UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 22 November 2005.

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.H. Fitter (Chair)
The Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment, Dr T.J. Crawford
The Provost of Wentworth Graduate College, Dr C. Thompson
Professor A.G. Burr
Mr C. Chen
Dr D. Efird
Dr B.J. Keely
Dr G.D. Low
Professor M. Maynard
Professor J.C. Sparrow
Professor M. Taylor
Dr G. Tsoulas
Ms T. Wardhani
Miss J. Winter
Dr R. Wooffitt

In attendance: The Registrar, Ms S. Neocosmos (for M05/85 only)
Dr F.M.K. Campbell (Graduate Recruitment Officer)
Dr K.V. Clegg (Director, Graduate Training Unit)
Dr R. Partridge (Acting Director, Careers Service)
Mr P. Simison (Assistant Registrar)

Apologies: Professor T.A. Sheldon

05/81 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2005 were approved and signed.

05/82 Report from Senate

The Board received the report from the meeting of the Senate held on 1 November 2005.

It was noted that, on a vote, Senate had declined to accept the proposal in section 13 of the draft University code of practice on research degree programmes that oral examinations should be either recorded or conducted in
the presence of an independent observer, and had referred the code of practice back to the Board.

05/83  Draft University code of practice on research degree programmes

Arising out of the previous minute, the Board gave further consideration to section 13 of the draft University code of practice on research degree programmes.

A further draft of section 13 was considered, in which provision was made:

(i) for independent reports to be submitted by the examiners before the oral examination;

(ii) for guidelines on the conduct of the oral examination to be prepared, and for the examination to be chaired by the internal examiner;

(iii) for the audio-recording of oral examinations to be piloted in selected volunteer departments.

A further draft of section 13 is attached as Appendix 1.

05/84  QAA special review of research degree programmes

The Board considered the draft response to the QAA’s special review of research degree programmes.

A number of amendments were suggested, including:

Page 7: The inclusion of a paragraph by Dr Partridge on the treatment of first destinations data;

Page 9: Dr Clegg to provide evidence regarding the Researchers in Residence and UK GRAD school schemes; and examples to be added of departments which had funded students to attend conferences.

Page 11: Dr Clegg to provide a note about briefing sessions for departmental graduate school boards.

Page 12: Examples of departmental pro formas for TAP meetings to be provided.

Page 13: Dr Partridge to provide a note on the appointment of a careers adviser with special responsibility for postgraduate research students;
05/85 Graduate School Working Party

The Board received a discussion paper from the Graduate School Working Party.

After investigating provision at four other universities, the Working Party had identified four graduate school options for discussion and consultation:

(i) Status quo
(ii) A re-badging of current provision as a ‘graduate school’, with little or no change in terms of organisational structure or physical provision;
(iii) An ‘agglomeration’ graduate school, bringing together existing activities in an integrated structure, with a director to ensure development of strategy and operational co-ordination;
(iv) A physical graduate school, involving a building to house graduate offices and services.

The Chair stated that the proposals stemmed from a desire to improve the way the University’s current provision was presented; in his view the University could not afford to maintain the status quo: the absence of a formal graduate school at York gave the impression that the University was deficient in its graduate provision compared to other universities. The ‘re-badging’ option offered no benefit to students. It was improbable that the option of a physical graduate school involving a dedicated building was one that could be pursued in the present financial climate. He therefore recommended the further exploration of option (iii), involving the appointment of a director to coordinate existing graduate activities and to provide strategy and vision. This would not exclude future developments on the lines of option (iv).

In reply to a question concerning the role departments would have in a single graduate school structure, it was stated that no change was foreseen: the intention was to improve co-ordination at the centre and the coherence of interactions between departments and the centre, and to improve the experience of graduate students by increasing their sense of belonging to an organisation larger than their department. It was commented that, despite the excellence of the facilities, some graduate students felt isolated; it would therefore be beneficial for provision to be better co-ordinated.
Dr Thompson stated that he was keen to see Wentworth College developed as a focus for graduate activities outside of departments.

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the Working Party should explore option (iii) further.

05/86 Implementation of Graduate Professional Development

The Board received a paper from Dr Clegg, the Director of the Graduate Training Unit, on the implementation of Graduate Professional Development (GPD).

The Board was asked to consider the paper in principle, before its submission to the Committee on Research Skills Training.

It was noted that it was intended that implementation should be piloted in a number of volunteer departments in the first part of 2006, with a view to full implementation in October 2006.

It was agreed that the Committee on Research Skills Training should be asked to clarify how the requirements of the scheme were to operate, e.g., what the consequences would be if the requirements were not met; and how information on a candidate’s GPD was to be made available to the examiners, and what use the examiners were to make of it.

It was explained that supervisors would be required to verify the student’s participation in training activities.

The Board agreed to approve the proposals in principle for the purpose of the pilot, but to ask the Committee on Research Skills Training (or Professor Sparrow acting as Chair on its behalf) to decide on any changes of detail. It was noted that the Board would have the opportunity to review the scheme again before it was implemented in full.

05/87 Report to Research Councils on use of Roberts money

The Board received for information a copy of the report sent to the Research Councils on the use of Roberts skills training funding in 2004/05.

It was noted that departments were to be asked for reports in January 2006 on their use of Roberts funding allocated in May 2005. These reports would go to the Committee on Research Skills Training in the first instance.
05/88  **Policy on extensions of registration**

The Board received a proposal from the Deputy Chair regarding policy on extensions of registration.

In the view of the Deputy Chair, candidates and departments were too readily requesting extensions of twelve months, without showing good cause for an extension of that duration. He therefore proposed that any single extension should normally be limited to six months, unless a compelling case was made for a longer period. Departments might recommend a further extension at the end of that period, if there were circumstances to justify it.

The Board approved this proposal.

05/89  **Next meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was to be held on Thursday 26 January 2006.