Present: Professor Rowan Truss (Chair), Professor Ross McAree, Professor David Mee, Mr Mohammadali Sadafi, Mr Kristian Weegink, Ms Yunhui Chen, Mr Chengwei Kang, Mr Haibo Lu, Mr Hongyi Zhan, Mr Pisan Kulkaew, Mr Xiaogang Liu, Mr Mitchell Dunn, Mr Johannes Reiner, Mr Wouter Mostert, Mr Brad Wheatley, Mr Rizwan Rahman Rashid, Ms Katie Golschewski, Ms Brianne Mackinnon (Secretary).

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2012

2. Business arising from the minutes

The following actions from the previous meeting are still to be finalized:

- **Prize Winning Engineering**
  The School is in contact with Engineers Australia to determine if this event will be run again in 2013.

- **Final Thesis Seminar Presentations**
  A group of RHD students will be elected to coordinate this program with administrative assistance from the School Office.

- **RHD Web Portal**
  The School website is currently undergoing a transition to the new Drupal system incorporated by EAIT Faculty. New content will be added once the transition is complete.

3. Report from Postgraduate Coordinator (Professor Rowan Truss)

a. **Milestone Extensions – New Process**

Students were informed that candidates who commence or are confirmed from 1 January 2013 may only apply for up to 3 x 3 month extensions throughout the entire duration of their candidature, including submission. The timing and use of the extensions is at the discretion of the candidate and their advisory team to allow for flexibility as required; however, extensions will still need to be approved by the Graduate School as per standard process. Where an extension is being sought, an attainment or extension of a milestone form must be submitted to the Graduate School **at least 2 weeks prior** to the milestone due date.

Extensions beyond the capped number will be considered by the Dean of the Graduate School on a case-by-case basis in exceptional circumstances. For example, exceptional circumstances may include:

- partial or total destruction of research samples or data due to natural disasters (e.g. crop destruction due to flooding) leading to research being unable to be re-created within the maximum extension period

- failure of essential equipment leading to research being unable to be re-created within the maximum extension period

Candidates who are unable to achieve milestones due to a change in personal circumstances (e.g. illness, work commitments) should discuss taking temporary leave from candidature with their advisory team.

Members recommended that this information should be distributed to all RHD students and advisory teams via email and Staff Meetings with emphasis on the heightened importance of timely progression from the Graduate School.

b. **Tuition Fee Scholarship End Dates**

Students studying on a Tuition Fee Scholarship were reminded to pay careful attention to the end date of their scholarship. The tuition fee scholarships commence on the start date of the research quarter that a candidate enrols in, not on the candidate’s actual enrolment date. Therefore, the end date of the scholarship is the end date of the research quarter three years later for a PhD, and two years later for an MPhil (timeframes may be longer for some recipients of UQIRTA and IPRS scholarships awarded before 2010).

A. BM
c. Scholarship Extensions

Students were reminded that candidates are only eligible for scholarship extensions if they meet the following criteria:

- Completion of the thesis has been delayed due to circumstances beyond the student’s control (these circumstances must be directly related to the student’s research); and

- The student has successfully completed the confirmation and mid-candidature review milestones.

Unfortunately, extensions cannot be granted on the basis of work commitments, ill health or personal circumstances. Candidates who are experiencing difficulties due to non-research related reasons should apply for an interruption to candidature, or if relevant, paid sick leave.

Applications for extension must be submitted to the Graduate School at least two weeks prior to the scholarship extension date. Applications received outside of this timeframe will not be approved. For more information about scholarship conditions, please refer to the UQ Research Scholarship General Conditions.

Members recommended that this information should be distributed to all RHD students and advisory teams via email and through Staff Meetings.

d. Backdating of requests

Students were informed that from 5 November 2012 the Graduate School will no longer approve backdated requests. Changes to candidature will be effective from the date the Graduate School receives the request. The only exception is sick leave, which can be backdated two weeks from the date we receive the request in exceptional circumstances (e.g. the enrolling unit submits the request on behalf of the student as they are unable to do so themselves). Please note that if the sick leave request is submitted within two weeks of the census date, then it can only be backdated to the day after the census date.

