

# GRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENT LIAISON COMMITTEE

## Minutes of Meeting

**PRESENT:** Professor Richard Blaikie (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research & Enterprise (Convenor)), Andrew Lonie (Graduate Research School), Peter Boston (Graduate Research School), Dr Fiona Edgar (Graduate Research Committee Representative), Jade Yip (Sciences Representative), Christian Chukwuka (Sciences Representative), Ellie Torbati (International Representative), Rossana Boni (International Representative), George Mombi (Pacific Islands Representative), Bee Bathish (UOC Representative), Zhang Wei (UOW Representative), Amanda Clifford (Māori Representative), Emmanuel Osigwe (Commerce Representative), Joel Gordon (Humanities Representative), Kirio Birks (OUPS Representative), Leigh Bateup (ITS Representative).

**APOLOGIES:** Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith (Graduate Research School), Lucy Northwood (OUSA Postgraduate Representative), Renee Hamel (Distance Representative), Saiedeh Babashi (Commerce Representative), Golnoush Madani (Health Sciences Representative).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Susan Craig (Graduate Research School)

**DATE:** Friday, 24 November 2017

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting</b> The minutes for the meeting held on Friday, 2 September 2017 were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Matters arising from previous meeting</b></p> <p>a) <i>NZ Three Minute Thesis Final Recording (Susan Craig):</i> Susan advised the Committee that she is still trying to locate a link to the final of the NZ Masters Three Minute Thesis Final.</p> <p>b) <i>OUSA Postgraduate Committee (Kirio Banks for Lucy Northwood):</i> Kirio advised the Committee that this new body will be formed in 2018 and he will provide an update on this at the February meeting.</p> <p>c) <i>SSR Review and Implications for the Graduate Research School (Professor Spronken-Smith):</i> Professor Spronken-Smith advised (via email) that the doctoral and scholarships administrator activities will most likely be moving into the Student Lifecycle group and that this group will provided a shared service back to a much smaller Graduate Research School and the rest of the University. At this stage it is unclear how postgraduate and scholarship matters will be organised but Professor Spronken-Smith hopes to be able to share more information in the New Year.</p>	<p><b>SC</b></p> <p><b>KB</b></p> <p><b>RSS</b></p>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Christchurch update (Bee Bathish)</b> Key points discussed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSOC elections for 2018 have been held and five new members have been elected.</li> <li>• Throughout 2017 PSOC has held numerous research lectures and social events which have all been very well attended.</li> <li>• There is concern regarding support services (including health and mental health support). Professor Blaikie responded that a rise in the Student Levy may be required to enable the provision of more support services to Christchurch based candidates. He added that concerned candidates in both Christchurch and Wellington campuses should contact the Graduate Research School, which can provide advocacy around these issues. Andrew Lonie endorsed this suggestion.</li> </ul>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Wellington update (Zhang Wei)</b> Key points discussed were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation Ceremonies for PhD and Masters candidates on the Wellington campus. Zhang explained that many candidates a reluctant to travel to Dunedin for graduation and would far prefer a local ceremony in Wellington, perhaps added on to the ceremony, which is already held for medical graduates on campus. Professor Blaikie and Andrew Lonie both encouraged Zhang to contact the Graduate Research School to discuss this issue further.</li> <li>• Lack of facilities / services for Wellington candidates. Leigh Bateup encouraged Zhang to contact her directly regarding any IT issues.</li> </ul>	
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Distance candidates update</b> Renee Hamel apologised for this meeting so there was no update from her.</p>	

