UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 27 January 2009.

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.H. Fitter (Chair)
The Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment, Dr D. Efird
Dr P. Ansell
Mr D.G. Carr
Dr J. Clarbour
Dr I. McIntosh
Dr F.G. Özkan
Dr R. Vann
Dr R. Wooffitt

In attendance Dr K.V. Clegg (Director, Graduate Training Unit)
Mrs A. M. Grey (Planning Office)
Mrs R.J. Royds (Manager, Student Administrative Services)
Mr P. Simison (Student Administrative Services)

Apologies: Professor G. Griffin
Professor T.A. Sheldon
Dr C. Thompson
Dr M.J. White
Miss K. Wicker
Mrs R.A. Goerisch

09/1 Membership of the Board
It was reported that the following members had been appointed by the Graduate Students’ Association to serve in 2008/09: Daniel Carr (research student); Kitty Wicker (taught course student); and Naile Berberoglu (overseas student).

The Chair welcomed Mr Carr to the meeting. Mr Carr reported that Ms Berberoglu had subsequently resigned.

09/2 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2008 were approved and signed.
09/3 Council Tax exemption
Arising out of M08/70, it was reported that a Council Tax exemption form for full-time PhD students in their fourth year had now been completed, and would be posted on the web with guidance notes.

ACTION: PS

09/4 PhD submission rates
Arising out of M08/59, the Chair reported that he had asked departments to submit comments on their PhD submission rates by 31 January. A report would therefore be made to the next meeting.

ACTION: AHF

09/5 Four-year PhD programmes
Arising out of M08/34, it was reported that a further proposal would be submitted to the next meeting.

ACTION: RV, PS

09/6 Proposed new MPhil/PhD programme in Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine
Arising out of M08/71, the report from the Graduate School Board in Biology regarding the proposed new MPhil/PhD programme in Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine was received and noted.

In connection with the preponderance of undergraduate modules offered to students on the programme as training modules, it was noted that the list of training modules available would be reviewed annually by the Doctoral Training Centre.

The Board remained concerned about the procedure for the allocation of projects and supervisors. It was agreed to suggest that the identification of a potential supervisor should form part of the selection procedure before admission to the four-year programme, and that the final selection of project and supervisor should take place no later than the tenth month of the probationary year. The Board agreed to request information on what constituted satisfactory progress allowing progression to the PhD programme, and on the procedure that would be followed if no supervisor was prepared to assume the supervision of a particular student.

In conclusion, it was reported that a procedure for seeking University approval for new research degree programmes involving external funding was in preparation and would be submitted to the next meeting.
**Postgraduate admissions policy and procedures**
Arising out of M08/57, the Board received for information the final version of the postgraduate admissions policy and procedures. This had been revised to take account of the Board’s comments, had been approved by the Chair and had been published on the web.

The Board thanked Gillian Lindsey (Assistant Registrar: Registry Services) for her work in drawing up the policy and procedures.

In connection with the Board’s previous discussion of the value of academic references, a member expressed the view that references and transcripts provided different information, and that both were of value.

**Collaborative research degree programmes**
Arising out of M08/57, the Board considered a revised proposed policy on collaborative research degree programmes. The policy covered collaboration in the form of (a) spending a period at another institution; (b) academic input from other institutions; and (c) collaborative research degree programmes leading to jointly awarded qualifications. In considering the proposal, the Board was concerned that the procedures adopted should enable it to ensure that any proposed collaboration was both desirable in itself and of benefit to the department and the University, and would be conducted in a way which maintained the University’s academic standing and the integrity of its qualifications.

The Board agreed the following amendments.

*(a) Spending a period at another institution*

- the period for which a York MA/MSc student (by research) should be permitted to register at another academic institution should normally be limited to six months (rather than three);
- it should be indicated that the periods specified applied to full-time students, but that equivalent periods applied to part-time students
- it should be added that the period for which students from other academic institutions might register as visiting students at York was normally limited to one year under Ordinance 9.1
- it should be made clear that visiting students at York paid tuition fees unless specific alternative arrangements were agreed (e.g., under Erasmus schemes)
• it should be made clear that the Board’s approval was required for programmes which involved a period of registration (rather than simply study) at another academic institution
• it should be made clear that, for international students, permission to spend periods of study at other academic institutions (if registered at York), or at York (if registered at another academic institution), was subject to Home Office regulations

(b) Academic input from other institutions

• it should be made clear that this section applied to academic input from another academic institution that did not involve registration as a student there
• the sentence “Such input shall not be a charge on the University” should be replaced by “Any financial implications shall be the responsibility of the department concerned”
• the examples of academic input should include external members of thesis advisory panels
• it should be made clear that responsibility for monitoring such arrangements lay with the departmental Graduate School Board or Board of Studies
• the final sub-paragraph should be reworded to make it clear that, if a programme of this kind involved external funding, there was an additional stage in the procedure, namely, the prior approval of the Research Office was required

(c) Collaborative research degree programmes leading to jointly awarded qualifications

