparison sets against the sector (all UK HEIs taking part) and the benchmark group (post-1992 comparison group). There are some DMU specific questions that do not have a sector/benchmark comparison. Results are not available by Faculty.

The participation rate for DMU PGR students was a disappointing 12.5%, this was despite a 3 month promotional campaign. However, whilst the limits of a 12.5% response rate is acknowledged, the University maintains a strategic commitment to using PRES as part of an overall improvement planning tool for research students. Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Professor Andy Collop has confirmed the University will draw up a joint response owned by both Faculties and the Graduate School Office.

It is very pleasing to report some good news from the PRES results:

✓ student satisfaction levels with supervision are within sector norms and slightly *above* benchmark norms.
✓ Satisfaction with progress and assessment are also showing encouraging levels with our score being 2.9% above sector levels.
✓ Student satisfaction levels for agreeing a personal training plan or development are 20.9% above sector norms
✓ Students satisfaction levels for receiving training to develop research skills are 10.3% above our benchmark (post-1992 comparison group)

However, there are some areas where DMU performance is unsatisfactory, in particular 'research culture' and 'research resources'. Pro Vice Chancellor Collop has requested Faculty Executive Committees discuss the PRES results and propose actions to address the specific areas of lowest satisfaction levels.

The completed Action Plan will then be formally considered by the Research Degrees Committee and progress will be monitored through RDC and reported to QAEC and Academic Board.

Further information concerning PRES can be obtained from Jan Hewitt in the GSO.

High Flyers Scholarships Awarded

The Vice Chancellor's High Flyers PhD Scholarships scheme is designed to encourage the retention of our highest quality students to remain at DMU to study for their PhD. Only DMU graduates who obtain a first class honours degree at UGT level or a distinction at PGT level are eligible to apply. Following a recruitment process led Pro Vice Chancellor Collop, the scholarships for 2014/15 have been awarded to:

Student	Faculty	Supervisors
James Fenwick	TEC	Ian Hunter, James Russell
Pamela Hardaker	TEC	Ben Passow, David Elizondo
Shelton Giwa	BAL	Anne Broderick, Suha Omar
William Murithi	BAL	Natalia Vershinina, Kassa Woldesenbet Beta, Ram Monder
Paris Connolly	HLS	Mary Larkin, Stephen Hadsley, Martin Grootveld

Process Refresh

Formal Review

The Formal Review is the process by which the University confirms research degree students onto the award aim of PhD (with the exception of MA/MSc by Research and MPhil students). Prior to October 2012, students initially registered for MPhil underwent a similar 'Transfer' process. All students enrolled after 1 October 2012 will go through the Formal Review process, students enrolled before October 2012 and initially registered for MPhil will go through the 'Transfer' process.

Formal Review takes place:

- Full Time   12-15 months after enrolment
- Part time   18-24 months after enrolment

The specific timing of the process depends on the student's enrolment date and the GSO emails all new students with their submission date, this email is copied to the first supervisor.

The Formal Review generally coincides with the stage of research where there has been time to conduct an in-depth literature review of the subject area, preparatory work for the body of research has been undertaken and initial use has been made of the chosen research methodology or approach. The purpose of the formal review is to provide evidence that the student is capable, in the view of the supervisors and assessors, of reaching the necessary level for the eventual award of PhD.

Students applying for formal review will be required to submit a written report (between 5,000 to 10,000 words) and attend an interview with an assessor. The report should evidence analytic insight/theoretical development where appropriate and demonstrate an investigation plan that addresses the issues identified. The report also should outline progress to date, the work to be done and the anticipated original contribution to knowledge. Further student guidance is on the GSO web pages.

The Process

- The student emails the *fully completed* form 'Application for Formal Progression within the Doctoral Researcher Programme to PhD' to the GSO with the Formal Review Report. The form has a section for the supervisors to complete.

- GSO asks the First Supervisor to nominate an academic assessor who is not part of the supervision team

- GSO seeks approval of assessor from the Faculty Head of Research Students

- All documents are then sent on to the assessor by the GSO

- After reading the Report, assessor interviews the student, notifies the GSO of the outcome and the GSO confirms this to the student

Points to remember

- ✓ A member of staff who has been the internal assessor for the Formal Review cannot then act as internal examiner for the viva voce examination; this is to preserve the integrity of total academic independence of the final assessment of the work.

- ✓ A member of staff who is a research degree student cannot be nominated as an internal assessor for the Formal Review process.

- ✓ In the year the Formal Review takes place, there is no requirement for students to also undergo an Annual Review.