

## Executive Summary of Business for Research Degrees Progression & Award Board

Title	Annual Review of Terms of Reference
Status	Unrestricted
Author	Susanna Broom, Head of the Sussex Researcher School
Type	Discussion paper
Date	February 2024
Summary of paper	<p>The Board's terms of reference and membership will be reviewed at the annual meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Presented here is a version of the terms of reference previously approved by the Doctoral School Board (DSB) in June (<a href="#">DSB/31/1A</a>), edited to bring terminology up-to-date following agreement that the term 'postgraduate researcher' or 'PGR' will be adopted moving forward (<a href="#">DSB/31/02</a>), and confirmation that the Doctoral School will be rebranded to the 'Sussex Researcher School'.</p> <p><i>Note: The DSB is in the process of being renamed the Postgraduate Researcher Board (PGRB) to more accurately reflect its remit, and is referred to as the PGRB in these updated terms of reference.</i></p>
Strategic context	n/a
Suggested reading	Original proposal for a restructure of PGR-focused governance ( <a href="#">DSB/29/2</a> ) and report on implementation ( <a href="#">DSB/31/1A</a> ).
Classification	Internal use
Resource implications	n/a
Consultation	<p>The revised terms of reference and membership of the Research Degrees Progression &amp; Award Board (RDPAB) were approved by the DSB on 27 June 2023 (<a href="#">DSB/31/1A</a>); the Chair of RDPAB is an <i>ex officio</i> member of the DSB.</p> <p>The version presented here reflects planned changes in branding and terminology following consultation with the DSB (<a href="#">DSB/31/02</a>), University Executive Team, and RaKE.</p>
Future actions	n/a
Recommendation	The Board is asked to <b>NOTE</b> the Board's terms of reference and membership.

The Research Degrees Progression & Award Board (RDPAB) is a sub-committee of the Postgraduate Researcher Board (PGRB).

### **Terms of Reference**

The below stated responsibilities apply to all research degree-awarding programmes at the University of Sussex, with the exception of those managed via the Brighton Sussex Medical School, which are overseen by the Joint Research Degrees Approval Board (see [Regulation 19](#)), and Higher Degrees, which are the responsibility of Senate (see [Regulation 25](#)).

#### *On behalf of Senate<sup>1</sup>:*

(a) To consider examiners' reports and make recommendations to the Chair of the PGRB on the outcome of research degree examinations, including the award of research degrees; as per [Regulation 23](#), the Chair of the PGRB will approve outcomes on behalf of Senate.

(b) To approve the appointment of examiners for research degrees;

#### *On behalf of the PGRB:*

(c) To consider and approve any individual variations to examination processes, including but not limited to<sup>2</sup>:

- Extensions to examination deadlines<sup>3</sup>
- Requests for remote vivas
- Requests for reasonable adjustments to the examination

(d) To report annually to the PGRB, highlighting trends in progression and examination outcomes and making recommendations or raising items for consideration, as required;

(e) To implement, monitor, and keep under review the regulations and policies relating to research degree progression and examinations and make recommendations for updates or changes to the PGRB.

(f) To develop, implement, monitor, and keep under review the procedures and correspondence relating to research degree progression and examinations and make recommendations to the PGRB where any changes will require a corresponding policy update.

(h) To provide input, as required, on the progression and examination of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) during the development of transnational education agreements, including joint, dual and double awards.

(i) To monitor national and international developments in PGR assessment and make onward recommendations to the PGRB.

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<sup>1</sup> In all cases, items will normally be considered by an individual academic member of the RDPAB, with items escalated to the wider board for discussion, as required. Items will normally be considered by the academic representative for the relevant cluster, unless the item relates to a PGR with whom the academic representative has a pre-existing relationship (e.g. supervisor, examiner, etc), in which case the item will be considered by another academic representative.

<sup>2</sup> Following consultation, and within clearly defined parameters laid out by the RDPAB, some approvals may be delegated to the Exams & Assessment Team.

<sup>3</sup> Submission and/or registration deadlines are out of scope; any deadline post-submission is in-scope (e.g. corrections).

## Membership of the Research Degrees Exam Board

### *Ex officio:*

- Head of the Sussex Researcher School
- Academic Regulations Manager
- Assessment & Examinations Manager
- Research Degrees Manager

### Elected\*:

- Academic representative for Media, Arts & Humanities
- Academic representative for Sciences (EngInf, Life Sciences, MPS, and Psychology)
- Academic representative for Social Sciences (Business, ESW, Global Studies, and LPS)

In attendance: Assessment & Examinations Officer (PGR) (Minute Secretary)

*\*As elected terms come to an end and/or academic representatives step down from their role, the relevant Heads of School will be invited to confer within their cluster and nominate a candidate (one per cluster) for approval by the PGRB.*

### To note:

- The terms of elected offices will align with institutional practice and be capped at three years, and a maximum of two terms per individual.
  - *Note: The end of the terms of the current (2023/24) membership will be staggered in order to avoid wholesale change in membership at any given point in time.*
- The Chair of the RDPAB will rotate amongst the elected members, on a two-year rotation.
- Delegates will not normally be permitted for one-off absences. Where an *ex officio* member of the Board is unable to attend on a regular basis, a formal delegate may be permitted by the Chair, in which case any voting rights will pass to the delegate.
- A full meeting of the RDPAB will take place annually in February/March to (i) discuss trends in progression and examination outcomes for onward reporting to the PGRB, and (ii) review progression and examination-related policies in order to make recommendations to the PGRB for updates or changes. Notwithstanding this, the Chair has discretion to call a meeting to consider any individual items where the decision is not straightforward.
- Quoracy for meetings is half the membership, including at least two academic representatives, one of whom must be the current Chair.