

Graduate School Office Supervisor Update

June 2014 Edition 5

GSO Staffing News

Farewell to Professor Martin Elliott

Director of the Graduate School Professor Martin Elliott departs GSO shores in August to resume his academic role in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences.

Martin joined the newly formed Graduate School Office in 2009 and has played an instrumental role in introducing new PGR policies and initiatives.

We asked Martin to offer his reflections on the last five years:

“Since taking on the role of Director following the inception of the Graduate School in 2009, my life has been busy, at times frantic, but always interesting and frequently entertaining. Changing from poacher (supervisor) to game-keeper (administrator) meant I already knew quite a few tricks concerning how to avoid forms and delay deadlines but now my job was to ensure that staff and students understood their importance and would willingly comply. Oh that life was that simple !



Professor Martin Elliott

In the last five years, however, I have overseen the introduction of a range of new ideas and revisions which I'm sure will strengthen our postgraduate research community into the future such as the introduction of MA/MSc by Research degree programmes; the replacement of MPhil_Transfer and PhD_Direct by the Doctoral Researcher Programme; the development of online training modules and the inauguration of the Doctoral Training Programmes.

My most tangible achievement has been the RDQR, HEFCE's measure of successful PhD completions, which started in 2010 at a woeful 60% but by 2013 had increased to 77% and in 2014 is anticipated to be 88%, taking us from near the bottom of the inevitable league table to reasonably near the top.

But the most significant legacy will not be revealed until after I leave, namely the PGR software management system. For most of the last five years I've battled to convince the university that we desperately need to replace the manual paper-based system by a modern online system with full transparency for students and supervisors. I guarantee that two years from now we'll wonder how we ever managed without it. So on leaving this post, I would like to thank everyone who has helped me in achieving these many goals including the students, supervisors, PVCs, Faculty Heads of Research Students and above all the GSO staff and wish my successor John Young all the best on my return to being one of the poachers”.

Martin, the GSO team thank you for your boundless optimism, calm stoicism (!) and wish you the very best in your research endeavours. We also bestow upon you honorary membership of the GSO Christmas Knees Up ☺.

Scholarship News



Midlands3Cities Doctoral Training Partnership

Nottingham Leicester Birmingham



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Midlands 3 Cities Scholarship Awards 2014

The University has been successful in securing three PhD scholarships through the first round of scholarships of the Midlands 3 Cities Doctoral Training Partnership.

The M3C Doctoral Training Partnership is a collaboration between De Montfort University and the universities of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent, Leicester, Birmingham and Birmingham City. This newly launched programme will provide students with combined research expertise for personal and professional development, creating the next generation of arts and humanities doctoral researchers. The scholarships have been awarded to:

- ☐ **Richard Glanville:** 'Robert Zemeckis and Contemporary Hollywood'
First supervisor, James Russell
- ☐ **David Holland:** 'Listening to the Inner Soundscape: A pedagogical tool for opening minds to sound-based music through creative practice'
First supervisor, Leigh Landy
- ☐ **Richard Whitney:** 'From Historicist Knowledge Workers to Humanistic Savants: C20 Literary Experience in the Work of H.D. and Louise Rosenblatt'
First supervisor, Andrew Mousley

Feedback!

Can we have your views?

The Supervisor's Bulletin has now been running for one year; it would be very helpful to hear any feedback you have regarding the bulletin so that these suggestions can be incorporated into the forthcoming 2014/15 editions.

Please therefore let Jan Hewitt (jhewitt@dmu.ac.uk) know of your views, suggestions and general comments on how this can be improved — much obliged!



Student Experience: Research Degree Poster Competition

Poster Competition Winners 2014!

