STUDENT JOURNEY PROJECT

Review of Postgraduate Research Student Administration

1. Introduction and Purpose of the Review

The Student Journey Project is centred on improving the efficiency and effectiveness of BU's student administrative processes and supporting services. It aims to ensure that students are at the centre of these processes and as a result have an enhanced experience embedded in a culture of service excellence and delivered as efficiently as possible.

Following the consultation on proposed service owners, a review of Postgraduate Research Administration is now to be undertaken. The Student Journey Project has identified a range of PGR administrative services to be provided and this indicates a strong correlation with the current roles and responsibilities undertaken by Research Administrator roles. Looking forward, many of these administrative tasks will continue, but there will also be changes. ResearchPAD, for example, is expected to streamline recording information on student progress and standardising management information reporting which could see a reduction in the time currently needed for these tasks.

In addition, the Graduate School identified in its Delivery Plan the objective to increase the number of postgraduate research students to 1 PGR: 1 FTE Academic Staff by 2018. It will therefore be important to also consider how this might impact on the PGR administrative support required.

The review will therefore consider the current provision of Postgraduate Research Administration, future requirements of this support, changes arising from the implementation of the new IT system, ResearchPAD, and the optimum model for future delivery of PGR administrative support.

2. Background and Strategic Context to the Student Journey Project

The Student Journey Project commenced in March 2012 when the University Executive Team approved a Project Charter to undertake the first phase of work with the following objectives:

- To enhance the student experience and embed service excellence by designing process, service and supporting organisational structures around student need
- To identify efficiencies in professional support and administration costs
- To produce a tender specification for a Student Record System (SRS)

Work was undertaken between May and December 2012 to review existing student administrative processes across the University. This work involved around 200 professional and support staff who deliver the processes. Their contribution and feedback has been key to understanding existing processes and IT systems, issues of concerns and limitations and has helped to develop the optimal requirements for new systems and processes.

3. Service Ownership of Postgraduate Research Administration

The work undertaken during Phase 1 of the Student Journey Project analysed a range of processes that were within the project scope as they form part of the student's journey through the University. This included the support that is provided to postgraduate research students. It was recognised that the administrative support provided to these students is different to that for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students as the postgraduate research student has a different relationship and interaction with the University.

Following consultation it has been confirmed that the service owner for Postgraduate Research Administration will be the Head of the Graduate School. The management of Postgraduate

Research Administration support and associated resources, which includes the school based Research Administrators, will therefore be centralised under the Graduate School. The recommendation of the Target Operating Model Group during Phase 1 of the Project was that there should be distributed delivery of the service with Research Administrators located in Schools.

4. Scope of Postgraduate Research Administration Services

The Head of the Graduate School as service owner is responsible and accountable for the delivery of Postgraduate Research Administration and the scope of this service, taking into account the needs of different stakeholders within the University. The work undertaken by the Student Journey Project to date has identified the following range of responsibilities/tasks that are currently being delivered by Postgraduate Research Administration:

- Provide students and potential students with answers to their enquiries.
- Provide immigration advice (Level 1) to international applicants and international students.
- Answer queries from applicants regarding their application for a research programme.
- Advise applicants on the outcome of their application and the reason for BU's decision.
- Check international applicants visa information; check visas at the start of the course.
- Provide administrative support for interviews of applicants, produce offer letters.
- Calculate fees to be invoiced to PGR students; take payment from students.
- Provide refunds to eligible students.
- Provide student with ID card.
- Working with DDRE and PGR supervisors to ensure students are provided with the equipment/resources they need to start their research.
- Working with DDRE and PGR supervisors and to discuss possible pausing or withdrawals from study and if appropriate process the change.
- Track progress of student against milestones. Record results from progress checks, transfers and examinations.
- Provide pastoral support and advice for students.
- Provide administration for evaluation of student progress at School committees.
- Maintain research records, updating UnitE and relevant webpages.
- Provide admin support to School research committee/postgraduate committees, research student workshops, seminars, conferences and other events, and support for the Deputy Dean Research & Enterprise
- Liaise with external examiners.

