**FACULTY RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEES (FRDCs)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

**Context and Purpose**

The Faculty Research Degrees Committees (FRDCs) exist to oversee the registration, progression and recommendations for the award of research degrees for research students in Departments comprising Faculties. The FRDCs have powers delegated to them from Academic Council to approve and administer research degree registrations, transfers from MPhil to PhD, examination arrangements, monitor student progress and make recommendations for the award of research degrees, in accordance with the university’s Academic Regulations for Research Awards. In the furtherance of their duties, the FRDCs will report on such considerations to the university’s Research and Enterprise Committee (REC) on a regular basis. The FRDCs also have an oversight of the implementation of the training of research students at the local level and ensuring that this dovetails with institutional arrangements, along with the responsibility for monitoring the quality of supervision of research students and for enhancing the quality of such supervision, including mechanisms for achieving this. Where, through their deliberations, an FRDC considers an issue warrants discussion at a cross-Faculty level, it should forward such a matter to REC for wider discussion.

**Terms of Reference**

a. To approve, monitor and administer research degree registrations, transfers and examination arrangements and make recommendations following examinations. In particular to:

1. approve programmes of work proposed in applications to register for the degrees of MPhil, MPhil with possibility of transfer to PhD (MPhil/PhD), PhD direct, PhD by published work and professional doctorate programmes;
2. approve the appointment of appropriately qualified first and second supervisors for the student’s programme of work and approve the appointment of any additional supervisor(s) and/or adviser(s) as appropriate;
3. satisfy itself that the conditions under which a student works meet the university’s requirements;
4. monitor the progress of students;
5. approve arrangements for students who wish to be assessed for transferring their registration from MPhil to PhD;
6. receive and consider assessors’ reports on students who have been assessed for transfer of registration from MPhil to PhD, and, where appropriate, approve the transfer;
7. approve changes to supervisory arrangements for students;
8. approve interruptions and extensions to the period of registration of students;

ix. approve changes in the mode of study of students;

1. approve the withdrawal of students from their programme of study;
2. approve examiners and examination arrangements;
3. receive and consider internal and external examiners’ reports, and, where appropriate, recommend the conferment of the relevant award on a candidate to REC; and the comments/evaluation from external examiners about the examination process;
4. receive and note project specifications, supervisory arrangements as authorised by Faculty Boards, approve examiners, and receive and note examiners’ reports relating to Masters by Research programmes (LLM/MA/MSc);
5. provide feedback to students/supervisors and Faculty designated representatives on the outcome of submissions made to the Committee;
6. arrange with REC for the assessment and award of Higher Doctorates.

b. To receive and consider statistical data and any other information relating to the progress of research students, either in relation to the university and faculties as a whole, or its Departments.

c. To be responsible for the monitoring of the quality of supervision of research students and for taking such steps as may be required to maintain and improve the quality of such supervision.

d. To ensure that institutional requirements for the training of supervisors are met, and implement and monitor mechanisms for the sharing of good practice between supervisors.

e. To monitor the development, implementation and operation of skills training programmes for the postgraduate research students operating within a Faculty, at both the pan-university and the Department levels, in keeping with the recommendations of the Quality Assurance Agency and the Research Councils.

f. To promote the development of the postgraduate research community within the Faculty through the encouragement of the specific infrastructure support required to enable postgraduate research to progress.

g. To establish Sub-Committees and Working Groups, as appropriate, to facilitate furthering the work of the Committee.

h. To report on its activities to REC on a regular basis.

i. To forward matters to REC where it is considered there would be benefit from discussion at a cross-Faculty/pan-university level.

j. To prepare an annual report on the work of the Committee to a set specification for consideration by REC.

k. To forward minutes and the annual report to Faculty Board for information.

**Membership**

The Committee shall consist of no fewer than seven and no more than ten members. Membership from the Faculty should be that, collectively, there is appropriate representation to address the range of postgraduate research activity encompassed by the Faculty. In addition, there will be a representative from another Faculty Research Degrees Committee, so as to bring a measure of externality to the work of the Committee, as well as acting as a conduit for sharing good practice between Committees. The Head of the Research & Enterprise Training Institute (RETI) may attend any meeting on an ex-officio basis, and has decision making authority. Within the membership there will also be a representative with expertise in the area of research ethics.

