

MINUTES

MEETING	Crawford School of Public Policy, HDR Committee
MEET No.	2016/4
VENUE	Seminar Room 1, Stanner Building
DATE/TIME	Wednesday, 10 August 2016, 10am – 12 noon
ATTENDANCE	Fiona Yap (Chair), Premachandra Athukorala, Bjoern Dressel, Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, Tim Legrand, Tracy McRae, Megan Poore
APOLOGIES	Belinda Lawton
MINUTES	Tracy McRae (cap.student@anu.edu.au) and Megan Poore (megan.poore@anu.edu.au)

Part 1. Formal items

1. Announcements and apologies

Received.

2. Minutes from June Meeting

Approved.

Part 2. Business arising

3. Crawford HDR Convenor position descriptions (PDs)

Dr Legrand presented his draft HDR Convenor position description document. The Committee thanked him for the work he had put into the PDs. It was noted that the overall FTE for an HDR Convenor of 0.35 was “heroic” and didn’t reflect the amount of work being done by convenors in the role. It was further noted that some duties around oversight of HDR student progress (such as monitoring compliance with milestones, taking the lead role on advising on coursework requirements, reviewing requests for leave, etc.) are the responsibility of supervisors, not of HDR Convenors. It was agreed that the list of duties should be revised to make sure that HDR Convenors are not expected to take on the duties of supervisors. The Committee felt it was important that supervisors also be clear about what their duties are.

Action item: Dr Legrand and Dr Poore to revise the PDs.

4. Scholarship extensions

A request for an extension to a Crawford PhD scholarship was made by a student who had already submitted their thesis. The request was supported by the supervisor. The Committee pointed out that as a matter of logic a PhD scholarship cannot be extended if the student has already submitted and is no longer writing their PhD.

Resolution: Requests for fee payment and scholarship extensions should be assessed by the Committee as a whole.

Resolution: The Committee will not assess requests for extensions to Crawford PhD scholarships after the student has submitted their thesis.

Action item: Chair to write to both student and supervisor.

5. Thesis Proposal Reviews (TPRs)

The Chair provided an update from the CAP HDR Committee that indicated that the current TPR process is working well. That said, however, the Committee felt that the TPR milestone could be used more rigorously to assist students who might be struggling early on in their candidature. To this end, the PhD Academic and Research Skills Advisor and the HDR Administrator should work in tandem to track students as they enter the TPR milestone period to see how students are managing the requirements of their candidature so far.

Action item: Ms McRae and Dr Poore to develop an 'in-house tracking' procedure for students as they enter the TPR milestone period to see how students are managing the requirements of their candidature so far.

6. Use of MPhil as an 'exit' strategy

All ANU areas (including Crawford) have an MPhil on the books and it is used in some instances as an 'exit' strategy for students who have started a PhD but who early on in their candidature cannot – for whatever reason – meet the requirements of a PhD. The Committee noted that the use of an MPhil for entry would be difficult at Crawford, as there is a significant and compulsory coursework component to the Crawford PhD, especially in Economics, meaning that a student wanting to 'exit' via the MPhil would have to complete all their coursework as well as a 60,000-word thesis within two years. The discussion also noted that students seeking MPhil in RE&D or POGO should not be exempt from the mandatory coursework required of Masters students. It was noted that students can still apply for an MPhil and can enrol in the programs if they find a supervisor. The option of MPhil as an exit strategy remains.

7. New thesis examination procedures

The Chair raised the problems with the new thesis examination procedures (previously discussed by this Committee) with the CAP HDR Committee, which expressed sympathy with our concerns but nevertheless confirmed that University process remains. The Chair, however, confirmed that Crawford's in-house practice around the handling of examiners' reports will still be followed: The HDR Director receives the reports and forwards them to the supervisor, who then collates the reports and advises the HDR Director as to what needs to be done by the student (if anything) in order for the thesis to be passed. The HDR Director then proceeds as per the current ANU procedure.

8. Coursework: exemptions, auditing, and examination results

Some students are seeking exemptions from undertaking coursework and other students are auditing courses courses that they believe to be more useful to them than the compulsory coursework courses. This raises two issues. First, Do we need to review our coursework provisions so that they are more 'useful' to students? And second, Are students taking on too much when they choose to audit courses? It was suggested that POGO and RE&D (and maybe NSC) consider aligning their coursework offerings and that supervisors be reminded that students should not audit too many courses and instead maintain a focus on the thesis.

The Committee also discussed the issue around students who fail their coursework. If we have mandatory coursework and the student fails, then what does this mean? Failing coursework does not lead to an automatic termination of candidature (which can only occur when a 'termination' process is undertaken). Discussion ranged around issues of language, quality of learning, and options for those who fail their coursework: Is it feasible for a student to repeat a class? Can they resubmit work? If so, how many times? Do we establish thresholds for PhD students, i.e., if 50% is a pass for a Masters by coursework students, then should a pass for a PhD student be 60% or higher?

The possibility of grading PhD students at 'satisfactory/unsatisfactory' was raised (as opposed to pass, non-pass). It was felt that further consideration should be given to this matter and that it should be discussed at the next meeting.

Action item: Dr Yap to raise the possibility of satisfactory/unsatisfactory grading for PhD coursework at the next CAP HDR Committee.

9. Supervisor sign-off on thesis submission

Supervisors must be aware of supervision procedures and as such must sign off and endorse theses under their supervision before the thesis can be submitted. The Committee in particular noted that supervisors need to be aware of typical submission components and their timelines, such as

notification of intention to submit, notification of appointment of examiners, and the giving of a final oral presentation.

Resolution: Supervisors must sign off and endorse theses under their supervision before the thesis can be submitted. Supervisors are strongly discouraged from not endorsing theses and only in extraordinary circumstances will non-endorsement be permitted at Crawford.

Action item: Dr Poore to start a section on the Crawford PhD wiki that can be used as a resource for supervisors confronted with a range of issues, including the issue raised above.

Part 3. Convenor reports

10. RE&D Convenor

Dr Lahiri-Dutt reported that RE&D is still in the process of discussing – with any eye to developing – guidelines around thesis by compilation. The ANU has some vague guidelines, but they do not address quality and ‘commensurability’ issues to the satisfaction of this Committee. Economics has an agreed-upon format for what constitutes an acceptable quality of thesis in that discipline, but this will not be the same for all disciplines. Issues of co-authorship were also discussed, with Professor Athukorala noting that Economics expects the equivalent of three full papers before a student’s thesis can be considered acceptable in that discipline: three co-authored papers would not meet the requirements for a thesis to be submitted.

RE&D has obtained the Fenner School’s guidelines for thesis by compilation, which requires the publication of at least three papers in high-grade journals.

Action item: Dr Lahiri-Dutt will try to get the Committee some draft guidelines for RE&D before the Committee next meets.

Part 4. Other business

11. Annual Report and TPR process

The Annual Report and TPR process business arising from the previous meeting was already dealt with under item 5.

12. Next Crawford HDR Committee meeting to be held on Wed, 12 October 2016, Seminar Room 1, Stanner Building