UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 21 January 2003.

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.W. Ellis (Chair)
Professor C.A. Godfrey
Professor G.J. Hitch
Miss A.E. Hollings
Professor S. Jackson
Miss C.L. Shobbrook
Dr L. Smith
Professor J.C. Sparrow
Dr E.M. Tyler

In attendance: 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: Professor B.C. Gilbert
Dr S.J. Marshall

03/1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2002 were approved.

03/2 PhD by publications

Arising out of M02/45, the Board received a final draft proposal for the introduction of a PhD by publications, together with draft guidelines for examiners (agendum 5a).

It was agreed to make the following amendments:

Proposal
Paragraph 8
‘original contribution to research’ to read ‘original contribution to knowledge or understanding’

Draft guidelines for examiners
Paragraph 1.e
‘original contribution to research’ to read ‘original contribution to knowledge or understanding’

Paragraph 3.a.v
It was agreed that there should be no requirement for a second oral examination if additional publications were required as part of a resubmission.

Paragraph 3.b.i
‘and the departmental Graduate School Board is unable to resolve the disagreement’ to be omitted

**Paragraph 3.b.ii**
It was agreed that a satisfactory mode of presentation was relevant to work submitted for this degree.

**Paragraph 3.c.iv**
‘the internal examiner should notify the candidate in writing of the minor revisions required’ to read ‘one or other of the examiners should notify the candidate in writing of the minor revisions required’

‘The internal examiner should then certify on the report form that the revisions have been made’ to read ‘One or more of the examiners should then certify on the report form that the revisions have been made’

**Paragraph 3.c.v**
It was agreed to include in the proposal the possibility that the examiners might recommend the award of an MPhil by publications where a submission for a PhD by publications fell short of the requirements.

It was agreed that options 3 and 4, allowing the examiners to recommend the award of an MA or MSc to a candidate whose work fell short of the requirements for the PhD, should be omitted.

**Paragraph 3.d.v**
It was agreed that two copies of both the original submission and of any resubmission should be lodged with the Graduate Schools Office. The works submitted might be either in the form of a bound thesis or stored in a rigid container, in accordance with the Regulation for the presentation of PhD theses.

It was agreed that the proposal and guidelines for examiners, in amended form, should be submitted to Senate for approval (attached as Appendix 1). It was also agreed that a Regulation on the award of the PhD by publications should be drafted for the Board’s consideration.

It was agreed that the proposal, following approval by Senate, should be publicised by means of email to and circular to departments, briefing note and the University Magazine, and that the Personnel Office should be informed.

**03/3 Draft policy on research degree programmes**

Arising out of M02/47, the Board a further draft of the policy on research degree programmes (agendum 3b).

The Board agreed the following amendments:

**Research and professional training**

This section needed to be expanded in consultation with Dr Marshall, Dr Hutchinson, and the Working Group referred to in M03/6 below.
Supervision

The second sentence to read: ‘Formal supervisory meetings should be held at least twice a term, except where temporarily waived by the department.’

The third paragraph to read: ‘It is considered good practice that the student should keep a record of formal supervisory meetings.’

Thesis advisory panels

Add: ‘If the supervisor is relatively inexperienced, the panel should include experienced members of staff’.

‘The panel will be appointed early in the student’s registration period’ to read ‘The panel will be appointed within the first six months of the student’s registration period.’

It should be made clear that the panel was expected to meet only during the normal registration period.

‘Alternate meetings of the panel may be ‘minor’ meetings...’ to be deleted.

After ‘Following each thesis advisory panel meeting a brief report’ add: ‘possibly on the same pro forma’.

‘will not be involved in the preparation of the student’s thesis’ to read: ‘will not be involved in the final preparation of the student’s thesis’.

Upgrading

The second paragraph to read: ‘Upgrading to PhD registration will normally be considered within eighteen months (for full-time students) or within three years (for part-time students), in the expectation that students will be registered for the degree of PhD by the end of the second year of study (if full-time) or of the fourth year of study (if part-time).’

Add to final paragraph: ‘To inform its judgement, the panel should have available to it evidence that the research is under way; a substantial piece of written work by the student; and a coherent timetable, with intermediate deadlines, for the completion and submission of the thesis.’

Writing up students

It was agreed that this section should be headed Students who proceed beyond the normal period of registration.

It was agreed that information on fees payable during this period should be included in a section on Induction and training among items to be made known to students beginning a research degree programme.

The final sentence to read: ‘Students should maintain contact with their supervisors during this period, and can expect to receive continuing support from their supervisor, including reading the final draft of the thesis before submission. Departments should
provide students with guidance on the level of support they can expect during this period.

**Suspensions and extensions of registration**

A new section to be included, making it clear that, for students supported by the research councils or the AHRB, the University would approve suspensions or extensions of registration agreed by the sponsoring body.

**Referrals**

A new section to be included, incorporating relevant parts of the *Notes of guidance on the degrees of PhD and MPhil.*

In particular, it should make clear that a candidate should not expect to receive a mechanical list of corrections to be made, particularly where the revisions required involved major improvements in depth, intellectual quality, analysis, argument or structure.

**Role of research students in teaching**

It was agreed that this section should specify University policy on the extent of paid teaching which research students might undertake.

The Board agreed to consider a further draft of the policy at its next meeting.

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**03/4  Graduate student application and entrant statistics 2000-02**

The Board received graduate student application and entrant statistics for 2000, 2001 and 2002 (agendum 4; Appendix 2).

It was noted that applications had risen by 25% between 2001 and 2002. This included an increase in overseas applications of 50%. Home and EU applications had risen by 2.4%. The Department of Economics received about 30% of all applications.

The number of entrants had risen by about 5% each year. The most significant growth had been in overseas entrants, particularly for taught masters courses.

