



## Research Induction Committee

Meeting 04/07 of the Research Induction Committee, Faculty of Education, held on the Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2007 at 09.00 a.m. in the room GO8, Building 6, Clayton Campus.

Mr Michael Enticott - Executive Officer

### 1. Introduction to Formal Business

#### 1.1 Present

Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder (chair), Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz, Mr Calvin Taylor, Professor Jane Kenway, Dr Mandi Berry, Prof Peter Sullivan, Dr Jill Brown, Assoc Prof Trevor Gale, Dr Tasos Barkatsas

#### 1.2 Observers

None

#### 1.3 Apologies

Prof Margaret Somerville

#### 1.4 Minutes

Mr Michael Enticott

### 2. Minutes

**Motion:**

The Minutes of meeting no. 03/2007 of the Research Induction Committee were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

**Mover:** Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder

**Seconded:** Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz

**Carried:** Unanimously

### 3. Starring of unstarred items

All items for discussion on the Agenda were starred.

There was some discussion regarding confusion about who is responsible for MEd research course, whether it is Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder (as Assoc Dean) or Prof John Loughran and Dr Jane Southcott as directors of Postgraduate programs.

Action: determine who is responsible for MEd Research.

### 4. Business Arising from Minutes

#### 4.1 Proposals for New HDR Combined Courses



Assoc Prof Trevor Gale reported on the MPsych/PhD combined program changes. The first year of the course will comprise coursework (CSP) under the title MPsych (Prelim). Years 2-4 will be RTS funded and called MPsych/PhD. The programs will be approved soon and relate to students from 2008.

Assoc Prof Trevor Gale formally thank Sue Plowright, Pearl Rischin, Peter Lawford, Janette Simmonds and John Roodenburg for their work in mounting these programs.

#### 4.2 PhD in Singapore

Assoc Prof Trevor Gale reported that the Asia Pacific Management Institute (APMI) is keen for Monash University to offer a PhD suited to their interests (not just a thesis, but perhaps portfolio and some coursework). This has been put to the Dean, and a decision has been made to put forward a proposal.

APMI are also interested in establishing a 'visiting scholar' program where Monash academics in Singapore could give lectures, which would be advertised to the wider APMI community.

Prof Sullivan suggested that the proposal be costed by Peter Lawford as a preliminary step as there was some concern that the venture may not be cost effective, especially when we are trying to boost the numbers of local research students.

## 5. Reports

### 5.1 MERC Report

Mr Calvin Taylor reported that the MERC conference was a success, with 70-80 participants. He is still waiting on a final meeting where the results of the evaluation reports will be discussed. The discussion panel was seen as excellent and was very well attended.

During research month, MERC are planning to offer an emerging researchers series, where a number of progress reports will be delivered. The plan is for one a week for four weeks with several emerging researchers presenting at each session. The series will be advertised as research in progress to encourage undergraduate students to look at undertaking research degrees. This project needs to be promoted on the website and through other outlets.

Action: Calvin to meet with Ilana to plan these seminars.

### 5.2 Associate Dean (Research Degrees and Induction) reported on the following matters:

- Monash Research Month 2007

Four posters for research month were submitted (all the students were from the Peninsula campus). Professor Peter Sullivan asked whether Research Month was being used for recruitment specifically to Faculty of



Education programs. Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder reported that it is not specific to the Faculty and that it is devoted more to research degrees in general and to pathway programs.

- Doctorate Program Workshop

Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder reported that one of the major themes discussed at the MRGS sponsored workshop was coursework. University of Queensland has the highest research degree completion rate in Australia and this has been attributed to the fact that it requires some coursework in the doctoral program. It is unlikely that coursework will become mandatory in PhD programs at Monash but faculties are encouraged to explore possibilities.

- The Winter School 2007

This was opened by Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder, who believes that it went well. The evaluation reports have not yet been compiled, but will be done by Mayur Katariya once he returns from leave.

Action: A brief report will be prepared for the next RIC.

- Mid Year Scholarships 2007

There were no mid year scholarships offered to Faculty of Education students. Prof Max King said that the competition was immense this year.

- Annual Progress Reports 2007

These are being looked after by Stacey Dodge (in Mayur Katariya's absence). About 50% have been submitted.

- Administrative Office Position

Michael Enticott has taken up the advertised position in the Research Degrees Office and he was warmly welcomed.

