UNIVERSITY OF YORK
Planning Committee

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 26 February 2002.

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.W. Ellis (Chair)
Professor B.C. Gilbert (Chair, Teaching Committee)
Professor R.W. Godby (Chair, Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committee)
Professor M. El Gomati
Ms J. Fraser
Mr R. Gutierrez Vargas
Professor G.J. Hitch
Professor S. Jackson
Dr P.M. Lee
Professor P.J. Simmons
Dr L. Smith

In attendance: Professor D. Raffaelli (for M02/03 only)
Dr F.M.K. Campbell (Graduate Recruitment Officer)
Dr S.J. Hutchinson (Graduate Student Training Officer)
Ms C. Rees (Careers Director)
Mr P. Simison (Assistant Registrar)

Apologies: Miss Hollings
Dr Marshall
Dr Tyler

02/1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2001 were approved.

02/2 Changes in committee structure and responsibilities

The Board received a copy of the proposal, which had been approved by Senate, concerning changes in committee structure and responsibilities (agendum 3). It was noted that the responsibilities of the Graduate and Undergraduate Studies Committee were to be divided between, on the one hand, Teaching Committee and a new Standing Committee on Assessment, and on the other, the Board for Graduate Schools. The new responsibilities to be given to the Board for Graduate Schools were noted.

It was noted that certain responsibilities (1, 11, 12) would fall on the whole Board, while others (2 to 8, concerning individual graduate students) could be dealt with by designated individual members of the Board. Two responsibilities (9 and 10, concerning academically unsatisfactory students, and appeals) would fall on the Chair and a panel of members of the Board; a final responsibility (13, concerning academic misconduct by research students) would fall on the Chair alone.
It was agreed that the number of meetings of the Board should increase from three to five a year (with two in each of the autumn and spring terms). It was also agreed that the membership of the Board might need to increase, and that members designated to deal with individual cases should meet occasionally to ensure a common approach.

02/3 Proposal for new PhD programme in Environmental Science

The Board received a proposal for a new PhD programme in Environmental Science (agendum 4). Professor Raffaelli was in attendance for this item.

It was noted that the normal entry qualification for the existing PhD programme in Environmental Economics and Environmental Management was possession of an MSc degree. It was proposed that for the new PhD programme the normal entry requirement should be possession of a first degree. This would enable the programme to compete more effectively with programmes elsewhere which had a similar requirement. The first degree requirement also satisfied the criterion for award of NERC studentships.

The Board approved the proposal.

02/4 2002 review of postgraduate recruitment strategy

The Board received the review of the 2002 postgraduate recruitment strategy, which had been prepared by the Chair and Dr Campbell for the Planning Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee (agendum 5).

The following points were noted:

(i) the principal objective of a 5% per annum increase in graduate student numbers had been achieved;

(ii) the conversion rate from applicants to entrants was greater for home than for overseas candidates;

(iii) the Department of Economics had seen a very large increase in its graduate student numbers in 2001. This had resulted in its effectively closing its admissions to some programmes in the early summer;

(iv) the number of home applicants in 2001 was down on 2000;

(v) there was scope for developing the EU market, providing this was felt to be cost-effective;

(vi) Dr Campbell would be seeking to establish the graduate area as a priority with the new Web Manager.

02/5 Graduate application and entrant statistics

Graduate application and entrant statistics for 1999, 2000 and 2001 were received (agendum 6).

It was noted that in Table 3 (conversion rates by department) the figures for MRes courses were given under each of the departments involved, rather than split between
them. The generally higher conversion rates in science departments reflected the greater availability of funding. With regard to Table 4 (entrants by course), it was agreed that departments should be consulted about those courses which had admitted few students or none in 2000 and 2001. It was pointed out that such courses nevertheless occupied space in the prospectus and attracted allocations of funding for advertising; there was also a danger that such courses might continue to be advertised when the members of staff who supported them had left the University. The view was also expressed that the titles of some courses should be reviewed. It was agreed that proposals for new courses should give information on applications and entrants to existing courses.

