GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE
2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 11 April 2017
Senate Room, Quadrangle (A14)

Members Present: Associate Professor Michael Kertesz (Acting Chair); Nicholas Avery (Nominee of the President, SUPRA); Associate Professor Rachel Codd (Medicine); Associate Professor Ross Coleman (Director, Graduate Research); Anne Fernandez (Nominee of the Deputy Registrar); Associate Professor Geoff Frost (Business); Dr Janice Gullick (Nursing); Associate Professor Patrick Kelly (Medicine); Tong Li (Postgraduate Research Student); Dean Lovett (Postgraduate Coursework Student); Associate Professor Shae McCrystal (Chair, HDR Scholarships Sub-Committee); Associate Professor Lynette MacKenzie (Health Sciences); Associate Professor Kathleen Nelson (Chair, HDR Examinations Sub-Committee); Dr Tim Newsome (Science); Associate Professor Aek Phakiti (Education & Social Work); Associate Professor Marjorie Valix (Engineering & IT); Dr Munira Xaymardan (Dentistry).

Attendees: Dr George Carayannopoulos (Head, HDR Administration Centre); Dr Matthew Charet (Secretary); Dr Glenys Eddy (University Secretariat); Edwina Grose (Head, Academic Model & Student Progression); Associate Professor Annette Katelaris (Medicine) (for Item 4.3); Dr Shailendra Sawleshwarkar (Medicine) (for Item 4.3).

Apologies: Dr Roslyn Bathgate (Veterinary Science); Professor Jo-Anne Brien (Pharmacy); Professor David Hamer (Law); Associate Professor Tony Masters (Chair of the Academic Board); Associate Professor Kirsten McKenzie (Chair); Associate Professor Gaby Ramia (Arts & Social Sciences); Associate Professor Lee Stickells (Architecture, Design & Planning).

MINUTES

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
The Committee noted apologies as recorded above.

2 PROCEDURAL MATTERS
2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting
Associate Professor Nelson requested a correction to Item 6.1, advising that cancellation of units of study must be advised to the government at least two months in advance. Subject to this correction, members confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 7 March 2017, as an accurate record.

Resolution GSC17/3-1
That the Graduate Studies Committee resolve that the minutes of meeting 2/2017, held on 7 March 2017, as amended, be confirmed as a true record.

2.2 Actions Arising
Members were advised that all actions arising from the previous meeting have been completed.

3 STANDING ITEMS
3.1 Report of the Chair
Further to the written report, the Chair observed that the approval process for addition of staff to the Supervisor Register is on the agenda as Item 4.6.

Resolution GSC17/3-2
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Chair.
3.2 Report of the Academic Board

In the absence of Associate Professor Masters, no questions were raised to the written report, which was noted by the committee as presented.

Resolution GSC17/3-3
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the report of the Academic Board meeting held on 28 March 2017.

3.3 Reports of HDR Examinations Sub-Committee

Associate Professor Nelson spoke to the three reports circulated with the agenda, advising that the January report was an amended version of the report of the same meeting as noted at the previous GSC. The February meeting highlighted the desirability of increased management of the cotutelle program as issues were emerging that did not directly relate to the HDRESC (which only monitors examination arrangements). The March meeting focussed on two major elements: the desirability to provide supervisors and Chairs of Examination with guidelines on how to write an effective outcome recommendation; and an informal review was undertaken of conflict of interest (COI) principles and guidelines. It was broadly agreed that the current COI process is effective, with identification of conflicts appropriately made the responsibility of the supervisor rather than an administrator. It was suggested, however, that the COI form needs to be improved. There is also scope for improvement of the Appointment of Examiners form.

Resolution GSC17/3-4
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the reports of the HDR Examinations Sub-Committee meetings of 31 January, 28 February and 28 March 2017.

3.4 Report of HDR Scholarships Sub-Committee

Associate Professor McCrystal advised that the Sub-Committee had met only once since the last Graduate Studies Committee meeting, and drew the attention of members to a paper circulated shortly before the meeting which discusses challenges with new ranking processes as approved by the Academic Board in 2016. Specifically, the Sub-Committee has determined that the intention to offer twenty per cent of available HDR scholarships to candidates in strategically-aligned areas is currently problematic, and it is therefore proposed to revisit the means of delivering on this intention. Noting that the Academic Board agreed at its last meeting to postpone allocation based on faculty research compacts, the committee agreed to recommend that the Academic Board also defer until Semester 2 the adoption of a mechanism for awarding additional points to HDR scholarship applicants based on strategic alignment. This will allow further time to refine the current model for differentiating applicants.