6.	<p><b>Updates from all Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee Reps (ALL)</b></p> <p>Each of the representatives at the meeting gave feedback. Key points arising were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Joel Gordon (Humanities PhD)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Joel had a few 'minor issues' brought to his attention by fellow candidates facing particular struggles with supervisors. Joel reminded them about the MOU and the fact that it is a tool which can be used for negotiating such struggles.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Amanda Clifford (Māori PhD):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amanda outlined the many activities facilitated by Dr Pete Russell (Māori Postgraduate Support Advisor at the Graduate Research School) for Māori Postgraduate candidates in the latter part of the year including taking ten candidates to the MAI Doctoral Conference, running a three-day writing retreat in the first week of December and the many writing days and hui. These events are a great vehicle for candidates to meet people from other departments. Amanda also praised the work of the Doctoral Office and mentioned the Hui Poutama held on campus in Dunedin recently.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Christian Chukwuka (Sciences PhD):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clarification sought regarding the recent correspondence around the Change of Research Details form with regard to overseas travel. Andrew Lonie explained that the form only needs completing if candidates are travelling for data collection or fieldwork, especially if visiting high-risk areas. For other travel, it is good practice to inform departments. Professor Blaikie mentioned a staff and student tracking system, which is being developed for Health and Safety and will be especially important in the instance of natural disasters etc.</li> <li>- The importance of taking breaks during the PhD but candidates need to be aware that some longer breaks may have implications for visas and scholarships.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Rosanna Boni (International Masters):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor communication between departments and candidates around changes within departments because of the Support Services Review. Professor Blaikie advised that candidates can visit their Divisional Office to get information when changes have an impact on students. They can also contact the Graduate Research School if there are significant issues arising because of poor communication. Candidates should not hesitate also to contact their Head of Department to gather information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <u>Ellie Torbati (International PhD):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thanks to Brian Johnston (Personal Performance Coach) and Yvonne Gaut (Careers) for the recent workshop the presented around employment issues for international candidates. Ellie then raised concerns of no secure job at the completion of study, thus affecting visa application to stay. Zhang Wei suggested all postgraduate students need to be more proactive, to talk with their supervisor(s) about potential contracts and grant applications in the early stage of study, because it takes time to set up research contracts for them.</li> <li>- For those international candidates having children during the course of their studies the Student Safe Insurance package does not cover hospital stays for childbirth. Action: Andrew Lonie to contact International Office for more information about what is available for candidates in the way of maternity cover.</li> <li>- International candidates receive a gift from the International Office at Christmas time. However, the general consensus is that function would be preferable where candidates and staff of the Office could get together. Action: Andrew Lonie to contact International Office to ascertain what is happening for candidates at the end of 2017.</li> <li>- Subsidised food for students and greater variety of food on offer. Professor Blaikie advised that the range of food available on campus is currently being reviewed by the office of the Chief Operating Officer. With regard to subsidising food, this is not practically possible but where there is real hardship the OUSA has hardship support available as well as food parcels etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>AL</p> <p>AL</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Kirio Banks (OUPS):</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kirio informed the Committee that he will be completing his term with OUPS at the end of December and, from January, will take over as the Postgrad Representative for OUSA.</li> <li>- Inequity of service provided to candidates in different departments. Professor Blaikie explained that the MOUs and Supervisory Agreements are very important for ensuring that candidates receive the services and resources to which they are entitled. He reminded the Committee that some candidates receive resources from external funders and so this can be the reason some candidates have more than others. However, if the minimum standards are not being met it is important to seek advice and he encouraged the Committee to contact the Graduate Research School in these instances. Andrew Lonie reminded the members of the Committee that there is a confidential comment section in the progress reports which is seen only by the Dean, Graduate Research School and himself and that any concerns entered here are followed up.</li> </ul> <p>With regard to computer resources, Leigh Bateup informed the Committee that the ITS eCycling team has monitors that can be given to departments in need of them for use by candidates as well as computers that are no longer in use. Leigh will send Susan Craig the link to the eCycling team, which will be distributed to the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Plans are in place for 2018 with a meeting being organised at divisional levels for postgraduate candidates with staff present and without. Kirio said that input from Graduate Research Student Liaison Committee members was welcome.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b><u>Jade Yip (Sciences Masters):</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jade queried if the date of an oral exam can be set at the time of submission of the thesis. Andrew Lonie explained that it is recommended to departments that they set the date of the oral exam at the start of the examination process, to encourage timely thesis marking.</li> <li>- Transparency around the length of PhD examinations. Andrew Lonie explained that whilst there are guidelines in place around the length of time examiners should take to mark a thesis there are sometimes genuine reasons for why extensions are granted to examiners. The Doctoral Office works hard to remind examiners frequently about their deadlines. If candidates have any concerns about the length of time their examination is taking they should contact the Graduate Research School for assistance. Professor Blaikie enquired whether, with the upgrades being made to eVision, it is possible for candidates to see the status of their examination. Andrew Lonie responded that this is not currently possible but could be a change that is made to the system in the future. Andrew Lonie went on to add that candidates with recommendations for improvements to eVision should email <a href="mailto:rsmreview@otago.ac.nz">rsmreview@otago.ac.nz</a>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	LB / SC
7.	<p><b>Update on the proposed Postgraduate Certificate in Research and Professional Development (Professor Spronken-Smith via email)</b></p> <p>The project team is now working on the design of a project qualification. The team hopes to develop a Student Research Portal as a one stop shop to find out about professional development opportunities at Otago. They are also working on curriculum design in the first semester of 2018, with implementation of a pilot in semester two.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Coverage for Dean, Graduate Research School in 2018 (Professor Spronken-Smith via email)</b></p> <p>From January to May 2018 inclusive Professor Spronken-Smith will be on Research and Study Leave and Associate Professor Lachy Paterson, the current Associate Dean Postgraduate in Humanities will be Acting Dean. He will look after administrative issues and some teaching. The new professional practice fellow with the School will undertake most teaching of core workshops.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Convenors Business</b></p> <p>Professor Blaikie thanked Joel Gordon, Jade Yip and George Mombi for their work on the Committee. This was their last meeting as representatives.</p>	
12.	<p><b>General Business</b></p> <p><i>Meeting dates for 2018</i></p> <p>Susan Craig will email the meeting dates for 2018 to the Committee.</p>	SC

The date of the next meeting is **Friday, 23 February 2018 at 2.00pm in AVC1 in the Link Building.**

**Distribution:**

Professor Rachel Spronken-Smith (Chair), Dean, Graduate Research School  
Professor Richard Blaikie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise)  
Andrew Lonie (Graduate Research School)  
Peter Boston (Graduate Research School)  
Saeideh Babashahi (Division of Commerce Representative)  
(Division of Commerce Representative)  
Joel Gordon (Division of Humanities Representative)  
(Division of Humanities Representative)  
(Division of Health Sciences Representative)  
Golnoush Madani (Division of Health Sciences Representative)  
Christian Chukwuka (Division of Sciences Representative)  
Jade Yip (Division of Sciences Representative)  
Ellie Torbati (International Representative)  
(International Representative)

George Mombi (Pacific Islands Representative)  
(Pacific Islands Representative)  
Bee Bathish (UOC Representative)  
Wei Xhang (UOW Representative)  
Amanda Clifford (Māori Representative)  
(Māori Representative)  
Lucy Northwood (OUSA Postgraduate Representative 2016)  
Kirio Birks (OUPS Representative)  
Renee Hamel (Distance Representative)  
Susan Craig (Graduate Research School)  
Associate Professor Lachy Paterson (GRC Humanities Representative)  
Dr Sally Shaw (GRC Sciences Representative)  
Dr Fiona Edgar (GRC Commerce Representative)  
Associate Professor Lois Surgenor (GRC Health Sciences Representative)  
Leigh Bateup (ITS Representative)