02/6  **Response to UKCGE/HEFCE review of research**

The Board received for information the response that had been prepared to a UKCGE/HEFCE review of research (agendum 7). It was noted that several questions referred to an institutional code of practice for research degree programmes, which the University was to develop (see M02/07).

02/7  **Development of University policy on research degree programmes**

The Board gave further consideration to the QAA code of practice on postgraduate research programmes, and to the development of a University policy in this area (agendum 8). It noted that the University would need to demonstrate that it was in compliance with the QAA code of practice before the QAA audit scheduled for the autumn of 2003. It therefore agreed that it should draw up a policy on research programmes and general graduate student procedures over 2002/03. It was suggested that the policy should draw on existing documents such as the notes of guidance on MPhil/PhD degrees, and should constitute an irreducible minimum of required practice combined with recommendations on good practice. It should form a common element in departmental handbooks for graduate students, to which departments would be free to add.

02/8  **Provision for ‘writing up’ students**

The Board received a note from the Student Welfare Committee recording its concern for ‘writing up’ students, who, not being in full-time registration or paying full tuition fees, had little formal status in the University and therefore little entitlement to University resources (agendum 9). The Board also received an explanatory note from Mr Simison on the current status and entitlements of ‘writing up’ students.

Ms Fraser, the President of the GSA reported that the area of provision which caused the greatest anxiety to ‘writing up’ students was that of accommodation. In this respect, it was noted that the Accommodation Office sought to exercise some flexibility in allowing overseas students to remain in residence where there were compelling medical, compassionate or domestic circumstances, though it had to balance their needs against the needs of incoming students and students on waiting lists.

It was agreed that Dr Campbell should provide Ms Fraser with a breakdown by department of the numbers of research students who were writing up or in extended registration.
02/9 Access to campus facilities for part-time and Health Studies students

The Board received a note from the Teaching Committee on the issue of access to campus facilities in relation to, for example, part-time students and Health Studies students; the Board was asked if there were matters which it would wish the Committee to consider in this context (agendum 10).

It was reported that the issue had emerged in the context of Health Studies students and the provision of facilities, including library opening hours, over the summer vacation and in the degree day period. It was agreed that the GSA should submit any comments it might have direct to Professor Gilbert as Chair of the Teaching Committee.

02/10 AHRB postgraduate review

The Board received information about a review which the AHRB was conducting of its support for postgraduate training (agendum 11). Departments had been invited to submit comments, and these had so far been received from the Department of Politics. It was agreed that Mr Simison should circulate to departments a summary of the first two points made by Politics and, subject to any further comments he might receive, submit the summary to the AHRB by 31 March.

02/11 Graduate teaching assistant code of practice

The Board received recommendations from the Graduate Students’ Association and the Graduate Student Training Officer regarding a code of practice on graduate teaching assistants (agendum 12).

The Board welcomed these recommendations in principle. It agreed that it was desirable to have a short code of practice in this area, and that such a code could be included as a section within the code of practice on graduate student procedures proposed above (M02/07). It was agreed that there were difficulties over the description of graduate teaching assistants (in paragraphs 1, 1.8, 1.9 and 1.11 of the recommendations) as “members of staff”.

02/12 York Graduate Award

The Board received an oral progress report from the Graduate Student Training Officer on the proposed York Graduate Award (agendum 13). He reminded the Board that his original proposal was that an optional additional programme should be made available to graduate students, on completion of which they would receive a certificate. However, such a programme would require considerable effort to mount, and take-up might be low. He now therefore intended to propose that the award should be based on the accumulation of points by students for participating in activities that were already offered (on the lines of the “green card” system operated by Biology). This would allow students to take charge of their own development. He would be circulating a proposal to departments. The Board agreed that it was desirable to maximise the number of students who achieved the award.

02/13 Staff Development Office graduate programme

The Graduate Student Training Officer reported that there had been a large increase in the number of students taking graduate programmes offered by the Staff Development Office.
There was a problem, however, with students who booked places but failed to attend. The Board considered whether such students (or their departments) should be charged; if so, there would need to be clear guidelines about non-attendance because of illness or other good cause. It was agreed that, in the first instance, the names of students who failed to attend should be reported to their departments.

**02/14 Next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 18 June 2002.