The University of Melbourne  
Department of Mathematics and Statistics  

Research and Graduate Studies Committee Minutes  

Wednesday 16th May 2007  
2:15pm, Thomas Cherry Room

Present: Aleks Owczarek (Chair), Iain Aitchison, Jan de Gier, and Lara Maia-Pike (minutes)

1. Apologies  
Antoinette Tordesillas, Peter Taylor & Loretta Bartolini.

IMPORTANT NOTICE:  
Due to the large number of apologies for this meeting, Aleks suggested that members not present will have the opportunity to provide comments after the meeting. Items that are open for comments have been indicated in this document. Three documents used during the meeting will be provided to all committee members.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting.  
The minutes from the previous meeting were accepted as a true record.

Matters arising from previous minutes:

- Aleks has contacted the Publicity Officer to liaise with RPC
- Aleks provided a spreadsheet with all 2008 Discovery Applications: 19 applications within the Department, 21 within the University and four shared applications with other institutions.
- Ian has contacted supervisors of those students with unclear status/situation.

3. Web site update  
A list of possible supervisors for prospective students on the website has been updated. The list has been simplified and contains names of Possible Supervisors (which links to individual profiles), Research Group and Research Areas for Supervision. It was agreed that the list should be kept simple.

Suggestions:

- Jan De Gier suggested that even the Research Group could be left out of the list.
- Supervisors could be able to update their own details on the list. The possibility is being discussed with the IT department.
- Eligibility criteria to should be Level B and Above.

This item is open to all members for comments.
4. **Postgraduate Coordinator**

Iain Aitchison is retiring from his position and on behalf of the Department and students, Aleks thanked Ian for his great work as a Postgraduate Coordinator and as a mentor for students. Negotiations with a new Postgraduate Coordinator are still in process. It was agreed that due to the upcoming Growing Esteem changes, the adjustments to the role are still unknown and a handover to the next coordinator is crucial.

**Action:** Ian to provide a document that outlines the important tasks of the role.

5. **Postgraduate enrolments**

Eleven new postgraduate students enrolled the Department in 2007. Other three students have joined the department in late 2006.

The induction packs did not contain forms for CSP membership. As a result, nine students have not received CSP membership. This issue has been actioned and will be sorted by next week. The situation of three students (Ashish Gupta, Alonso Matta and Tim Robinson) has to be followed up. The new Student Administration Officer has to ensure induction packs contain required all forms.

6. **Linkage grant Applications**

The Department has met its target for Linkage Grant Applications. A hard copy has been provided for reference.

7. **RQF**

The Statistical Mechanics group has been selected to undertake RQF Pre-Implementation Trials. Peter Forrester was asked to provide a description of tasks in order to assist the Department in the future.

Summary of the RQF procedure:

*The RQF is due to be implemented next year (although a change of government could change this). In preparation DEST is requiring of certain universities that they participate in mock RQFs. The statistical mechanics group has been nominated by the department for this purpose.*

*The mock RQF is to take place under the rules of the Preferred RQF document, which is both brief and vague on many issues. In general terms, both quality and impact are to be assessed. Impact is defined as the social, economic, environmental and/or cultural benefit of research to the wider community. It is stated that research groups (which must consist of 5 or more individuals, are what are assessed) unsuited to impact assessment because of the intrinsic nature of their research can make claim for exclusion from the impact assessment. Otherwise, an up to 10 page impact statement is required, together with up to 4 case studies that verify these claims together with the details of end users. This doesn't fit the statistical mechanics group, so a claim for exclusion is to be made.*
For research quality, the period being assessed is 2001-2006 inclusive (for impact, this period, together with the previous 6 years, can be claimed against). Each member of the group must submit their (corrected) Themis publication data, annotated with citation counts, together with a count of those articles which are published in journals that "fall in the top percentiles for the discipline". This latter task is near impossible, because disciplines are so varied, but generally the Preferred RQF document is keen on so called quality metrics. A separate heading containing the "4 best" publications is required, and a brief reason for choosing each article can be given. In addition the group is to provide a so called context statement, which asks for information on the focus of the group, and on more metrics, like competitive grant income. The possible marks for research quality are 5 down to 1, with no half marks (for impact, the marks are from A down to E).

Action: Outcome to be communicated to the Department.

8. Student Issues

Loretta has asked Aleks to raise the following issues:

- With the ongoing implementation of the Melbourne Model students are concerned that supervisors are taking longer to provide their feedback. The committee members agreed that this is a concern, but no action can be taken at this stage. Iain pointed out that, students that are overdue with their thesis submissions have already applied for an extension. Many students are taking three and a half years to complete their thesis, even before the full implementation of the Growing Esteem. With the expected increase of workload, this may become a major issue in special because the duration of scholarships is three and a half years.

- RSS Guidelines:
Even though the RSS guidelines state “In general, funding to conferences is contingent on presentation of a paper/seminar” consideration has been given to some students and funding was provided towards attendance to seminars/conference or coursework.

Iain and Jan agreed that the statement should be taken out of the RSS guidelines. Another suggestion is that maybe students should be required to provide a small report.

This item is open to all members for comments.

9. Any other business
None

The meeting concluded at 3.00 pm.