The existing Research Administrator (or similar) roles within academic Schools provide the support which currently exists. The role's main responsibility, as detailed within current job descriptions, is to provide administrative support for Postgraduate Research Students within the School. This encompasses:

- Admissions, all aspects of the admissions process for postgraduate research students;
- Students records, including maintenance and enhancement of database records;
- Preparation and responsibility for routine and non-routine correspondence;
- Advice and pastoral support for students;
- Transfers from Research Diploma/MPhil to PhD;
- Examinations (viva voce) including liaison with examiners;
- Enrolments, Suspensions and Withdrawals;
- Awards; Admissions & Wastage statistics

There are also some additional responsibilities which include providing administrative support to School Research Committees or similar meetings, updating relevant web pages and assisting with

research student workshops, seminars, conferences and other events, and support for the Deputy Dean Research & Enterprise.

The Research Administrators work to a set of policies and research framework that the Graduate School has established, however there is varying practice and different support systems which have evolved across the academic Schools particularly with regard to recording information about postgraduate research students.

5. Process and Service Improvements identified by the Student Journey Project

• Process User Group Improvements

During Phase 1 of the Student Journey Project, a Process User Group (PUG) reviewed the journey of postgraduate research students before enrolment and the administrative processes supporting them. The processes supporting postgraduate research students post enrolment were considered as part of the information gathering undertaken for the procurement of a PGR monitoring system.

The Process User Group made a number of suggestions for improving student support, these being:

- Set common start dates for students
- IT system that could provide automatic confirmation of application outcome to students
- Enable students to book appointments through an IT system
- Self-guided tour of BU and facilities, this could be available on mobile applications
- Online booking facility for student appointments
- Detailed research programme information accessible online
- Details about Bournemouth and living here; what's it like
- Student's handbook to be made available online
- Manage the students expectations throughout the application process
- Clear information relating to Visas and application process
- Clear details with regard to Fees and funding information

• Postgraduate Research Monitoring System

The information gathering work undertaken ahead of purchasing the PGR monitoring system, ResearchPAD, identified a number of issues it was hoped would be addressed by a new IT system and improvements that would result.

Fundamentally it was considered that the system should be able to facilitate greater uniformity of student data captured and enable streamlined reporting. It should enable others to view the data, not just the Research Administrator.   An enhanced IT system and improved processes could support an improved student experience by ensuring that:

- There is a single on-line system that contains student information and enables PGR tracking.
- There is a single system which all stakeholders can access; Graduate School, PGR students, supervisors and administrators.
- One system is used for recording and reporting information, reducing inaccuracies.
- Research Administrators will not need to manually compile information or keep separate records.
- Research students and supervisors will be able to maintain their own records and update information.
- Monitoring processes, systems and information would be consistent across all Schools
- Possible to ensure Data Protection Act requirements are adhered to.

6. Review Format and Timescales

The review of Postgraduate Research Administration will be led by the Student Journey Project Organisational Change Lead in conjunction with the Head of the Graduate School and Graduate School Manager.

The following timescale is proposed for the review of PGR Administration:

Activity	Timescale
Review of PGR Administration commences	w/c 16th September 2013
Review of PGR administration completes	4th October 2013
Outcome of review and decision on appropriate next steps	w/c 7th October 2013
Implementation of ResearchPAD	End-September 2013

The review work will incorporate the following:

- Discussion with Research Administrators to review service delivery.
- Assessment of new IT system and resulting changes to processes and operations.
- Discussion with key stakeholders, including PVC, Deputy Deans Research & Enterprise, School Directors of Operation, Postgraduate Research students and supervisors.
- Review of all administrative job descriptions and roles required to support future service delivery.
- Assessment of the Process User Group review work and recommendations

There are a number of key questions to be addressed as part of the Review. In particular the following issues need to be determined:

- Does the scope of postgraduate research administration identified by the Student Journey Project cover all of the services necessary for ensuring excellent support to students?

- What are the operational changes expected as a result of implementing the new IT system ResearchPAD?

- How will ResearchPAD change current and future administrative processes and the support needed to deliver them?

- What impact might the planned growth in Postgraduate Research Student numbers have on administrative support needed going forward?

- The Target Operating Model Design Group recommended local delivery as the operating model for postgraduate research administration i.e. administrators to be located within academic schools where students are also located. Is this the optimum model?

During the Review in addition to discussion sessions, staff can raise questions or provide information through the Student Journey Project email: studentjourney@bournemouth.ac.uk or direct to the Organisational Change Lead, Jackie Molnar: jmolnar@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Once the Review has been completed the findings, along with an equality assessment, will be considered by the Head of the Graduate School with the Organisational Change Lead and with reference to the Graduate School Manager. A decision will then be made as to next steps and how those proposed changes are taken forward.