• the outline proposal should include “a clear statement of the substantial benefits” that the proposed programme would bring to the department and the University
• the outline proposal should require “evidence of an existing research or teaching association” between York and the other institution
• the outline proposal should require evidence of the availability of funding to support “any additional specific costs (e.g., staff or student travel, language training, payment of examiners’ fees or expenses beyond those normally allowed)”
• if approved by the Board, the outline proposal should next be submitted to the Planning Committee either for approval of any resource implications or otherwise for information
• the detailed proposal should be submitted first to the Graduate Schools Office, which would check that all the required information was in place before it was submitted to the Board
• the detailed proposal should confirm that the proposed programme conformed to all the requirements of the University of York for research degree programmes (including regulations, admissions policy, code of practice on research degree programmes, and policies on the conduct of examinations), or should draw attention to any proposed exceptions
• the detailed proposal should contain specific information on the duration of the programme and the minimum periods of attendance by students at each institution; on arrangements for the payment of tuition fees at each institution; on arrangements for the appointment and payment of examiners; and on arrangements for the conferment of degrees and the issue of certificates.

It was agreed that the numbering of paragraphs in the proposal should be improved.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the proposal, revised as set out above to the satisfaction of the Chair, should be drawn to Senate’s attention as a substantial item of business.

ACTION: PS, AHF

09/9 Proposal concerning e-submission of theses
The Board received a proposal concerning the e-submission of theses submitted by a working group consisting of Elizabeth Harbord and Jane Henley (Library) and Philip Simison (Student Administrative Services).

The working group reported that EThOS (Electronic Theses Online Service) had been launched by the British Library in January 2009 to provide access to British doctoral theses in electronic form. The University currently subscribed to that service, which allowed frequently requested theses to be digitised. The three White Rose university libraries had simultaneously been developing White Rose Etheses Online (WREO) to store and disseminate theses accepted at Leeds, Sheffield and York. Sheffield had required e-submission of theses since October 2008, Leeds was planning to do so, and the majority of other research universities were making or planning this change. If required, masters dissertations in electronic form could be stored in the York Digital Library.

The working group noted that e-submission enabled much wider dissemination of research. Since the British Library no longer provided
microfilmed theses on loan, but only access to digital copies, the availability of theses submitted electronically would save the University the cost of digitising printed theses in future. E-submission would also facilitate checks for plagiarism.

The working group proposed that all students beginning PhD, MPhil or PhD programmes in October 2009 or later should be required to deposit the final version of their thesis in electronic form (together with a softbound print copy); and that previously registered students should be strongly encouraged to do so. An outline procedure was proposed. The Board was asked to consider whether the proposal should also apply to masters dissertations. It was proposed that the proposal should be circulated to departments for comment, with a view to obtaining University approval for the proposal and for consequential amendment of the Regulations in July 2009.

The Board noted that the working group was proposing e-submission only at the stage when the thesis was deposited after successful examination. The proposal would be of advantage to the Library (in terms of savings in shelf space), as well as to students (who would save the cost of having theses hardbound). As proposed, the procedure would facilitate checking for plagiarism only after the examination. A possible concern was that e-submission made copyright observance easier to check; the Board agreed that the Graduate Training Unit would need to ensure that students were aware of their responsibilities in this area. The proposal also raised questions of version control; it was noted, however, that no formal version control took place under the current print copy system.

The Board agreed to approve the proposal, subject to the following additions and amendments:

(a) in order to facilitate checking for plagiarism, it was agreed that research students should be required to submit to the Examinations Office for examination the required number of print copies of their thesis together with the same number of electronic copies on CD, so that both could be forwarded together to each examiner; the electronic copies on CD should normally be in pdf format and must be identical in every way to the print copy;

(b) that the proposal should apply equally to MA/MSc students by research, who would, however, submit their dissertations to their department for examination and, after successful examination, deposit a print copy with their department and an electronic copy with the Library;
(c) that there should be no University requirement for taught masters students to deposit their dissertations with the Library; if departments wished such students’ dissertations to be deposited with the Library in print or electronic form, that arrangement would need to be agreed between the department and the Library;

(d) that the electronic version of the thesis or dissertation deposited with the Library should be in pdf format or in another format acceptable to the Library and appropriate to the medium; and that, once deposited, theses/dissertations should not be editable;

(e) that, in depositing the thesis or dissertation in electronic format, the student should be required to certify that it was identical to the print copy deposited with the Library;

(f) that departmental graduate school boards, the Graduate Students’ Association and (so far as the proposal concerned assessment) the Standing Committee on Assessment should be consulted on the proposal, and their comments invited by 28 February;

(g) that a statement should be placed on the postgraduate admissions web pages advising applicants that this change was under consideration.

The Board noted that the Standing Committee on Assessment was to review the guidance given to departments on the mechanism to be used for checking student work for plagiarism.

It was agreed to consider the comments received at the next meeting.

**ACTION:** PS, Library

**09/10**  **Annual report to Research Councils UK on Roberts money 2007/8**
The Board received and noted the annual report made to Research Councils UK about the use of Roberts money in 2007/8.

**09/11**  **Next meeting**
It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 2.15pm.