

**Executive Summary of Business for
Doctoral School Committee**

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| Title | Minutes from School Research Degree Committees on School Annual Review of Research Students |
| Author | School Research Degree Committees |
| Summary | Details of minutes setting out the consideration and actions arising from the Schools' Annual Review of Research Students. |
| Recommendation | The Doctoral School Committee is invited to NOTE the minutes. |

School of English

Minute from School of English Research Degree Committee, held on Wednesday 3rd October 2012:

6. Annual Review of Research Students

Lindsay Smith referred Committee members to the reports from Jason Price and Laura Vellacott (SoE/GSC/10/3 and SoE/GSC/10/4).

Laura has asked for comments from Committee members, and Lindsay has been asked to send the minute on this item to the Doctoral School Committee.

The following points were raised:

- Members felt that it was not appropriate to review the student's ELTP progress at the thesis panel and that this should be dealt with separately.
- Members felt strongly that thesis panels should have a sample of the student's written work available, in addition to their research plan.
- There was some discussion about the timing of the review.

Members concluded that the annual review of research students should comprise **two stages**:

- a mid-year progress report in the Spring Term (completed by supervisors)
- an end-of-year progress report (from supervisors and students) followed by a thesis panel for each student.

The Committee recommended that the mid-year report and the end-of-year report should be available for supervisors to complete on **Sussex Direct** (as opposed to electronic forms which are emailed to faculty), as this would streamline the annual review process considerably. The progress reports would be available on Sussex Direct alongside the general supervisory contact reports, **but students should not have access to view progress reports on Sussex Direct.**

School of History, Art History and Philosophy

Informal note pending availability of the formal minute

Annual review of students was an item in the agenda (item 3). We discussed (1) this year's patchy record with action point for each departmental representative to address the issue during the departmental meeting the following week (2) normal practice which is to collate responses from the student's annual review forms and address issues in the following committee (e.g. the issue of quiet study rooms) and relate our response through the student reps who are members of the committee (3) draw attention to best practice currently implemented in two of our departments that includes an end of year interview for first year researchers (with a view to roll it out to all researchers).

School of Media, Film and Music

- 1 It was decided that the Annual Review process needs to be changed and improved, that we would canvass opinion about the review process, and that KL will draft a proposal. New forms will be created and circulated and then approved by a virtual committee or with the Doctoral School committee.

Action: KL/SM

There was a discussion about the possibility of making the review interview optional.

It was agreed the annual reports should include a clear statement of objectives for the coming year that would form the criteria for review the following year.

- a. Issues arising from Annual review reports
 - i. Agreed we should hold a termly meeting for all PhD students
 - ii. There should be a meeting about applying for AHRC funding
 - iii. There should be a meeting for MA students thinking about doing a PhD
 - iv. Prospective ATs should be encouraged to audit UG teaching
 - v. School website/SyD to include info/links to info about Language Support available
 - vi. KL to look into possibility of dedicated seminar series for 1st year PhD students
 - vii. List of new students' projects to be distributed.
 - viii. Request for a document listing various options of what practice is acceptable for Creative Practice degrees has been addressed to some extent in the new Handbook.
 - ix. Agreed the feedback loop had to be swifter and more transparent in the review process.

School of Life Sciences

Minutes of the School of Life Sciences RDC meeting held on 3rd Oct 2012 – Annual review of Research Students

Annual review process needs to be discussed in detail as it is expected by the Doctoral School that DoDs should present a report at the next DS meeting. LifeSci has set a good example so far and therefore other schools may wish to use our model/method. It was decided that a more rigorous method will now be used to assess student's progress. Any emerging issues will be flagged in the first year and students and supervisors will be notified. Students and supervisors will be explicitly informed about the rules on ill health; students will be asked to intermit instead of applying for extension at the end of their maximum period of registration.

In Chemistry, John Spencer will be setting up group meetings with students and supervisors in advance and ask them to complete all the paperwork.

In addition, explicit instructions will be given to all students on how to write reports, especially those in year 3. Students will be asked to submit a comprehensive draft and quality of writing will need to meet the standards. Students will be encouraged to see their co-supervisors as well on a regular basis. Students and supervisors will be made aware by the RDCs that annual review is dealt with very seriously in the School. Students will be asked to express their concerns clearly and provide feedback on research supervision openly on the reports. This information will be kept confidential.

In Genome, the interview and public speaking methods are used to review the annual reports. This should possibly be implemented more widely across all the Subject groups in the School. Given the increasing importance of monitoring progress and research supervision it is important to have interviews and talks. Personal contact with the student adds quality to the report. This should be done locally in each subject group. It is like a safety net where students are given the opportunity to critique the science. In such interviews and talks appropriate questions are asked and key issues start emerging on whether Year 1 students are equipped to write a thesis; students get the opportunity to know the core faculty.

There is also a possibility of an away day which will encourage scientific socialisation. RDCs should come back on the proposal on PGR away day. Some other suggestions are going to a pub on Friday evening (monthly/termly) or a School-wide beer hour.

School of Law, Politics and Sociology

The Research Degree Committee of the School of Law, Politics and Sociology met on 10 October 2012. The meeting formally recorded the completion of the Annual Review of Doctoral Students that was carried out at the end of the previous summer term and formally submitted to SPA on 26 July 2012, including the names of all PGR students who were recommended for re-registration and short-term temporary registration.

The performance of the School-wide Annual Review was discussed by the Committee and a high level of satisfaction was noted with current arrangements in terms of adequate capture of student difficulties, supervision problems, poor academic progression and timely interventions in resolving areas of concern. There was also endorsement for the principle of moving to an entirely on-line system for recording AR matters in 2013. PGR student representatives on the Committee were in agreement.