Committee membership, including Chair will be reviewed biennially, with new members being introduced on a phased basis.

***Present in a decision making capacity***

The membership of FRDCs will be:

* Chair – A senior, research active academic member of staff, who is experienced in the business of PGR supervision, normally exemplified by a track record of supervising a minimum of five doctoral students to successful completion in the capacity of first supervisor – 1

*Note: The Chair will be nominated by the appropriate Pro Vice-Chancellor, and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), in consultation with the Head of RETI.*

* Designated representatives from the Faculty, totalling no less than four and no more than seven – 4-7

*Notes:*

*This range is to facilitate sufficient representation of expertise and knowledge from the research disciplines encompassed by the Faculty.*

*More than 70% of those operating in this capacity will be experienced in the business of PGR supervision, normally exemplified by a track record of supervising a minimum of three doctoral students to successful completion in the capacity of first supervisor. The remainder may be drawn from less experienced staff to facilitate staff development in such matters.*

*These representatives will be appointed by the appropriate Pro Vice-Chancellor, in consultation with relevant Heads of Department and Faculty Directors of Research and Enterprise.*

*A designated Vice-Chair will be drawn from this category, who will act in the capacity of Acting Chair when the Chair is unavailable – nominated by the appropriate Pro Vice-Chancellor, and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), in consultation with theHead of RETI.*

*Should a designated representative be unavailable to attend a meeting, his/her place will be taken by a designated substitute, who will meet the same requirements as set out above.*

* A representative from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) - 1

*Note: This representative may be drawn from the above category – nominated by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, in consultation with relevant Heads of Department and Faculty Directors of Research and Enterprise.*

* An external representative who is a member of another FRDC – 1

*Note: This representative will be appointed through the agreement of the Pro Vice-Chancellors, in consultation with relevant Heads of Department and Faculty Directors of Research and Enterprise.*

* Head of RETI – 1 (Ex-officio)

*Notes:*

*A primary role of the Head of RETI is to ensure consistency of operation and decision making across FRDCs.*

*A nominee of the Head of RETI may be present in the event of the Head of RETI being unable to attend a meeting.*

***Others present in a non-decision making capacity***

* Secretary (from RETI) – 1
* Others, internal to the university, may attend meetings on an occasional basis where it is considered that their attendance would be beneficial to the work of the Committee. This must be agreed by the Chair in advance of attending. Such attendance will be in a non-decision making capacity and must be recorded in the minutes.

The Head of RETI will be informed of the membership of FRDCs at the beginning of each academic session, and this membership must be formally recorded in an annex to the annual report of each FRDC relating to that session.

**Attendance**

Attendance by representatives from the Faculty is expected at every Committee meeting. In the event of less than full representation, the Committee will be considered quorate when 50% of those who can act in a decision making capacity are present. This figure must include the Chair or Vice-Chair. In the event that there is inadequate representation within the Committee to address any agenda item, such business will not be discussed.

**Meetings**

There will be a minimum of four face to face meetings in each Faculty in each academic year, with more if required. The dates and venues of such meetings will be published by no later than the end of June before the start of the following academic year.

**General Notes**

1. No one registered as a student for a research degree of the university may be a member of a FRDC.
2. Any matter that cannot be resolved by a FRDC should be referred to the REC for consideration.
3. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) is entitled to attend meetings of the FRDCs as an observer.
4. The Secretary of FRDC will be responsible for organising agenda, producing accurate minutes, and enacting and reporting on follow-up actions. The minutes and operation of each FRDC may be subject to internal and external audit.
5. Student related matters put before a FRDC will only be considered if they are presented on the latest version of the appropriate RETI generated proforma.
6. Chair’s Action will only be permitted when the Chair is empowered to do so by the FRDC in relation to a particular matter, and this will be explicitly noted as such in the minutes.
7. The responsibility for maintaining accurate student records rests with RETI. These records may be subject to internal and external audit.

*Status:*

*Version approved by Academic Council, 17 July 2013 (Chair’s Action), with recommended amendments from the Research and Enterprise Committee endorsed by Academic Council 11 March 2015. Updated 30 August 2016. Updated 14 July 2017*

*Version approved by Chair’s action – Academic Council 4 October 2017*