Therefore, if there are any changes to your candidature you must inform the School Postgraduate Administration Officer (PGAO) straight away to process the change with the Graduate School immediately.

e. Recreation Leave

RHD candidates are entitled to recreation leave throughout their candidature. Full-time candidates are entitled to a maximum of 20 days per annum. Part-time candidates are entitled to a maximum of 10 days per annum. Recreation leave is arranged by negotiation with your advisory team and must be reported to the School. Members were reminded to send an email to their supervisor and rhdadmin@mechmining.uq.edu.au to record any recreational leave taken.

f. Student email accounts

Students were reminded that all correspondence relating to your student candidature is sent from the Graduate School directly to the student UQ email address. It is a student’s responsibility to check this email account regularly, or redirect to their staff or personal email account.

4. Postgraduate Representative on Research Committee

A new student representative on the School’s Research Committee is required for 2013. The committee thanks Mr John Varghese for the valuable contributions he made to the committee as the postgraduate research student representative.

Members are encouraged to nominate themselves for consideration by emailing rhdadmin@mechmining.uq.edu.au with their expression of interest. One or two new student representatives will be selected in the coming month.
5. Report from Chair of Research Committee (Professor Ross McAree)

a. Conflict of Interest

The Graduate School ensures that all thesis examiners act with integrity. All Conflicts of Interest (COI) are avoided so that a thesis may be assessed independently and free from any perception of bias or preferential treatment. UQ uses the COI Guidelines that have been adopted by Universities Australia Deans and Directors of Graduate Schools.

Students are reminded to familiarise themselves with the full guidelines prior to their thesis examination: http://www.uq.edu.au/grad-school/content/current-students/coi.pdf

b. 2013 School Retreat

The outcomes of the 2013 School Retreat were circulated to staff and students in late 2013. Those RHD students that attended the event and gave their feedback on School procedures and direction are thanked.

As identified at the 2013 School Retreat, the following areas will be a focus for the Research Committee throughout 2013.

Domestic Enrolments

The number of domestic RHD enrolments in the School of Mechanical and Mining Engineering has been steadily decreasing since 2012. The Research Committee intends to focus on this issue throughout 2013 and will develop a short paper for inclusion in the next agenda to address domestic enrolments. As an outcome of this review, the Research Committee aims to implement a recruitment strategy for domestic RHD students.

There are several domestic recruitment efforts taking place in other School’s within the university including the following from the School of Chemical Engineering and School of Biological Sciences.

- Undergraduate student field trip to Gladstone to visit industry sites and develop connections between students, academics and industry.

- Undergraduate student field trip to take part in workshops at an off-site research station to build engagement and relationships between research staff and undergraduate students.

Student members encouraged a domestic recruitment strategy and noted the following information:

- There is a stigma toward completing your postgraduate study in Australia if you wish to pursue a career in academia. Domestic students prioritize overseas postgraduate study in an effort to gain better standing for employment in the academic field.

- A third year field trip offered in the UQ BE allowed students to visit a power station. This was valuable in exposing students to the industry and types of employment available. Something similar with a focus on research and undertaking a Research Higher Degree would be extremely valuable to undergraduate students to give an idea as to what you would actually be doing as an RHD student.

- A Mathematical Neuroscience Short Course was offered to undergraduate students from across Australia. Participation was by application and extensive advertisement was undertaken. 20 students were selected to attend a 3 day course where they attended lectures (by potential advisors and research groups), toured the research facilities and met with current RHD students. Participants also received information on current scholarship options and top-up funding opportunities.

Student members recommended that the School consider taking the following steps to increase domestic recruitment:

- Members noted that awareness of the School Scholarship Guarantee for undergraduate students is low. Measures should be taken to promote this avenue into RHD studies.
- The School should establish communication with undergraduate students around the postgraduate opportunities available. Undergraduate students should be exposed to the types of research being conducted in the School & research projects that are available. Information on scholarships, application processes and admission should be addressed in order to provide a smooth transition from undergraduate to postgraduate studies.

- The school should consider running a short course for undergraduate students to attend, including:
  - Presentations by potential supervisors to give an overview of what they do in their research groups
  - Tour of research centres & facilities
  - Demonstrating a fraction of an experiment
  - Morning/afternoon tea/dinner with some current students
  - A session providing information on what scholarships/top-up/funding is available and the application process for admission.

**English Skill Development**

Due to the decrease in domestic enrolments, the School’s international proportion has risen to over 50% and we recognize the shifting demographic occurring within our student population. As a result of this rise, the School has noticed an increase of English Language Proficiency issues being raised throughout the Milestone process by candidates and their advisory teams.

