

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

Research and Graduate Studies Committee Minutes

**Monday 17th March 2008
10:30am, Thomas Cherry Room**

Present: Aleks Owczarek (Chair), Peter Taylor, Aihua Xia, Jan de Gier, Ellie Button, Angela Balshaw (Minutes)

Apologies: Antoinette Tordesillas, Peter Forrester

1. Minutes from previous meeting

- A couple of action items are now out-dated. RQF item is now not required.
- Aleks emailed staff about grants and a number of grant applications have been submitted.
- Student progress reports were tabled. A couple of students should have had panel meetings but they are not recorded in the database. Angela to follow up about these.
- Leigh Humphries and Robin Langer should have been confirmed by now – Angela to follow up about these.

ACTION: Angela to follow up outstanding issues.

2. Chair's Report

- Peter Forrester will be joining the committee, and he will be the new chair from the middle of the year.
- Ellie Button is the new student representative.

3. Grant applications

- There have been 16 applications to the Discovery program (there were 25 last year). All but one of them is through this department.
- Last year we requested \$14M and were awarded \$3M. This year we have asked for \$12M, in spite of the fewer applications.
- Peter believes anyone who isn't full up should be putting in grant applications. Aleks said there may be some people who haven't done so.

ACTION: Peter and Aleks to speak about individuals separately and follow up with them during their PDFs.

4. Postgraduate Co-ordinator's report

- Embarked on a recruitment campaign targeted at last year's Honours students. The response was very good.
- Of all the students who applied, there was only 1 student that didn't meet the cut-off point.
- When students put in applications, they often believe that we will get their marks for them. There were delays in processing applications because of this (relates to applicants from outside the university), and resulted in a lot of extra work for Aihua.
- Will be holding an induction session on Thursday this week for new students. Ellie will make sure that as many existing students as possible attend the session.

- Issue with scoring of students – currently we treat marks from different universities the same. Not sure how to address this issue. Students from outside the university tend to score better than our students. Unless we have an issue where a student misses out on a scholarship who should receive one, it's not really a problem.
- Staff who aren't on the department payroll, such as associates of the department, can still be 2nd or 3rd supervisors. There needs to be at least one supervisor who will be here longer than the student will be.
- Desks for PhD students – some students feel that some desks are better than others. Ellie and Loretta will liaise with Angela about how to organize this.
- Some supervisors feel students haven't done enough and are unwilling to let them graduate, but the students feel they have done enough. The standards of PhD varies a lot. Students need to know what's expected of them.
 - Should we insist there should be publications? Should at least be submissions of publishable quality.
 - Where there's a difference between supervisor's and student's expectations, this should be addressed at meetings of CSPs.
 - The make-up of the panel can help address problems between supervisors and students. If you have a member who is outside the group, but close enough to understand the work, they can offer a more independent point of view. The panel doesn't have to only meet once a year – can meet more regularly if there are problems, until they are resolved.

ACTION: Ellie to make sure as many students as possible attend the induction session for new students on Thursday.

ACTION: Ellie and Loretta to liaise with Angela about desks for postgraduate students.

5. Student Report

- All is otherwise fine.

6. CSP Panel Update

- Angela reviewed and updated details. There are still a few students that don't have panel's set up. Angela will follow up on these.
- Natasha will remain an associate and will continue to supervise her current students.
- Sophie Dickson – Peter will look up what Natasha's email said about her.
- Angela to follow up with Greg about Leigh Humphries.
- Robin Langer – will make Ole and Tony the panel.
- Matthieu Gilson (Kostya's Engineering student) – find out who his Engineering supervisors are and make them the panel.
- Shanil Ramanayake – will follow up about panel meeting.
- Khurram Kamran – will follow up with Steve about his panel.
- Michael Lachut – Angela to check recently submitted paperwork. Does he have a panel?
- Alonso Matta – due for a panel meeting now. Confirm that there has been a meeting.
- Ashish Gupta – due to finish soon. Need to update the panel to replace Dave Coulson, need to have another meeting (if they are applying for an extension).

ACTION: Angela to follow up on outstanding items.

7. Department Colloquium for finishing Research students

- Research students need to give seminars. Could use the department colloquium for this to give students a wider audience.
- The committee agreed that finishing Research students will give Colloquium talks.

ACTION: Aleks will contact Paul Pearce about finishing Research students giving Colloquium talks.

8. Top-up scholarships

- Aleks tabled the list of new students starting this year and their scholarship scores and the scholarship they are receiving.
- MASCOS gives top-up scholarships to students who have scholarship scores over 85, so anyone who has an APA scholarship gets a MASCOS top-up scholarship if they are MASCOS students.
- Question of equity – do we only give top-ups to students who have other scholarships? Or any students who get a certain score?
- Department top-up would be \$5K added to the scholarship, couldn't match what MASCOS gives.
- The top-ups haven't been applied uniformly over time. It needs to be equitable and it needs to be financially viable for the department. We currently don't have a budget for it.
- Aleks suggests it could be like the Research Scheme, where students apply for it when they arrive. If the supervisors have grants, it could come out of that.
- If we agree to a top-up, it's a commitment for 3 years.
- To address the equity issue, need to allow students who currently don't get a top-up to apply for one. Application would be a joint one from the student and the supervisor. Supervisor needs to declare that they don't have a grant that can cover it. Only available to students who have APAs.
- International students won't be eligible.
- There have been students who in the last year have got to the 3 ½ year point and need a few more months to finish up and they have run out of funding. We have extended their funding from the department's budget. With more students, this could become a bigger issue. Peter will make this an item for the next management meeting. Need to talk to Averil about putting together an ongoing budget for this.
- There probably will be more money on the table for scholarships in the future.
- Top-ups will be subject to review each year. Will require progress reports from CSPs and students.
- This will be an agenda item for next meeting – scholarships, top-ups, bridging funding.

ACTION: Peter to put scholarship funding on the agenda for the next management meeting.

ACTION: Aleks to put this item on the agenda for the next RGS meeting.

9. SSP (Long)

- Last year there was an issue where more people applied for SSP (long) than could be approved because they were from the same area.
- We need a policy on how many people can be away at any one time.
- 31 people (equivalent) are teaching 3 courses this year according to the lecture schedule, as opposed to about 40 last year.
- Criteria for deciding on applications:
 - Length since previous SSP.
 - Quality of research program
 - Needs to be spread across the department's research areas so teaching can still be managed.
- Need a 3-year rolling plan.

- Need to address the question – what is the expected benefit, both for the person and the department?
- This RGS committee will decide on applications.

ACTION: Aleks to write up details of this and send it to staff.

10. Any other business

- Equipment – the department purchases a computer for each postgraduate student at the start of their candidature and PhD students can then buy their computer at the end of their candidature. Some students also have a laptop that they bought with their MASCOS money. A student has asked if they can purchase both the computer and the laptop. Will say they can buy one or the other, not both.

The meeting closed at 12:10pm.

The next meeting will be held on Monday, 19th May 2008, at 10:30am in the Thomas Cherry Room.