Welcome from the eGSA Director

As the holiday season fast approaches and we reflect on our accomplishments throughout the year, I’d like to take the opportunity to thank all the people involved with the e-Grad School. These people are the administrators at each of the universities who promote our programs and coordinate student registrations, the moderators who teach our courses, the four ATN Directors of Graduate Studies who form the eGSA Board, and Paige, Lisa and Lynda for their professionalism and management of high quality courses which receive great student feedback. They form the backbone of the eGSA team ensuring that students have access to the resources, modules are successfully delivered and moderators are hired and paid.

It’s been a busy year for us all and as you head off on an end-of-year break we wish you all the best for a safe and happy holiday season and all the best for 2014.

Best wishes
Paul Burnett

Successes in 2013

• Congratulations to three e-Grad School students who graduated recently with the Master of Research Management and Commercialisation – Larissa Melanie, Janet Price and Therese Egan. Well done and best wishes for your future!

• The e-Grad School successfully hosted the inaugural offering of the online professional development module Project Management for Professionals. 35 research administrators from around the country participated in the program which will be offered again in Semester 2, 2014 as a result of overwhelmingly positive feedback.

• This year four New Zealand universities (Auckland University of Technology; Victoria University of Wellington; University of Canterbury; University of Waikato) sponsored 88 research students to participate in the LEAP modules. Their feedback was also positive and we look forward to their continued participation in the future.

• In 2013 we celebrated 10 years of the LEAP program with 628 registrations, the highest since the inception of the program.

What’s planned for 2014?

Professional Development opportunity in Leadership and Communication for Research Managers and Research Administrators

As mentioned above, eGSA hosted the successful offering of the online Project Management module for Research Professionals earlier this year. We are now pleased to announce the offering of a similar professional development opportunity in 2014, specifically a module on Leadership and Communication.

The online discussion forum which is part of the module, allows participants to interact regularly and develop broader networks in their field. All participants who complete the module requirements will receive a Certificate of Completion.

The module will cover the following topics:

• Leadership Qualities
• Effective Communication
• Interpersonal Skills
• Team Membership
• Mentoring and Coaching

Commitment is approximately 3 hours per week for this fully online course which runs from 10 March to 11 April 2014. Cost: $350+GST with a 20% discount for ATN members.

To register please contact: egscacoordinator@qut.edu.au

New online module for Supervisors

A moderated online professional development module titled Effective Supervisory Practices has been developed for supervisors and early career researchers and will run over five weeks from 10 March to 11 April 2014 (Week 0 online orientation commences 3 March).

The module is designed to walk supervisors and Early Career Researchers through the frameworks and pragmatic issues associated with supervising in today’s research environment; ultimately to provide them with effective and essential tools for their supervisory tool kit.

Content is cross-disciplinary and draws on common and best practices and guidelines across Australia and covers the following weekly topics:

• Research and HDR Candidature Today: Rules, Guidelines and What Everyone Involved Needs to Know
• The Student-Supervisor Dynamic: Starting and Ending Well
• Reading, Writing and Goal Setting: Starting and Keeping the Momentum Going
• Navigating the Tunnel: Getting Through to the End
• Finishing Well: Achieving Timely Completion and Providing Career Guidance

From the Moderator’s desk...

‘Generic skills’ not so generic – Nigel Palmer

Opportunities are central to the research degree experience. These include opportunities to become a specialist in a
particular area and opportunities to develop a broader range of skills: ‘Generic Skills’ as they are often called.

Sometimes I think all this talk of ‘generic skills’ can start to sound a bit, well, generic – as if the aim is to produce generic graduates with generic skills through a generic research degree experience. Thankfully I do not think this fits with the reality of research degrees in practice, as every project and every candidate are unique.

That’s where development opportunities like the e-Grad school units come in. While the program has been developed to cover ‘generic’ skills development areas, each module provides scope for candidates to align what they do in the program with their own research, and their own professional development interests and needs.

In the big scheme of things I think one of the main challenges in research degrees is to make the most of the opportunities available. My advice to any candidate is to cherry-pick from what’s on offer in support of your degree to make it distinctive and to make it work for you. I think this applies to the e-Grad school units as well as any other aspect of the research degree process. I would say be strategic, prioritise both the things you like as well as the things that enable you to do more, and dive in....

Nigel moderates the LEAP Public Policy unit which in Semester 2 2013 had 70 people participating in the module from across 12 institutions in Australia and New Zealand.

Nigel brings a wealth of experience to the moderation role, having been a Research Fellow with the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne and National President of the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations prior to that.

His research interests include student participation and equity, higher education quality assurance and management and research and research training policy and practice.

Student Profile - Chris Mallon – Swinburne participant - Practice-led Research in Creative Arts, Media and Design

Q: What led you to do the Practice-led module?
A: I began to realise that my research involved a reflective-critical arc; indeed, a practice-led research. At that stage, I knew little about the methodology involved in the practice, but my supervisors recognised that this was what I was actually doing. So when the e-Grad School module in Practice-led Research in Creative Arts, Media, and Design, become available through the Research portal at Swinburne University, I jumped at the opportunity.

Q: What are you doing at the moment (ie working? Study-PhD?)
A: I’m engaged in PhD in writing, which involves producing an artefact (novel) and exegesis. The novel is a crime fiction text, based in Geelong, and along the Great Ocean Road in Victoria.

Q: What did you expect from the Pract-led module?
A: To learn and gain particular skills to engage in a practice-led methodology to my research.

Q: How was the fit between your expectations of the courses and what was delivered?
A: Initially I wasn’t sure if my scope of research would fit within the context of the material, but those anxieties were quickly resolved. The weekly topics helped provide a greater insight into the how I could develop my PLR methodology, an indeed how potentially any creative field could be explored through this program. The instruction, and follow-up commentary, was particularly helpful in developing a particular discourse about the content.

Q: Any other comments you’d like to make?
A: I really enjoyed the program, and would certainly recommend it to others engaged in creative areas of work. I would like to see the program expanded, to perhaps a Graduate Certificate, and even a conference on practice-led research.

Farewell

During the year we said goodbye to Helen Lennox, who has been our contact person at RMIT since the beginning. Helen is retiring at the end of the year and we miss her cheery voice and emails. We welcome Belinda Corbo who has taken over from Helen.

Some interesting reading

- **The rise of the professional master’s degree: the answer to the postdoc/PhD bubble** – Maria Theodosiou, Jean-Philippe Rennard & Arsia Amir-Aslani
- **Discovering innovation and intrapreneurship** - Written by John Baxter and Paul Toombs for the Vitae intrapreneurship project, a collaborative project with eight UK higher education institutions (Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Strathclyde, University of Surrey, University of Warwick and Queen Mary, University of London)

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Paige, Lisa, Lynda and Paul