As a school, we do not have the resources to offer a program in English Skill Development for our international students; however, the Research Committee intends to make upward looking recommendations to deal with this issue. At present, the Research Committee would like to recommend that the Graduate School integrate a fourth UQ Advantage program to address this issue, but would also like to recognize any local programs that the School can address directly.

With the opening of the AEB in 2013 and the shifting desk space of Materials Engineering students to this location, the School is currently reviewing the option to break up any international or domestic seating ‘enclaves’ to increase communication between our student cohort. We understand that laboratory constraints would need to be taken into consideration.

Members noted the following concerns toward English Skill Development:

- Members agreed that English Skill Development is an important issue in the School and noted that some RHD office environments are functioning better than others. Students noted that having several nationalities and research groups within the one area can make a big difference towards the improvement to international student’s English ability.

- One member expressed concern that they are seated within a predominantly Chinese office environment and it is often the only language spoken in the room. This is hindering the development of their English language skills.

Overall, members supported a review of the School’s seating arrangements for RHD students to break up any strong international or domestic seating ‘enclaves’ with the intention to increase communication between our student cohort.

### 6. Occupational Health & Safety

#### a. Annual Fire Safety Training

The University requires all RHD students to complete the online Fire Safety training each year. A recent report indicates that a large group of RHD students in the School have not completed the training in 2012. A reminder email has been sent to all students and OH&S training will now be reviewed at each milestone.

Members recommended that the Milestone Procedures be updated so that students are required to submit their Fire Safety certificate with their Attainment forms to the Postgraduate Administration Officer.
7. Research Higher Degree 2013 Events

The Research Committee together with the School’s PGC and PGAO’s have reviewed the 2012 Skills Workshops Series and propose the following events to be run throughout 2013. Members approved this schedule of events and the 2013 RHD Events calendar will be circulated to all students prior to Orientation Week.

a. Orientation Week Events

The School will run an Orientation Week Events for RHD students in February and July 2013. The current schedule for the Orientation Week Event was approved by members.

b. Research Quarter Induction Sessions

The School has implemented a new Induction Session for commencing RHD students. The first was held in October 2012, with a plan for 3 sessions to be held over 2013, in April, July and October.

c. 2013 RHD Workshops

The School will no longer run a weekly skills workshop session as offered in 2012. The following workshops will be scheduled throughout the year with on an ad-hoc basis.

- How to structure an academic thesis
- Presentation Skills
- How to write an abstract
- Writing Journal Papers (Structure / Technical / For non-English natives)
- Milestone Information Session

8. Research Higher Degree Processes

The School undertook a review of the administrative/finance/technical processes in the School in 2012. Members present were asked to raise any concerns with RHD processes. No issues were raised.

9. Three Minute Thesis

Congratulations to Dawid Preller and Elise Fahy who participated in the 2012 Faculty Three Minute Thesis Final. Ali Habib from the School of Civil Engineering was promoted through to the UQ Final, with Elise Fahy awarded Runner-Up.

10. Final Seminar Program

The implementation of a 2013 Final Seminar program for RHD students has been approved by the Research Committee as suggested by the RHD Student Staff Liaison Committee.

All Research Higher Degree students will be required to present a final seminar after completion of the Thesis Review Milestone (third milestone). This will be in line with the Confirmation presentations that are currently required of RHD students. With approximately 25 RHD students graduating per year, attendance will be compulsory for RHD students (a requirement to attend a certain number of seminars per year).

The following members nominated to coordinate this activity throughout 2013. Any administrative assistance required to implement this program will be provided by the School administration team (e.g. Room bookings / Email invites to all staff & students).

- Mitchell Dunn
- Kristian Weegink
- Wouter Mostert
11. The Graduate School Thesis Hub

There are currently vacancies in the Thesis Hub for PhD and MPhil candidates in the final stages of their candidature. Due to recent vacancies, the Graduate School will consider applications from PhD candidates in the last 12 months, and MPhil candidates in the last six months, of their candidature. Please contact the UQ Advantage team on uqadvantage@gradschool.uq.edu.au if you would like any additional information about this space.

12. Other Business

The Student Staff Liaison Committee will meet 4 times throughout 2013 (February, May, August & November). This will allow all members to familiarise themselves with the structure of the Committee and enable any resulting RHD changes to occur in 2013. From 2014 onwards, it is expected the Committee will meet twice a year in February and August.

The next meeting will be held in Research Quarter 2 (May 2013).