UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 26 January 2006.

Present:  The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.H. Fitter (Chair)
The Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment, Dr C.J. Fewster
Professor A.G. Burr
Mr C. Chen
Dr D. Efird
Dr B.J. Keely
Dr G.D. Low
Professor M. Maynard
Dr G. Tsoulas
Ms T. Wardhani

In attendance:  Professor S.F. Jackson (M06/1 only)
Dr F.M.K. Campbell (Graduate Recruitment Officer)
Dr K.V. Clegg (Director, Graduate Training Unit)
Mr P. Simison (Assistant Registrar)

Apologies:  Professor M. Taylor
Professor T.A. Sheldon
Professor J.C. Sparrow
Dr R. Wooffitt

06/1  Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2005 were approved and signed.

06/2  Academic misconduct by research students

Arising out of M05/70, the Board received a further draft procedure prepared by the Working Party on Academic Misconduct by Research Students. In the absence of Dr Wooffitt, Professor Jackson attended to present the draft on behalf of the Working Party.

The Chair thanked the Working Party and Professor Jackson.

He noted, however, that at its meeting in October 2005 the Board had agreed that a departmental investigative committee should in every case recommend penalties, rather than refer more serious cases to the Board for Graduate
Schools for a decision on the penalty; and that, where a less severe penalty was recommended, the student should have the right of appeal to a panel of the Board for Graduate Schools; but that, where a more severe penalty was recommended, there should be an automatic hearing by a panel of the Board for Graduate Schools. This would make the procedure comparable to that for taught course students. In addition, there was no provision in the Regulations for an appeal to the Senate, as proposed by the Working Party.

The Board endorsed the Chair’s view that the procedure should adhere to these agreed principles. It was noted that the Working Party had felt that the relationship between a supervisor and a student might be damaged if the department were to recommend a severe penalty which was not upheld by the Board for Graduate Schools, but the Board did not find this argument compelling.

It was agreed that the procedure should contain provision for the Deputy Chair of the Board for Graduate Schools to advise departments on dealing with particular cases, and to request a full hearing by the Board for Graduate Schools where academic misconduct was established but where in the Deputy Chair’s view no adequate penalty had been recommended. (This provision would be similar to that contained in the procedure for taught course students with regard to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment.) It was agreed that the Deputy Chair should not be a member of the panel at a hearing by the Board for Graduate Schools.

It was agreed that Mr Simison, in consultation with the Chair, should redraft the procedure on the lines agreed above, for consideration by the Board at its next meeting.

06/3 Priorities of Special Cases Committee for 2005/06

The priorities of the Special Cases Committee for 2005/06 were noted.

06/4 Periodic Review of Department of Language and Linguistic Science

The Board received the report of the Periodic Review of the Department of Language and Linguistic Science. It was noted that the reports of such reviews, which were conducted by the Teaching Committee, were submitted to the Board for information, particularly with regard to postgraduate and research students. It was noted that at present the Board had no ready mechanism for disseminating good practice around departments.

06/5 Graduate Awards Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Graduate Awards Committee held on 10 November 2005 were approved. With regard to teaching scholarships, it was
suggested that the Committee should adjust the guidance given to
departments in order to clarify what information it required from them.

06/6  EPSRC CTA Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the EPSRC CTA Committee held on 15
December 2005 were approved. It was noted that the Committee had agreed
that in future departments must seek its permission to award an EPSRC
studentship to a student with either a lower-second-class or third-class degree.

06/7  Appointment to selection panel for ORS awards

The following members were appointed to serve on a selection panel for ORS
awards in 2006:

Professor M. Taylor  (Chair)
Professor A.G. Burr*
Professor M. Maynard*
Dr Y. Xu

* appointed by the Chair on behalf of the Board after the meeting.

06/8  Committee on Research Skills Training

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee on Research Skills Training held
on 30 November 2005 were approved.

In connection with M05/24, it was noted that Roberts funding would in future
be withheld from departments which failed to provide a satisfactory report on
the training they had put in place or spent the funding incorrectly. It was
noted that at its next meeting the Board would be asked to consider a draft
questionnaire designed to elicit from departments a report on expenditure
from and use of Roberts funding.

06/9  Review of committee structure

The Chair reported that the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar had asked the Pro-
Vice-Chancellors to conduct a thorough review of the committee structure,
with a view to relating the structure more closely to the University’s key
functions of research and teaching.

Among the recommendations which the Pro-Vice-Chancellors had discussed
was that the Board for Graduate Schools should be dissolved, and its functions
distributed among the Research Committee (policy on postgraduate
education), the Teaching Committee (quality issues, programmes of study), the
Standing Committee on Assessment (assessment issues) and the Special Cases
Committee (individual student cases).
Members of the Board discussed this recommendation, and commented as follows:

- the recommendation appeared to run counter to the proposal to establish a single York Graduate School; it was not clear how the integration of graduate activities and single point of focus for graduate students could be achieved under the proposed new committee structure

- the recommendation was advantageous in combining similar functions and procedures under single committees, and thus for processing individual students, but a single body was needed to co-ordinate graduate policy

- it would be undesirable to have a single graduate school without a board to advise the director

- research students were a distinct constituency, and the Research Committee was not the appropriate body for strategy regarding research students

The Chair thanked members for their comments. For his part, he pointed out that there was no separate committee for undergraduate students; and that the recommendation would necessitate the inclusion on the relevant committees of members with expertise in graduate matters.

06/10 Next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 28 February 2006.