



**York Graduate Research School
Awards and Funding Sub-Committee**

Friday 27 November 2020, 9:00am

By video-conference

MINUTES

Present: Dr K Arnold (KA, Chair, Dean of YGRS)
Prof Y Birks (YB, Associate Dean for Research in Social Sciences)
Prof J Finch (JF, Deputy Director of the HRC, on behalf of Prof R Ogden)
Mrs A Grey (AG, Research Strategy and Policy Manager)
Prof S Thompson (ST, Associate Dean for Research in Sciences)

In attendance: Miss G Kirk (GK, Secretary, Research Student Administration)

Category I Business

20-21/01 Welcome and Apologies

This was the first YGRS Awards and Funding Sub-Committee meeting under the new Chair and Dean of YGRS, Dr K Arnold. The Chair also welcomed Prof J Finch who has recently taken over from Dr K Allen as Deputy Director of the Humanities Research Centre.

Apologies were noted from Prof M Ruth (MR, PVC for Research), Prof R Ogden (RO, Associate Dean for Research in Arts and Humanities) and Dr R Grant (RG, Planning Officer).

20-21/02 Minutes from last meeting

The Minutes from May's meeting were approved as an accurate record.

With regard to GTA contracts, ST noted it would be reassuring to know there will be enough departmental representation to tease out and resolve a number of issues prior to rolling out any new policies.

ACTION: The Chair to follow up with HR to ensure that the concerns of departments around GTA

contracts are being picked up.

The Chair noted Katherine Denby's BBSRC CDT bid was not funded.

20-21/03 Briefing Note from outgoing Dean, Prof Tom Stoneham (Sep 2020)

Updates on Matters Arising from May's meeting were noted by the Committee.

20-21/04 Matters arising

a) Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships application

The University is yet to hear the outcome on Michael Plevin's TRACES bid submitted in June, though this is due in November. (It has since been confirmed as unsuccessful.)

b) Update on funding extensions [KA]

The Chair reported that on 12 November UKRI announced they have put together a package of £19 million to support funding extensions based on PhD researcher need, with a big emphasis on mitigation. It was also made explicit that not everyone who is eligible and in need is going to receive funding.

There are two categories:

Category 1: Those with funding end dates between 1 April and 30 September.

Category 2: Second, third and fourth years who haven't already had a funding extension and who are least able to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 disruption on their projects. UKRI gives examples of people with a disability, long term medical condition, who are neurodivergent or who have caring responsibilities.

Phase 2 is very different from Phase 1 in that there are no blanket extensions for a particular group and they are not administered through CDTs/DTPs. The research organisation will receive a block grant and we must establish an application, decision-making and awarding process, as well as an appeals process, to differentiate individuals based on need.

Additionally, UKRI have said that if there is any underspend on any of the CDTs/DTPs that has to be used first, thus the challenge is to ensure equity across all PhD researchers and ensure a process is devised that is seen to be fair and transparent.

A Governance Plan needs to be submitted by 4 December including an outline of the application process then we should receive an award letter from UKRI by the end of the year.

KA has put a paper to UEB to request a mirrored level of funding for University funded PhD researchers (to include those internally funded, match-funded and those to whom we disburse their funding, e.g. from charities) which will be considered next week, with the aim of applying the same procedure to this group as to those funded by UKRI.

c) Update on support for self-funded students [KA]

The [PGR Writing-up+ Support Fund](#) has been created from the £90k drawn down as hardship support from the 2021 Wolfson grant. This fund permits PhD researchers who are currently in their continuation period or have been granted an extension and have exhausted all other funding options to request financial support of up to £3,000 while writing up.

KA has also asked UEB whether they are in favour of her putting together financial models to see what can be done for self-funded and international PhD researchers who are also affected by COVID-19-related disruption.

20-21/05 Annual review of Terms of Reference and membership

The Terms of Reference and membership were reviewed and it was confirmed that no amendments are to be made.