- Introduction of confirmation of candidature for MEd Research

Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder tabled a proposal and rationale for the introduction of a confirmation process. Ilana reported that we are looking at ways to improve the numbers of students completing their studies, and trying to lower attrition rates. Attention to pedagogy and supervision practices will also be undertaken. The confirmation process represents one of a number of elements of the process. Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz reported that the Masters by research has the highest attrition rate and that something needs to be done to rectify this.

It was reported that most faculties have introduced a confirmation procedure, and that the Faculty of Education also needs to. All commented that improvements need to be made to help students and



improve completion rates.

Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz commented that if this proposal is put through, it also presents an opportunity to look at students who could upgrade their Masters degree to a PhD.

It was discussed that external students may be at a disadvantage, as they may not have the opportunity to present at a MERC conference. It was proposed that a third option be considered, that relates primarily to external students, where a journal article could be submitted in lieu of recommendations 1 and 2. It was decided that the proposal include a third section stating 'or approved alternative' for external students.

Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz commented that this situation will also provide a good opportunity to monitor students' progress, which would alleviate some of the problems with some students.

Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder received approval to continue with this proposal from the attendees.

Action: implementation of all the suggestions discussed.

- Introduction of mid-candidature milestone for doctoral students

The same rationale applies to PhD candidates as to Masters candidates. The introduction of a second milestone (as per the handout from Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder) is a recommendation, not a requirement. The committee commented on the need to gather academics' acceptance of this proposal.

The letter of offer to PhD students should outline all the expectations requirements and expectations for candidates in the Faculty of Education.

Action: implementation of the proposal

- Supervision Practices

Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder reported that MRGS is working on ways to run reports from the university databases on supervisors' completion rates. The report will provide information about how many of a supervisor's research students have completed, withdrawn, changed supervisors etc, with the view of identifying supervisors with poor records. If a supervisor is deemed to be performing poorly, then a range of actions could be pursued eg, ensuring that the supervisor not take on new students, mentoring etc.

A discussion ensued as attendees spoke about the inherent problems with relying solely on statistics to decide performance and all agreed that the individual situations of the students (and whether they should have been admitted in the first place) should be taken into consideration before a supervisor is counselled.



Prof Peter Sullivan asked whether the Annual Progress Report was the usual place for students to outline any issues with their supervisors. Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz explained that as supervisors sign off on the form, students do not use the PR for this purpose. He suggested that a new process should be arranged for students to outline any problems with their supervisors.

Action: proposal for ways of improving supervision practices.

Action: Mr Calvin Taylor mentioned that MERC meetings are not well attended by students. Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder is to look at the initial offer letter to see if it mentions MERC, with a view to adding this information in if it is missing.

- 5.3 Coordinator of the Honours Degree reported that a short information session for 4<sup>th</sup> year students was recently held (with 13 attendees).

Dr Berry also reported that Kerry Theodora has sent letters to third year students with a distinction average, advising them of information relating to the Honours program. A discussion followed as to whether a dedicated Honours unit can be set up. Dr Mandi Berry explained that this has been suggested before but is unattainable as the 30 students are in different campuses and are at different stages of their studies. The possibility of dedicated online modules was suggested.

- 5.4 The Director of Research reported that she and Assoc Prof Ilana Snyder have been invited to the research committee meeting on funding issues for the MEd.

It was also reported that ethics applications are now being charged to the faculty at more than \$400 per application. It was suggested that the faculty look to have more group ethics applications.

- 5.5 There was no representative from the Education Committee present

## 6 Next Meeting

24th October, 9:00 AM GO 8, Building 6, Clayton.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Associate Professor Ilana Snyder, Chair  
Assoc Prof Helen Forgasz  
Professor Margaret Somerville  
Professor Peter Sullivan  
Dr Mandi Berry  
Dr Jill Brown  
Dr Jenny Miller  
Dr Umesh Sharma

### FOR INFORMATION

Professor Jane Kenway  
Dr Robyn Zink  
Miss Joanne Witheridge  
Dr Evan Kritikakos  
Ms Sue Plowright  
Dr Janette Simmonds  
Dr John Roodenburg  
Dr Tasos Barkatsas  
Dr Zofia Pawlaczek



**MERC Representatives**  
Mr Calvin Taylor

Executive Officer: Mr Mayur Katariya  
Administrative Officer: Michael Enticott