

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference (Version 2.3)

1. Constitution and purpose

- 1.1 As detailed in the Senate Statement of Primary Responsibilities and Delegations, the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) is responsible on behalf of the Senate for matters concerning research degree programmes.
- 1.2 With the approval of the Senate, the UCRI has established the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) as a sub-committee to undertake on its behalf many of the duties concerning research degree programmes, including admission, advice, registration, supervision, monitoring and examination of postgraduate research students and candidates for higher degrees.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Research Degrees Committee is to provide institutional-level leadership in relation to all issues affecting postgraduate research students and programmes.
- 1.4 The Research Degrees Committee (RDC) has the primary purpose of:
- i. considering and approving the academic conditions associated with the establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of programmes, and disciplines with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates.
 - ii. approving, amending, or revoking the appointment of supervisors.
 - iii. approving internal and external examiners for the examination of the thesis associated with research degrees and higher doctorates.
 - iv. considering and approving the granting of awards resulting from programmes of study with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates.
 - v. ensuring compliance with the Regulatory requirement for granting awards resulting from programmes of study with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates.
 - vi. having oversight of the implementation, monitoring, and reviewing of the Code of Practice for Research Students (or equivalent).
 - vii. reviewing the research student experience including training and development activities.
 - viii. providing guidance on the University's programme of activities provided by the Research Future Academy (or equivalent) to support PGR students and supervisors.
 - ix. ensuring activities provided by the Research Futures Academy (or equivalent) align with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.
 - x. establishing and maintaining links with the University Research Ethics Committee to ensure research carried out in pursuit of research degrees and higher doctorates meet the requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- 1.5 The UCRI may also task the RDC to report or make recommendations in relation to emerging issues of institutional, national, or international significance.

2 Remit

- 2.1 The UCRI will make recommendations to Senate based on reports submitted by the RDC.
- i. consider and make recommendations to the UCRI based on issues concerning:
 - a) academic quality assurance and enhancement reviews with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates;

- b) the findings of quality assurance and enhancement reviews, and action plans arising from these, with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
- c) the University's participation in external research assessment exercises as they relate to research degrees, and the findings and action plans arising thereof;
- d) the enhancement of support in relation to the development of the academic attributes of Students and the research skills of Staff and Students undertaking research;
- e) the development of the physical and virtual academic environment pertaining to research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
- f) the findings of surveys and other reviews of Student experience and the destinations of graduates with respect to research students and graduates.

ii. with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates to:

- a) consider and approve the granting of awards with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
- b) consider and approve the granting of changes to periods of study and compulsory withdrawals for research degree students and higher doctorate Students;
- c) approve, amend, or revoke the appointment of supervisors, advisors and internal and external examiners;
- d) consider and approve the academic conditions associated with the establishing, modifying, or withdrawing of research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
- e) consider and approve the academic conditions associated with the establishing, management, or termination of external academic partnerships for the delivery of research degree programmes and higher doctorates.

2.2 In addition, the RDC will:

- i. make recommendations and approve changes to the programme of specific events such as themed research conferences for research students;
- ii. monitor and provide analysis to UCRI on research student data e.g. retention, thesis submission and completion rates;
- iii. monitor Athena SWAN issues in relation to research students.

2.3 The UCRI delegates authority to the RDC to:

- i. develop, recommend, and monitor the implementation of, and report on Ordinances and Regulations for, and review and modify policies and procedures with respect to:
 - a) appropriate professional development provision for Students undertaking research;
 - b) academic quality assurance and enhancement for research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
 - c) academic and other entry requirements, and the recognition of prior learning for research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
 - d) conditions of registration, periods of registration and changes of registration and compulsory withdrawals for research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
 - e) assessments, examinations, feedback, and progression for research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
 - f) the appointment of supervisors and internal and external examiners for research degree programmes and higher doctorates;
 - g) the granting, deprivation, and revocation of awards with respect to research degree programmes and higher doctorates.

