

## Graduate Research Directors: Terms of Reference and Specific Responsibilities

**Document Reference:** Responsibilities of Graduate Research Directors

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**Approved By:** University Research Committee

**Originator:** Doctoral College

**Responsibilities:** Doctoral College

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**Further Guidance:** QAA UK Quality Code (2018) – [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

### **Summary/ Description:**

This document sets out the responsibilities of Graduate Research Directors.

#### **Version 1 07 (Jun 23)**

- Replaced list of GRDs with sharepoint link.
- Clarified role of GRDs in admissions, supervisor approvals and the issuing of warnings.
- Removed references to honorarium.

#### **Version 1 06 (Feb 23)**

- Updated nomenclature.
- Clarified role of GRDs in RDC case investigations.

#### **Version 1 05 (Nov 19)**

##### **Housekeeping:**

- Replaces Graduate School with Doctoral College
- Replaces school with academic unit

#### **Version 1 04 (Aug 16)**

- Replaces department with school
- Replaces semester with trimester.

#### **Version 1 03 (Feb 16)**

- Updates references with respect to recommendations to RDC relating to PGTS (paras 1 & 2)
- Makes explicit the important role that GRDs play with respect to representing their faculty at RDC and disseminating information from RDC to faculty postgraduate directors and administrators (para. 1)

**Version 1 02** (Aug 15)

- Updates the names of Graduate Research Directors and terms of office (para. 4)

**Version 1 01** (Sep 13) introduces the following changes:

- Sections 2, 3 and 4- amendments made in order to improve clarity
- Section 4- addition of the words **and promotion of the annual student monitoring and progression procedures within their own Faculty** and deletion of the words **The term 'Unit' is used to overcome the Faculty/equivalent terminology problem.**
- Section 4- updates to 'departmental' responsibilities

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## **1. Introduction**

In broad terms Directors have seven main roles:

- (a) Representing their Faculty at the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), and disseminating information from RDC to the academic units in their Faculty.
- (b) Contributing to the development of regulations, policies and procedures to enhance the postgraduate student experience in accordance with the University's mission, aims and objectives
- (c) Contributing to the development of the Postgraduate Training Scheme (PGTS) including ensuring that an appropriate range of training modules are being offered by academic units (to be advertised in the Training Manual) within their discipline, and that all modules meet the University and external quality expectations
- (d) Conducting investigations and making recommendations to the RDC on individual student cases relating to research degrees, including academic appeals.
- (e) Oversight of PGR applications for their respective areas
- (f) Providing leadership and guidance to colleagues within their areas in respect of PGR supervision and monitoring. They are also required to maintain an accurate and up to date list of supervisors for approval at the September RDC meeting.
- (g) Issuing Faculty / Academic Unit warnings to PGRs

## **2. PGTS**

Graduate Research Directors shall:

- 2.1 Annually (before the end of April) review with academic colleagues in the academic units within their discipline the range, level and appropriateness of the training modules being offered within the discipline and confirm the details to the Doctoral College for inclusion in the PGTS Manual (to be published by 1 August of each academic year). RDC is responsible for determining which modules are eligible for inclusion in the Scheme; RDC shall determine which modules are eligible at its January or April meeting. Particular attention shall be paid to any modules designated as core for any discipline or subject area.
- 2.2 Assist in reviewing the Induction Conference for new research students to ensure that appropriate opportunity is provided to explain the objectives and process of the PGTS with specific reference to the requirements of their discipline. Directors should be circulated with the Induction programme, and be available for appropriate parts of the event, including to discuss requirements with individual students as required
- 2.3 Make recommendations to the RDC for the award of credit transfers and exemptions on receipt of applications from research students and endorsed by their supervisors

## **3. Other student matters**

Graduate Research Directors shall:

- 3.1 Provide guidance, advice and support to research students and/or their supervisors within the academic units for which they are responsible on the application and interpretation of University regulations and procedures
- 3.2 Provide guidance in any case of dispute between a research student and their academic unit and attempt to mediate and achieve an agreed resolution, if necessary referring the matter to RDC