In discussion, concern was expressed with using Field of Research (FoR) codes or IRMA as the basis for strategic allocation, and it was observed that there are a large number of University Centres with indeterminate membership criteria that might be taken advantage of by staff seeking advantage for their students. A number of possible methods for identifying research priorities were suggested, including affiliation of supervisor only with Centres identified in the Strategic Plan, assessing each applicant’s project against strategic research priorities, or inviting faculties to identify staff whose students should be included. Members were also advised that the University is currently reviewing the Centres Policy and membership of the Centres as well as self-identification of FoR codes, which may provide additional mechanisms for strategic allocation.

The committee agreed to reconvene the ranking guidelines working party to further refine wording and allocation processes, and also supported the recommendation to delay implementation of the strategic allocation of scholarships until Semester 2 2017.

Resolution GSC17/3-5
That the Graduate Studies Committee note the verbal report of the Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Sub-Committee (HDRSSC) meeting held on 7 April 2017.

Resolution GSC17/3-6
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board agree to delay the implantation of scholarship allocations based on strategic alignment until Semester 2 2017.
4 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

Minor Course Proposals

4.1 Law: Juris Doctor

Associate Professor McCrystal spoke to this proposal and advised that students in the Juris Doctor are already permitted to take up to 24 credit points of units of study from postgraduate coursework degrees in the Law School. This proposal permits the recognition of units of study completed prior to candidature, and was endorsed as presented.

Resolution GSC17/3-7
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board:
(1) approve the proposal from Sydney Law School to amend the Juris Doctor; and
(2) approve the amendment of the course resolutions arising from this proposal, with immediate effect.

4.2 Medicine: Master of Medicine (Internal Medicine)

Associate Professor Kelly spoke to this proposal and advised that it arises from the development of what was approved as a 3 credit point unit of study which is to be delivered for the first time in Semester 2 2017. As the deliverable and assessable content of this unit has been worked out, it has been realised that the volume of material to be covered is commensurate with a 6 credit point weighting, necessitating the proposal. All students who are currently enrolled in the unit of study have been contacted and all have confirmed their willingness to adjust their subject selection accordingly, and the Faculty asserts that no student will be negatively impacted by the change.

Ms Fernandez advised that the 6 credit point version of this unit of study will need a new unit of study code, and that a prohibition for the 3 credit point version will need to be put in place to prevent students from being enrolled in both versions of the unit of study. The Faculty and Secretary undertook to liaise with Ms Fernandez to sort out the logistics arising from this proposal, which was endorsed by the committee.

Resolution GSC17/3-8
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that Academic Board:
(1) Approve the change in INTM5008 Basic Cardiology from a 3 credit point unit of study to a 6 credit point unit of study; and
(2) Approve changes to the table of units of study arising from this proposal with effect from Semester 2, 2017.

4.3 Medicine: Master of Medicine (HIV, STIs and Sexual Health)

Associate Professor Kelly advised that pathways within the Master of Medicine have existed for some time, and that the Sexual Health pathway currently has an enrolment of approximately 75 students. It is desired to simplify the offerings within the degree by collapsing one stream in Maternal, Fetal and Reproductive Medicine – which has never attracted students – and refocussing and renaming the existing stream in HIV, STIs and Sexual Health to provide a focus on Sexual and Reproductive Health, incorporating some material from the previous pathway.

In discussion, Ms Fernandez advised that there are no administrative impediments to supporting the proposal, but that some of the new unit of study names will need to be revised to fit within the 45 character limit in Sydney Student.

Subject to the revision of unit of study names where required, the proposal was endorsed for presentation to the Academic Board.