It was noted that applications for taught courses in Management Studies and in the former Health Studies area of Health Sciences were submitted direct to the department rather than through the Graduate Schools Office. It was agreed that this should be regularised to ensure that applications statistics were complete.

It was noted that the Graduate Schools Office was requesting an additional member of secretarial staff to help deal with the increased number of applications. (Applications for the forthcoming year were currently 70% up - from 1,435 to 2,432 - compared to January 2002.) A ‘frequently asked questions’ page had been set up on the web to help answer applicants’ queries.

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**03/5  Correspondence with ESRC concerning 2002 submission rate survey**
The Board received correspondence with the ESRC concerning its 2002 submission rate survey (agendum 5).

It was noted that the University’s three-year average four-year submission rate for the ESRC-funded students surveyed in 2002 had been 59%, below the 60% rate at which the ESRC’s sanctions policy would come into force. The University had drawn attention to special circumstances involving a number of students who had failed to submit within four years, and to its average 79% submission rate over the previous nine years. In the light of this information, the ESRC had agreed not to impose the sanction.

It was reported that departmental graduate chairs had been asked whether those students whose names would appear in the 2003 survey were likely to submit on time, and that the University’s three-year average rate looked set to be satisfactory in 2003. It was agreed that heads of departments should also be informed of the position.

It was agreed that measures needed to be taken to identify the funding source of students applying for suspensions or extensions of registration who were funded by research councils, so that the research council’s approval could be obtained where appropriate. It was also agreed that the Board should review likely submission rates in the spring term each year in advance of the ESRC annual survey. It was agreed that the Board should itself review submission rates across departments each year; it was noted that the new student record system to be introduced in October 2003 was likely to facilitate the provision of the necessary data.

Finally, it was agreed that use of the term “writing up year” was misleading and should be avoided. It was agreed that reference to this year should in future normally be omitted from letters offering places to research students.

03/6  Outcome of AHRB postgraduate review

The Board received the report arising from the AHRB’s review of its postgraduate programme (agendum 6). The report had been circulated to the relevant departments.

It was noted in particular that the AHRB proposed two new schemes of support for taught courses: the first would support masters courses focusing on advanced study and research explicitly intended to provide an underpinning for further research at doctoral level; the second would support masters or diploma courses focusing on the development of high level skills and competences as a preparation for professional practice in the disciplinary or vocational area concerned. The AHRB intended to shift the balance of its support in favour of more doctoral awards, and to give priority at masters level to the research training scheme.

The Board noted that the University had no institutional policy on research training, which was departmentally organised. It was agreed to convene a Working Party to compare what was currently offered with what was required by external bodies including the research councils, with a view to developing an institutional policy.

++03/7  ORS awards scheme

The Board received the circular from Universities UK setting out the arrangements for
the 2003 ORS awards scheme and the outcome of the recent review of the scheme by the HE funding bodies (agendum 7).

It was noted in particular that, with effect from 2003, awards would be set at a flat rate for each of the three main overseas fee bands (classroom-based, laboratory-based and clinical courses) rather than, as hitherto, reflect the difference between home and overseas fees set by individual institutions. **The Board agreed to recommend to Senate that, should that difference at York exceed the ORS flat rate, the University should waive the excess and require ORS award-holders to pay only the home rate of fee.**

03/8  **Degree of MPhil: implementation of report of National Qualifications Framework Working Group**

The Board received the memorandum concerning the implementation of the report of the National Qualifications Framework Working Group (agendum 8). The Board was asked to address the matters raised in section 9 of the schedule, relating to the award of the MPhil; and, specifically, to develop criteria to clarify the options available to examiners at different stages of the research process.

The Working Group had accepted the location by the QAA of the MPhil at masters level within the National Qualifications Framework, but had recommended that, for the MPhil, additional criteria, in terms of outcomes, skills and attributes, should be added to those required of masters level students in the NQF. Those additional criteria were drawn in part from those required of PhD students in the NQF.

The Board accepted that the criteria for the MPhil should exceed those for masters level, but felt that the additional criteria recommended by the Working Group were too close to those for the PhD and, if adopted, could lead to appeals by students against failure to upgrade or to be awarded the PhD. It was agreed to ask Mr Simison to formulate modified criteria for the Board’s consideration at its next meeting.

03/9  **Draft guidelines for the management of taught postgraduate programmes**

The Board received from the Teaching Committee draft guidelines on the management of taught postgraduate programmes (agendum 9). The draft guidelines were approved.

03/10  **Awards Sub-Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Awards Sub-Committee held on 9 December 2002 were approved (agendum 10).

The appointment of Professor J.K Local to serve as a member of the Sub-Committee was approved.

It was noted that the Sub-Committee had agreed that the total number of graduate awards beginning in October 2003 should be reduced, but that the value of stipends attached to research studentships should continue to match those offered by the research councils.

The Sub-Committee had also agreed that college research scholarships should be discontinued. However, Provosts, if they wished, might continue to offer residence charge waivers (which did not come out of the Sub-Committee’s budget) to students in return for performance of college duties.
Amendment to Regulation 2.7.3 (Presentation of PhD and MPhil theses)

The Board received a proposal (agenda 11) that Regulation 2.7.3(i), regarding the presentation of tables within PhD and MPhil theses, should be amended by the omission of the words “which shall appear beneath the table” from the sentence “Each table shall have a number and title, which shall appear beneath the table”. The object of the amendment was to permit the number and title to appear either above or beneath the table. It was agreed to recommend to Senate that the Regulation should be amended in this way. The existing Regulation, with an indication of the words to be omitted, is attached as Appendix 3.

Next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 25 February 2003 at 2.15pm.