- 3.3 Conduct investigations into PGR matters (including Appeals, Reviews of Appeals, Termination of Study requests etc) at the request of RDC
- 3.4 Conduct an appropriate investigation and advise a candidate lodging an appeal in accordance with the University's Code of Practice for Academic Appeals (the role of the RDC is defined in the Code).
- 3.5 Be the designated person to issue Faculty / Academic Unit Warnings to PGRs
- 3.6 Conduct such investigations as are necessary to ensure that a decision can be made on all relevant evidence which is both fair to the individual student in question and all research students in the following cases:
  - reductions of periods of study for the research degree based on claims to the accreditation of prior learning (APL)
  - consideration of 'special cases' (i.e. applications for a request to be approved 'regulations notwithstanding' where the course of action requested is not permitted by regulations)
  - requests to exceed the permitted word limit for the research degree
  - extensions to the writing up period beyond the fourth year of study (full-time) or sixth year (part-time)

In general it would be expected that such cases would be decided between meetings, by the relevant Graduate Research Director making a written recommendation – with such supporting material as deemed necessary – to the Chair who would make a decision. Both the Graduate Research Director and Chair would be entitled to determine that a case raises issues of principle, involves setting a precedent or is of such complexity that it should be considered by the full RDC. (Where the timing of the meeting presents difficulties this should be achieved by circulation to all the Graduate Research Directors).

Reporting of decisions to the next meeting should be by summary (numbers plus short note of the case and issues raised if any).

As the Chair is not permitted to make decisions relating to candidates in their own academic unit, Graduate Research Directors will be asked to act as Chair in appropriate cases. Equally if the Chair is absent from the University for any period of a time a Graduate Research Director will be asked to act on their behalf to ensure the efficient processing of decisions.

Matters not listed above should be matters for the Chair without the involvement of the relevant Graduate Research Director unless the Chair considers that the opinion of the Graduate Research Director, or an investigation by the Graduate Research Director, would assist in making the decision.

#### **4. 'Academic Unit' Responsibilities**

The following reflects the agreement that Graduate Research Directors should be responsible for PGTS matters and promotion of the annual student monitoring and progression procedures within their own Faculty, and for other student matters in a related discipline. It also seeks to reflect the concern that Graduate Research Directors should be seen to be independent of the academic unit in which the candidate is registered in matters of dispute, special case and appeal. The term 'Unit' is used to overcome the Faculty/equivalent terminology problem.

It is suggested that terms of office come to an end at the end of the first trimester of the relevant year to enable the new Director to be eased into the role and for appointments to be confirmed well in advance of publication of relevant documents (such as the Training Manual).

Current Graduate Research Directors can be found [here](#).

## **5. Process of Appointment**

Graduate Research Directors are appointed by the Dean or equivalent of the Faculty (or equivalent unit) in which they are based, subject to the approval of the Chair of the RDC. The RDC shall determine the academic units for which the appointee is responsible, and when a new appointment is required the Secretary shall approach the relevant Dean. The Dean shall provide the appointee with a formal letter of appointment enclosing the terms of reference approved by RDC (copied to Human Resources and Payroll).

In undertaking their role, Graduate Research Directors are answerable to the Chair of the RDC and not to the Dean of the Faculty (or Head of the Academic Unit) for which they are responsible, so that the Graduate Research Director and RDC (as appropriate) make the final decision on matters within the terms of reference of the RDC. Thus the Graduate Research Director is explicitly empowered to question and disagree with decisions/recommendations of the relevant academic unit. In such cases the matter should be discussed with the relevant academic unit in an attempt to find an appropriate solution. However, ultimately the Chair/RDC has the final say, and they will be strongly influenced by the views of the Graduate Research Director.

## **6. Training**

Graduate Research Directors are required to attend and take an active role in an annual training session facilitated by the Doctoral College.