Resolution GSC17/3-9
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that Academic Board:
(1) Approve the change of name of the current Master of Medicine/Master of Science in Medicine stream in HIV, STIs and Sexual Health to ‘Sexual and Reproductive Health’;
(2) Approve the reconfigured Pathway structure within this Stream, including a new Reproductive Health and Fertility Pathway.
(3) Approve the deletion of the stream ‘Maternal, Fetal & Reproductive Medicine’ from the Master of Medicine and Master of Science in Medicine;
(4) Recommend that the Senate endorse the Academic Board’s approval of the proposal and
Graduate Studies Committee minutes

4.4 Medicine: Master of Surgery

Associate Professor Kelly advised that this proposal is to enable study of Urology within the Master of Surgery program and will also be of interest to oncology students. The unit will be delivered online and is intended to be available in Semester 2 2017 (with 15 students already expressing an interest) and in both Semesters 1 and 2 from 2018.

The proposal was endorsed for presentation to the Academic Board.

Resolution GSC17/3-10
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board:
(1) Approve the proposal from the Sydney Medical School to amend the Master of Surgery; and
(2) Approve the amendment of the Unit of Study Tables arising from this proposal with effect for Semester 2, 2017.

Higher Degree by Research

4.5 Amendment of the Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2015

Associate Professor Coleman informed members that this amendment to Schedule 1 of the Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2015 will enable the checking of a substantial piece of written work via similarity matching software as part of the candidate’s first Annual Progress Review (APR). It is intended to set up all HDR supervisors with a Turnitin site to facilitate this process. It is intended that breaches would not be reported to the Research Office for disciplinary action; rather, the check provides an opportunity for the supervisor to address any deficiencies in academic integrity in the early stages of candidature.

In discussion, the possibility was raised of students being permitted to access Turnitin prior to submission; this has been identified as problematic for technical reasons. Limiting access to the tool to supervisors also strengthens use of the check as a learning tool, and supervisors will be able to turn off matching for subsequent revisions of previously-submitted text. The Chair advised that an earlier version of the process had been trialled in Agriculture and had not been successful, primarily due to lack of training of staff in use of the tool. This has now been addressed and the Director, Graduate Research, has been tasked with providing training and materials, which are currently under development. Papers that are submitted for checking will be retained in Turnitin, but the content of such submissions will not be accessible by external users without the explicit permission of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and this will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Associate Professor Nelson sought clarification as to whether a PG Coordinator or Head of Discipline can be a member of the APR panel and was advised that supervisors cannot be on the panel for their own students, but that there may be significant benefit for the PG Coordinator to participate on some or even all panels, to ensure that there is consistent scrutiny across the discipline or faculty. The Chair also questioned the appropriateness of the panel considering the cancellation of a candidate’s scholarship (as enabled by clause 13(4)(e)).

This proposal was endorsed for presentation to the Academic Board.

Resolution GSC17/3-11
That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve the amendment of the Progress Planning and Review for Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2015, with effect from 16 May 2017.

4.6 Accountability changes within the Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013

Associate Professor Coleman advised that the curation of a single list of approved supervisors had formerly been managed by the Director of the Graduate Studies Office but that with the dissolution of that office, the responsibility for approving staff to be added to the Supervisor Register was delegated to the Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee. The Director of Graduate Research and
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) suggest that approval of appointment of staff to supervise HDR students is more appropriately undertaken at faculty level. This proposal enables this delegation.

The proposal was endorsed for presentation to the Academic Board.

*Resolution GSC17/3-12*

That the Graduate Studies Committee recommend that the Academic Board approve the amendment of the Supervision of Higher Degree by Research Students Policy 2013, with effect from 16 May 2017.

5 ITEMS FOR NOTING

6 OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Limits on Suspension

Associate Professor Kelly asked members to provide their perspectives on the restriction for suspension of candidature to two years, as stipulated in Clause 57 of the Coursework Policy 2015. In discussion, it was observed that there should be a balance between ensuring that the student’s knowledge is current while allowing flexibility of study. In many faculties, current practice is to require a student who needs to suspend for more than two years to reapply for admission and seek credit for their previous study, which ensures that students only resume candidature when they are able to devote sufficient time to study. It was also noted that there are no clear parameters regarding suspension for students in combined degrees; this will increase in importance with the development of vertically integrated undergraduate / postgraduate combined degrees.

6.2 Any Other Business

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 3:32pm.

Next meeting: 2:00pm – 4:00pm, Tuesday 23 May 2017

Senate Room, Quadrangle