

**The University of Melbourne  
Department of Mathematics and Statistics**

**Research and Graduate Studies Committee Minutes**

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2008  
10:30am, Thomas Cherry Room**

**Present:** Aleks Owczarek (Chair), Peter Forrester, Aihua Xia, Ellie Button, Matthew Simpson, Angela Balshaw (Minutes)

**Apologies:** Antoinette Tordesillas, Peter Taylor, Jan de Gier

**1. Minutes from previous meeting**

- CSP panels – Angela to get these up to date by the next meeting in July. CSP meetings being held are all up to date.
- Peter and Aleks to speak to staff about grant applications – not done yet. Will be done when appraisals are held.
- Top-up scholarships – this hasn't been discussed at the management meeting. Once we know what money we have to spend, will put this item on the RGS committee agenda.
- SSP (long) applications – Aleks has circulated details to academic staff as discussed at the last RGS meeting. Aleks has a list of people who have applied – will discuss this later in the meeting.

**ACTION:** Angela to get CSP panels up to date by the next meeting.

**2. Chair's report**

- Membership
  - This is the last meeting for Aleks as Chair. Peter Forrester will take over from the next meeting.
  - Mat was welcomed to the committee.
  - Hyam has also joined the committee and will attend the next meeting.
- Dept Colloquium for finishing students
  - Some feedback suggested that "colloquium" wasn't an appropriate name for these. Might need to clarify that these are in addition to seminars given within groups on the details of their work. Could call it Department Student Seminar Series.
  - We expect that research students will give several seminars.
  - Catering – needs to be nibbles rather than sandwiches, with all students invited to attend.
- Linkage International Projects – these are becoming more important because of the lack of visitor funds. ARC have now said that we can apply for visitor funds.

**ACTION:** Peter and Aleks to review committee membership – Jan might not be needed here but he might be well utilized on the promotions committee.

**3. Postgraduate Coordinator's Report**

- What is the difference between the PhD thesis and MSc thesis? Aihua was asked this question by a student who wants to change course. Aihua was advised that PhD students should produce 3 publications while MSc students should produce 1. This sounds about right. For Masters, it should be equivalent to 1 publication, but might

not necessarily be published. Some areas publish more than others. The degree is now called MPhil.

- We have students from various parts of the university asking if they can do postgraduate studies in mathematics. Aihua's experience with Commerce PhD students doing his undergraduate subjects is that they struggle. If they want to enter our new coursework Masters program, this will be a question of entry requirements. To get a major in mathematics, students need to do 4 300-level subjects. There may be a diploma that students could do prior to doing the Masters. This is a work in progress.
- Aihua to refer student enquiries about the coursework Masters to Paul Norbury.
- Aside from these 2 issues, everything seems to be fine.

#### **4. Student Representative Report**

- Major revision of thesis
  - What to do when a thesis examiner says revise and resubmit. Feeling among students is that the student's supervisor shouldn't let this happen.
  - The Head of Department is the Chairperson of Examiners and he needs to sign off on the submission as well.
  - The student should present to their panel and they should approve it for submission. This is why the panel is very important.
  - The role of the panel tends to be quite inconsistent across the department, depending on who the supervisor is.
  - Ellie advised that students like having the meetings.
  - There should be a yearly mini-seminar.
  - Students sometimes hand in their paperwork just a few hours before the meeting, which makes it hard for the supervisors to be prepared.
- Provision of feedback
  - Not getting timely or detailed feedback on work – how could this be addressed?
  - Other members of the panel can be asked to read material.
  - The supervisor should be reading any reasonable draft of a thesis chapter.
  - The supervisor in question wasn't prepared to read or talk about the work, unless it was a draft of a paper. This seems unreasonable.
  - Students should be encouraged to talk to their panel members, the postgraduate co-ordinator, the chair of this committee, and if there's no other avenue, the Head of Department.

**ACTION:** Aleks to circulate a message to the department about the importance of the CSP meetings and suggesting that mini-seminars are held.

#### **5. Research Fellow Representative Report**

- Research Fellows are interested to know what's happening with the RQF replacement.
- Once we know the details of the replacement, this item will be back on the agenda.
- In the budget, it was reported that the number of APAs is to be doubled and there will also be a large number of extra funding opportunities for research fellowships.
- Faculty Research Industry meeting – Peter reported that Linkage grants were discussed. There is up to \$40,000 available from the Science Faculty for almost completed proposals. There will be smaller funding opportunities for more speculative proposals.
- Revised version of the RQF – will globally reflect the strength of departments. The committee is encouraging people to publish review articles in high-profile journals.

## 6. SSP (long)

- Aleks has received 2 applications.
- There are only 3 applications for next year. They are spread across different areas of the department so won't impact teaching – Andrew Robinson, Steve Carnie and Hyam.
- 2009 will be a difficult year from teaching point of view, but we can manage this.
- There are 3 people that have nominated for 2010, and 2 for 2011.
- A few people have indicated verbally that they are considering putting in an application.
- Looking at a system whereby people from the same teaching area aren't going at the same time. We could probably handle 4 or 5 people per year maximum, but spread across the department.

**ACTION:** Will recommend to the Head of Department that applications from Andrew, Steve and Hyam be supported.

## 7. Any other business

- A student was enquiring about the travel support money.
- Research support scheme applications get submitted to the Chair of this committee and the Head of Department.
- If supervisors have money, that money should be used first.
- If there's no other money, the department would pay for 1 local conference per year and one overseas conference at some point during their candidature. Students should speak at the conferences. There should at least be a poster.
- Students should submit a report after they return.
- For PhD students, there are travel grants from other parts of the university that they can apply for as well.
- In Physics, they often ask for money for students to travel in the ARC grant applications. We should include this in our Discovery grant applications as well.

The meeting closed at 12pm.

The next meeting will be held on 21<sup>st</sup> July at 10:30am in the Thomas Cherry Room.