3 Composition and Membership

- 3.1 The Chair of the Committee is nominated by the Deputy Principal (Research and Innovation) and approved by the UCRI.
- 3.2 Membership of the Committee shall include:
- a) the Chair of the Committee
 - b) the Vice Chair of the Committee
 - c) Six members of Senate appointed by the Senate (of which at least one would normally be a Dean of the University)
 - d) One representative from each School (nominated by Director of Research in consultation with Heads of School)
 - e) One representative from the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses (nominated by the Provost)
Dubai - TBA
Director of Research and Enterprise HWUM
 - f) A Student President
 - g) A Postgraduate Student Officer
- 3.3 The Committee's current membership is as follows:
- a) Dr Scott Dalgarno
 - b) Professor Lynne Jack
 - c) Professor Scott Arthur
Dr Cheng Siew Goh
Dr Amos Haniff
Dr Helen Lewis
Dr Marion Winters
TBC
 - d) Dr Scott Dalgarno (EPS)
Professor Stephen Gibson (SoSS)
Dr Lisa Macintyre (SoTD)
Professor Gabriela Medero (EGIS)
Dr Michela Ottobre (MACS)
 - e) Dubai – Dr Rehan Ahmed
Malaysia – Professor David Ngo
 - f) Mr Sanjit Krishnakumar, Student Union President
 - g) Mr Sean Keenan
- In attendance:
- 3.4
- a) Ms Ruth Moir, University Secretary
 - b) Dr Ruth Neiland, Head of the Research Futures Academy
 - c) TBC, Researcher Development Coordinator, Research Futures Academy
 - d) Ms Alba Sanchez, Academic Coordinator, Student Union
 - e) Mr Kieran Robson Renner, Quality Enhancement Officer (Student Learning Experience), Academic Quality, RAS
 - f) Ms Karen Paterson, Clerk to the Committee
 - g) Mr Phil Rowsby, Clerk to the University Committee for Research and Innovation

4 Equality and Diversity Statement

- 4.1 The Committee exercises its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working group or committee established by the Committee. The Committee, in carrying out its business, will also act to promote equality of opportunity for all.

5 Quorum and voting

- 5.1 The quorum necessary to transact business is five members, at least two of whom shall be School representatives and at least two of whom must be members of the Senate. In accordance with Statute Five, paragraph 4(b), the quorum of any Committee of the Senate exercising delegated powers shall include at least two members of the Senate.
- 5.2 Members who are participating in a meeting by means of audio-visual conferencing or other means enabling them to speak with and be heard by all members present at the meeting simultaneously shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and to count towards the quorum.
- 5.3 Normal practice is that wherever possible decisions shall be reached through consensus.
- 5.4 All members of the Committee are entitled to vote in any vote of the Committee except:
- i. when the Committee is required to vote on the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, those persons present who are not Senators shall be invited to abstain from voting.
 - ii. when the Committee is required to vote on a matter that is solely under the purview of the University Executive, then only those persons who are members because of their executive positions shall be eligible to vote.
- 5.5 The Chair shall rule on instances where a vote is required, and whether any matter under consideration pertains to the exercising of delegated powers of the Senate, or whether a matter is solely under the purview of the University Executive.
- 5.6 A person invited to be 'in attendance' at one or more meetings of the Committee is not entitled to vote.
- 5.7 In the event of a tied vote on a Senate matter the decision shall be referred to UCRI.

6 Committee Chair

- 6.1 The Chair of the RDC, who does not need to be a member of Senate, is nominated by the Chair of the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) and approved by the UCRI.
- 6.2 A Deputy Chair of the RDC is drawn from amongst the Committee Members who are members of academic Staff and approved by the UCRI.
- 6.3 In the absence of both the Chair and the Deputy Chair from any given meeting, those members present shall appoint one of their number as Acting Chair.

7 Frequency of meetings

- 7.1 The RDC normally meets seven times per year.
- 7.2 Additional meetings (including meetings held in conjunction with other bodies) may be required – with the approval by the Chair – for more detailed consideration of particular items.
- 7.3 Changes to arrangements, such as cancellation, rescheduling or additional meetings will be notified to members by the Clerk as soon as possible, and normally within not less than five working days of the scheduled meeting date.