The Research Degree Poster Competition for students took place on 9th April and was a packed event; we were delighted to welcome so many supervisors and Executive Board members who came along to support the day and meet students. Below is the list of finalists:

1st Christina Weis—Faculty of Health and Life Sciences; ‘Reproductive Migrations – Gestational Surrogacy Workers in Russia’

2nd Joanna Tarrant—Faculty of Health and Life Sciences; ‘*Clostridium Difficile* Spores and Health-care Laundry Policy: How Clean Is Your Hospital Bed?’

3rd Nehal Almerbati— Faculty of Art, Design and Humanities; ‘Reviving an Architectural Veil: The Validity of Using 3D Printing in Reproducing Mashrabiyya for 21st Century Bahraini Dwellings’

4th Rebecca Bell—Faculty of Technology; ‘Spiritual Growth: An Investigation Into How Interaction With Nature Through Gardening May Develop Spiritual Wellbeing’

5th Chetna Prajapati—Faculty of Art, Design and Humanities; ‘Enzyme Processing Technology to Generate Textile Surface Pattern’

Peer Reviewed Prize—Rebecca Bell Faculty of Technology; ‘Spiritual Growth: An Investigation Into How Interaction With Nature Through Gardening May Develop Spiritual Wellbeing’



Competition Winner Christina Weis and Jo Cooke, Director of Student and Academic Services

GSO Procedures

Thesis Test Chapter Facility

The university implemented a new policy from January 2014 requiring all research degree students to submit a copy of their thesis to **RESTtfrs** on Blackboard for checking by Turnitin. It is the Internal Examiner's responsibility to check the Similarity Report to determine if there may be a cause for concern regarding a suspected academic offence.

There is a 'Chapter Test' facility in Blackboard for students to submit the thesis as a **test** before final submission; this allows students to submit any written document for analysis to generate a similarity report which will be visible to the student and the supervisor.

Each time a new report is submitted to Chapter Test by the student it erases the previous report.

It would be helpful to your students to discuss the similarity report generated in each case in order to differentiate between simple coincidence for short sections of the text and previously published material, and the more serious issue of possible plagiarism involving substantial elements of the student's text.

We have recently found that some students have not submitted their thesis to the Chapter Test facility before their final submission to Turnitin, therefore missing the feedback opportunity we are trying to facilitate.

It would be helpful if supervisors could please remind students that are approaching submission to utilise this new facility. Many thanks for your cooperation.

GSO Staffing News

Professor John Young joins the Graduate School



Professor John Young

A warm welcome is offered to Professor John Young who will take up the post of Director of Graduate School from June.

John, a Professor of Composition, will continue his research in the Music, Technology and Innovation Research Centre in the Faculty of Technology and will be working with Martin Elliott over the summer to ensure a smooth handover but is also looking forward to working with the GSO and supervisors in his new role:

"A cross-institutional role like Director of the Graduate School is one of the most interesting and exciting challenges in academic life.

The Graduate School is an important resource and service for DMU, and I am very much looking forward to working with colleagues in further developing the quality of our research degree provisions and cultures across the campus".

Supervisor Workshops

In May, the Director of Graduate School and GSO Head—armed with enough sandwiches to sink a supertanker—held an open workshop session for supervisors.

The aim of the session was to talk through the role of the academic assessor and reviewer in relation to the registration of research and the formal review, key progression points in the PhD cycle. Other areas of discussion included interruptions and extensions to registration.

We all agreed this informal approach to talking through common supervision issues was a really useful communications channel and we will hold more events in 2014/15. In the meantime, our next session will be on **25 June at 12.30**. If you would like to come along (and share a nice lunch!) to talk through any points of the PhD progression cycle you are not clear about, please contact Jan Hewitt (jhewitt@dmu.ac.uk) to book a space.

Process Refresh

The Examination Process and arranging the Viva Voce

Under our current regulations, the viva voce examination is arranged by the First Supervisor. Below is a process refresh regarding the related administrative processes.

