

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS, STATISTICS AND ACTUARIAL SCIENCE

**GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
NON-RESERVED**

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 November 2009

Present: Dr TC Dunning (Chair)
Professor P Fleischmann, Dr JE Griffin, Professor EL Mansfield, Mr JD Millett, Professor MS Ridout, Dr RJ Shank, Professor PJ Sweeting, Dr FE Sowrey, Mr Mayukh Gayen, Mr Joe Watkins
Mrs CK Bateman (minutes)

Apologies

No apologies were received.

1. Chair's Communications

The Chair **reported** that all 1st year research students must complete a skills audit by the time of upgrading. This can be done by attending a Graduate School anchor day.

Teaching training in the form of a Graduate School workshop is becoming compulsory for all first year postgraduate students who will be teaching. Questions were raised as to what teaching meant. TCD will confirm the definition of 'teaching' with the Graduate School.

ACTION: TCD

The Graduate School is now offering all Graduate Skills Training sessions to taught postgraduate students, with the exception of Academic Writing as this is available through UELT. It was felt that the Graduate School should make it clear that these sessions are available to taught postgraduate students subject to timetable constraints.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

As this is an entirely new Committee membership the minutes of the last non-reserved meeting were **noted**.

3. Terms of Reference

It was **recommended** that the Research and Enterprise Committee be responsible for the strategic planning of research students, such as overall funding and student numbers and the Graduate Studies Committee be responsible for the management of research students.

It was **agreed** that the closing date for scholarships would be the end of April in order to discuss applications during the Committee's May meeting.

It was **noted** that the University had allocated fewer University studentships to the Faculty of Sciences than in previous years. SMSAS will receive one rather than two studentships. It was felt that it was important for money generated by the School be used to make up the missing studentship.

It was **agreed** that this issue would be raised at the next Board of Studies.

ACTION: TCD

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Periodic Programme Review

After the last PPR it was agreed that a Working Party would be set up to discuss the monitoring and progression of research students. The Graduate School may be making further changes and the Working Party is awaiting clarification of the University position before meetings are arranged.

5. Module and Programme Approval

There are 2 new MSc programmes (MSc in Mathematics and its applications and MSc in Finance, Investment and Risk) which need the approval of this Committee, as well as 12/13 new modules. Once this Committee has approved these programmes they will be sent to the Faculty and then to PASC.

It was **decided** that, because of the volume of documentation involved, the best way to circulate the information was electronically via Moodle. TCD will set this up with a 2 week deadline for all comments to be made. It was **agreed** to invite Loba Van der Bijl to participate in the discussions as the programme proposer for Finance, Investment and Risk.

ACTION: TCD

6. External Examiners Reports

It is the responsibility of this Committee to approve the responses to the External Examiners before the papers go to the Faculty.

The response for the Postgraduate Diploma in Actuarial Science was approved subject to minor changes to the wording. The responses for the MSc in Applied Actuarial Science and MSc in Statistics were approved.

7. Scholarships and Recruitment

The scholarships offered for 2009/2010 are as follows: 2 University scholarships, 1 EPSRC project studentship and 1 EPSRC DTA. There is a further EPSRC DTA student in Statistics who has deferred until June. There is also a possibility of a further self-funded student who has to pass language tests.

A postgraduate Open event will be held on Wednesday 2 December between 5.00 pm and 8.00 pm and on Saturday 6 February between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm. A short presentation will be made by MSR and LV. ELM will provide a poster.

The LTCC will be holding a recruitment event for prospective PhD students on 8 January 2010. It was suggested that a current PhD student could go along and talk to potential students. Publicity material for this event will be required shortly.

8. Supervisory Teams

All supervisory teams are almost in place for this year. A number of staff are now eligible to act as supervisory chairs; the paperwork has been submitted to the Faculty. The list of supervisory chairs will be circulated once new chairs are approved by the Faculty.

9. Completion Rates

Concerns were raised that the School's completion (within 4 years) rate for PhD programmes is below the EPSRC's expectations. EPSRC expect most departments over a five year period would have a completion rate close to 100%, and may penalise departments with a rate below 80%. Our rate is below 80%. It was felt that this may in part be due to the historically small number of PhD students and in part due to the fact that funding used to be for 3 years with a year writing up. However, now funding has been made available for 3 and a half years and students are expected to take graduate courses in year one, it may be harder to complete in 4 years.

There was some discussion on students who under-perform on the PhD being awarded an MPhil or MSc being seen as a failure at PhD rather than an achievement. It will be **recommended** to the Board of Studies that the standard route into a PhD would be to start at MPhil level and upgrade to PhD once sufficient progression indicators had been achieved. It was **agreed** that this would be referred to the Working Party set up as a result of the PPR.

ACTION: TCD

10. Any Other Business

TCD raised the question of the School paying for the cost of travel for students who participate in MSOR workshops designed for supporting mathematics and statistics students who teach.

The Committee would **recommend** to the Board of Studies that the School pays for travel costs for such support workshops.

TCD has been updating paperwork for the postgraduates and in particular the training log. It was **agreed** that the wording be changed to “recommend that students attend a seminar outside their discipline once per year.”

National Student Survey: although the response rate was higher the overall result is not as good as last year. FES will be circulating the result soon on order to discuss at the next meeting.

ACTION: FES

Next Meeting: Thursday 18 February 2010

At this point the students left the meeting.

12/11/09
CKB