8 Attendance at meetings

- 8.1 The Committee may co-opt members as appropriate for a specified period of time and report such co-options to the Senate and the UCRI at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2 In addition to the members, and those normally 'in attendance', other colleagues may from time to time be invited to attend meetings on an ad-hoc basis for particular agenda items and invited to contribute to discussions at the discretion of the Chair.
- 8.3 The Committee maintains a record of attendance at each of its meetings and reports this information in accordance with the Attendance Policy.

8 Reporting procedures

- 8.1 The RDC will submit a report following each of its meetings to the UCRI summarising activities, discussions, and decisions. Decisions relating to 1.4i, 1.4ii, 1.4iii and 1.4iv above shall be available for scrutiny by the Senate.
- 8.2 The RDC should be pro-active in bringing reports of institutional, national or international significance issues to the attention of UCRI.
- 8.3 The UCRI reports to both the University Executive and the Senate on matters of strategy and policy.

9 Forward planning

- 9.1 The Committee maintains a list of Standing Agenda Items and an annual schedule of activities.
- 9.2 The Committee sets dates for its ordinary meetings two years in advance.
- 9.3 As part of its annual year-end self-assessment, the Committee reviews its performance in fulfilling its Remit, and considers possible modifications to its Terms of Reference. This also gives opportunity to review the Composition (including the gender balance of its membership, and the opportunity to receive contributions from the University's different campuses), and to submit recommendations as appropriate to the Senate and to the UCRI.

10 Culture of operation

- 10.1 In fulfilling its terms of reference, the RDC shall follow the principles agreed by the Senate to enhance academic governance by:
- i. closer alignment between the decision-making structure and the University's strategic objectives, to ensure that the decision making structures are fit for the delivery of the strategy;
 - ii. a more efficient approach to the decision making process, leading to clearer lines of reporting and accountability, a reduction in time taken to reach business-critical decisions, and high quality outcomes;
 - iii. main committees should focus on matters of strategy and policy, with operational matters being dealt with by the relevant colleagues in consultation with ad hoc working groups as required;
 - iv. minimisation of business considered by numerous different groups and with appropriate accountability for decisions taken;
 - v. an assumption that decisions will be reached by consensus wherever possible;
 - vi. an assumption that each Committee will address business internationally;
 - vii. appropriate delineation between governance and management;
 - viii. the papers coming forward to committees should contain clear, evidence-based proposals for consideration;
 - ix. greater use should be made of IT facilities to reduce the amount of paper being circulated, with members of committees and others being able to access committee papers on a local intranet with appropriate access authorisation; and
 - x. effective communication of decisions to all relevant parties throughout the University.

Supporting Information

Groups feeding into the Research Degrees Committee

None at the date of these Terms of Reference.

Effectiveness and lifespan

This is an established Standing Sub-Committee of the UCRI and its lifespan is ongoing. RDC will be included in any assessments and formal reviews of effectiveness of UCRI and its sub-committees.

Actions that may be taken by the Committee

The Research Degrees Committee may:

- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Approve
- Recommend
- Reject

Most appropriate minuting style

Minutes of each meeting are distributed to members within two weeks of the meeting. The Chair approves the content of minutes before release.

The minutes are presented to the next ordinary meeting of the RDC, with any matters for consideration and/or approval highlighted in a cover paper.

The RDC's agenda and minutes, which are FOISA compliant, shall be available for publication on request.

Agendas, minutes, and papers are held electronically by the Clerk to RDC.

RDC has traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance on style, and requirements regarding Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

The papers and minutes should be copied to the Head of Heritage and Information Governance for archive purposes.

Resources

Clerk Ms Karen Paterson, PGR Office Manager (EPS).

Meetings Normally 7 meetings per year.

Version	Amendments	Approved by
V2.1		Senate - 23 April 2018
V2.2	November 2021 - Minor amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership	UCRI - 7 December 2021
	November 2021 - Minor changes to the appointment of the Chair of the Committee	UCRI - 7 December 2021
	November 2021 - Details transferred to the new University template	UCRI - 7 December 2021
V2.3	October 2022 – Minor amendments to reflect changes in Committee membership	UCRI – 14 November 2022