20-21/06 Chair's actions:

a) New agreements since last meeting:

Ref.	Date agreed:	Staff member / department	Application details / project title	Support agreed	Expected start
AFSC 20-21 /06/01	Nov 2020	Paul Wakeling (Education) / KA	OfS/RE - Widening participation for BAME PhD researchers	York to host management of White Rose consortium and ring fenced PhD studentships	Application due 28/01/21 (since extended to 27/05/21)

20-21/07 Update on UKRI funding for international PhD students [KA]

Up to 30% of UKRI studentships per training grant can now be awarded to international candidates (with overseas fee status) however UKRI will only pay fees at the domestic rate, resulting in a shortfall between the Home and Overseas rate to be covered by other sources. KA has been to Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof Saul Tendler, with a paper regarding a mechanism for this, whereby a fee waiver is applied but departments are not double-taxed. York is seeking an explicit agreement that applicants will not be asked to make up the difference between the Home and Overseas rate, to align with other Russell Group Universities. AFSC Committee members were in agreement with this. Saul would like the paper to go to Planning Committee in December, thus there will not be a formal decision on this for some time yet.

There was further discussion around whether this mechanism was only available for UKRI-funded PGR researchers or whether it could be opened up for other categories of students. One suggested option was to put a break in place that means any other cases could be handled via exceptional request to, and approval from, the Dean.

20-21/08 Update on renewal of agreement with China Scholarship Council [KA]

The Chair confirmed she inherited this renewal agreement after taking on the role of Dean, with it mostly being already agreed, except for final sign-off.

York will be allocated up to 10 CSC funded positions each year, with CSC paying stipends and RTSG and the University agrees to waive the fees for successful candidates.

New areas have been agreed with CSC using the research themes. Most themes were recommended by CSC as areas they want to highlight. CSC wanted some very specific areas to be identified, hence the additional areas noted in the paper provided, which reflect where there are strengths across the University. The Committee found the list of themes somewhat puzzling and it also seemed to miss out some areas completely, such as medical technologies and the Arts and Humanities are not hugely visible.

KA asked the Committee how familiar they were with the CSC funding scheme which highlighted that the profile of this scheme is very low. Some members were wholly unaware of it, with others only aware, having been Graduate Admissions Tutor, thus there is some work to be done in advertising this funding agreement more widely.

ACTION: CSC to be publicised more widely by Global Programmes to raise the profile of this scheme amongst departments.

ACTION: The Chair to suggest new areas for the CSC list for future years.

20-21/09 Review of Wolfson Scholarships in the Humanities selection process [KA/GK] [Encl. 6]

This was brought to the attention of the Committee as a selection process that could benefit from revision to increase efficiency, improve transparency of decision-making and potentially provide greater alignment with existing YGRS scholarship awarding processes that have undergone review in the past few years.

The main decisions being sought were around:

- Opening up the competition to all Arts and Humanities departments.
- Whether the University would be match-funding a third scholar for an October 2021 start.
- If the departmental Subject Panels could be dropped in place of one Central Selection Panel to make assessments across all nominated candidates.

There was insufficient time to discuss this and make decisions, however KA and JF agreed to look at this outside of the meeting and report back as Chair's Actions.

ACTION: GK to contact KA and JF with proposed options and decisions required for the Wolfson 2021 Scholarship Competition.

20-21/10 PGR scholarships database

To be raised at the next meeting.

20-21/11 Faculty updates

No updates.

20-21/12 Any other business

No other business was raised.

Category II Business

20-21/13 Chair's Actions 2019/20

All RDF studentship match-funding commitments from 2019/20 were provided for information, including an update on outcomes, where known.

20-21/14 YGRS Conference Fund

The 2019/20 Report on Expenditure was provided by GK, along with a note on the awarding process and round deadlines for 2020/21.

20-21/15 YGRS Overseas Research Scholarships

The collated annual rankings including Home Countries were provided, as requested at the May 2020 meeting.
An overview of the 2021/22 competition process was also circulated.

20-21/16 Current UoY Scholarship Offer Letter / Terms and Conditions templates

These undergo annual review in Research Student Administration and were included for reference.

20-21/17 Scholarship budget update

The latest budget update was included for information.

20-21/18 Date of next meeting: to be scheduled by timetabling