3 months before your student will submit their examinable thesis to the GSO, the supervisor will need to submit an 'Approval of Examiners' form to the GSO along with a copy of the proposed external examiner's CV and a validated copy of their passport. Normally the supervisor discusses with the student the intended examiners of the thesis. Students cannot 'veto' the proposed examiners but if there's legitimate reason as to why they would not be comfortable with the team proposed, it's worth exploring this further with your student.

The exam arrangements form is considered by the Faculty Head of Research Students and the Director of Graduate School and the GSO oversees this process. Normally, the external examiner will be the 'field expert'. If the student is a member of staff at DMU then two external examiners are required.

When the exam arrangements are approved and the thesis is submitted, the GSO sends the thesis, 'pre-viva' forms and examiner guidelines to the examiners. The internal examiner will also receive instructions on how to view the Turnitin Similarity Report of the thesis on blackboard. The supervisor receives a copy of this paperwork. The GSO will also send an expenses claim form to the External Examiner, it's worth noting that the Faculty will pay the external examiner costs so if you are considering nominating an external examiner who is not UK based then you may need to discuss this with your management accountant.

The supervisor receives the master copy of the Examination Report Form and there is a section for supervisors to complete which allows for a brief commentary about the student and the research - when this section of the form is complete the supervisor passes this to the internal examiner before the viva voce takes place.

The supervisor arranges the viva date, time and venue with the examiners and notifies the student and the GSO of this detail.

On the day of the viva, the internal and external examiners will normally meet before the viva to agree the focus of questioning.

During the viva voce, the supervisor can attend if they choose to but cannot participate in the discussions and cannot contribute to the examination outcome.

On conclusion of the viva, the internal examiner collects the signed examination report form and, if corrections are required, a single joint report of corrections is agreed between the examiners and this is submitted to the GSO who will then formally notify the student of the outcome.

Points to remember



- ☐ The Application for Approval of Examiners form is on the GSO website—The form ideally needs to be submitted around 3 months before the student is due to submit their thesis to the GSO
- ☐ The thesis cannot be sent to the examiners until the examiners have been formally approved
- ☐ If the proposed internal examiner has acted as an assessor at the student's formal review then it is not possible for h/she to also undertake the role of internal examiner.

Change in Process

External Examiner Eligibility to Work in the UK

The Research Degrees Committee has approved an amendment to the process for approving external examiners of research degree students.

The amendment relates to the external examiner's eligibility to work in the UK and how the University is required to evidence that we have attempted to check the examiner's eligibility to work. This process aligns with well established practice in the sector and at DMU for checking external examiner eligibility for undergraduate taught provision.

This process will still need to apply if the external examiner proposed already works in a UK University although the feedback we have received internally in our discussions about this policy suggest that many academics whom act as examiners themselves are fairly used to this request.

You will be aware that as part of the process to nominate the examination team, supervisors are asked to provide a copy of the CV of the proposed external examiner. From October 2014 it will also be a requirement that a validated copy of the examiner's passport will be requested and this will form part of the approval of examiners process. The copy will normally need to be signed by either the examiner's line manager or a member of their institution's HR department, again, we understand this is fairly common practice in the sector.

Thank you for your cooperation in this policy adjustment.

Student Voice

NEW! PGR Student Forum is Launched

As part of the University's commitment to continue to engage with and respond to the 'student voice' of research degree students, Pro Vice Chancellor Andy Collop has launched a new PGR Student Forum.

This regular calendar event will offer research students the opportunity to meet with the Pro Vice Chancellor to discuss and give feedback on the student experience; it will also enable us in the GSO to keep students briefed on developments and initiatives related to research students in the coming academic year, including the launch of the new progress management software for students and supervisors.

We would be most grateful if supervisors could kindly promote this new initiative, the first of which takes place on

Friday 20th June 12.00 – 1.30 in the Hugh Aston building room 3.96.

As lunch will be provided students will need to notify Jan Hewitt (jhewitt@dmu.ac.uk) of their intention to come along so that appropriate catering is ordered. We will feedback to supervisors the main discussion points arising from these meetings.