UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

BOARD FOR GRADUATE SCHOOLS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board for Graduate Schools held on 14 October 2003.

Present:  The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor A.W. Ellis (Chair)
The Chair of the Teaching Committee (Professor B.C. Gilbert)
The Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment (Dr T.J. Crawford)
Professor C.A. Godfrey
Professor E.R. Hancock
Professor S. Jackson
Dr P.M. Lee
Mr O. Lisagor
Dr J.E. Nuechterlein
Dr L. Smith
Professor J.C. Sparrow

In attendance:  Ms Y.E. Holder (Director of Equal Opportunities, for M03/66 only)
Mr W.G. Soden (English as a Foreign Language Unit, for M03/67 only)
Mr S.I.Stafford (President, Graduate Students’ Association)
Dr F.M.K. Campbell (Graduate Recruitment Officer)
Dr H. Lawrence (Staff Development Office)
Dr R. Partridge (Student Skills Development)
Ms C. Rees (Careers Director)
Mr P. Simison (Assistant Registrar)

Apologies:  Professor G. de Fraja
Professor G. Hitch
Dr S.J. Hutchinson

03/64 Membership of the Board

The membership of the Board for 2003/04 was noted (agendum 2).

The Board approved (a) the inclusion of the Provost of Wentworth Graduate College as an ex officio member of the Board (in place of a Provost appointed by the Provosts); and (b) the appointment of the remaining staff members (excluding ex officio members) by the Senate (rather than by the Planning Committee or by co-option).

The Chair welcomed new members to the meeting.

03/65 Terms of reference of the Board

The terms of reference of the Board (agendum 3; amended from 2002/03 by the addition of item 14, as agreed at the meeting on 17 June 2003 (M03/56) and approved by Senate) were noted.

03/66 Equal opportunities
Ms Yvie Holder, Director of Equal Opportunities, gave a presentation on equal opportunities issues and their implications for the Board (agendum 4).

Ms Holder reminded members of the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, which imposed on organisations, in the performance of their functions, a general duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good race relations. The University had a duty to examine its policies and procedures (with regard, for example, to admissions, teaching and curriculum, and assessment) in order to ensure that they complied with the Act. Committees should therefore identify and prioritise, for examination in this way, the policies and procedures for which they were responsible, and should also examine proposed new policies and procedures for compliance with the Act. They should also consider revising their terms of reference to include a commitment to equal opportunities.

The Board agreed on the following course of action:

(a) to include in its terms of reference a commitment to equal opportunities;

(b) to review the draft policy on research degree programmes in the light of the Act (it was agreed to ask for Ms Holder’s comments on the draft policy);

(c) to monitor graduate applications and admissions by ethnicity;

(d) to begin to monitor student progression by ethnicity, including: upgrading from MPhil to PhD; suspensions and extensions of registration; PhD completions within four years; failure; appeals and complaints.

The Careers Director agreed to consult with colleagues on the possibility of monitoring first destinations by ethnicity.

03/67EFL Unit

Arising out of M03/47, Mr Bill Soden, of the English as a Foreign Language Unit, gave a presentation on the courses provided by the Unit (in place of the Director, Mr Graham Low, who was unable to attend) (agendum 5).

Mr Soden provided information on English language examinations, and on the courses offered by the Unit. In-session courses comprised courses organised for departments (for which departments paid £35 per hour) and open courses (for which the charge made to students was £75 per term). The pre-sessional course could be taken over four weeks or eight weeks, the charge for tuition being £180 per week.

A number of points emerged from the presentation and subsequent discussion:

(a) Experience showed that a contribution to the cost of the course from the student increased the student’s motivation to complete the course

(b) Paradoxically, weaker students tended to drop out of language courses in order to concentrate on their academic course.

(c) Expanding numbers of overseas students meant that provision would have to
increase.

(d) Increased provision would be dependent on funding, availability of sufficient staff, and availability of teaching accommodation.

(e) Concentrations of students speaking the same language within a department made it more difficult for them to assimilate and to improve their English.

(f) There was advantage in teaching groups of students from the same department together, since they shared the same subject-related English needs.

The Board agreed on the following course of action:

(g) to ascertain the extent and cost of provision at other universities, particularly those in the Russell Group;

(h) to invite the EFL Unit to put forward practicable costed recommendations for expansion of provision;

(i) to consider this matter further - in the light of provision elsewhere, of the costs involved, of the recruitment strategy with its commitment to expansion, and of the implications of the Race Relations Amendment Act - with a view to recommending to the Planning Committee an increase in English language provision, possibly funded out of overseas fee income.

03/68 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2003 were received (agenda 6).

The student members requested that M03/47 should be amended by the addition of the following as the second sentence of paragraph 2: “The student members expressed concern at the conclusion that the standard requirement should not be raised.”

Subject to this amendment, the minutes were approved.

03/69 Priorities for 2003/04

The Chair set out the following priorities for the Board in 2003/04:

(a) policy on research degree programmes: to finalise and keep updated

(b) submission rates: to consider departmental submission rates at the January meeting

(c) development of a policy on skills training

(d) arrangements for chairing of the Board for Graduate Schools: it was proposed that Professor Ellis and Professor Sparrow should be Co-Chairs, and members agreed that this proposal should be pursued.

03/70 PhD by publications
Arising out of M03/41, it was noted that the Senate had approved the draft regulation on the degree of PhD by publications (agendum 8a).

The Board approved a proposal that the fee payable by candidates for this degree should comprise the annual staff registration fee (currently £71) combined with the examination fee (currently £226) paid by staff candidates for a conventional PhD programme, making a total of £297. In the case of referral, a re-examination fee (currently £226) would be payable.

It was agreed that the new degree should now be publicised (including an article in the University magazine). It was also agreed that the number of candidates and their success rate should be monitored in the initial phase.

03/71 Policy on research degree programmes

Arising out of M03/43, the Board received and considered comments from departments on the draft policy on research degree programmes (agendum 8b). In the light of these comments, the Board agreed as follows.

Application of the policy

(i) It was agreed that the policy should apply initially to students registered for MPhil and PhD, but that the Board should consider during 2003/04 the extent to which it should apply also the students registered for the MA or MSc by research;

Applications and admissions

(ii) It was agreed that the following amendments to this section should be made:

- “Candidates who submit formal applications will be sent a response (though not necessarily a decision) within six weeks.....

- “The interview will normally involve the prospective supervisor.”

- “Departments are expected to engage in dialogue by telephone or email with overseas applicants unable to attend for interview.”

(It was noted that the requirement for an interview or similar dialogue applied only to candidates to whom an offer was to be made.)

(iii) It was agreed that the offer letter should, as proposed, name the prospective supervisor. Where the supervisor had not been decided at the time of the offer, the letter could name the supervisors from whom the choice would be made.

Facilities

(iv) It was noted that History was not able to give students access to a suitable room for personal study purposes. The Board agreed that it was important that students should have such access, both to assist their individual progress and to foster the development of a research community within the department. It was recognised that the adoption of this requirement placed an obligation on the University to
provide the means of meeting it.

(v) It was agreed that the second and third sentences of this section should read:

“The department will provide students with adequate access to telephone, fax and photocopying, and with other basic support, to enable them to pursue approved research. Guidance on the extent of such provision will be given in departmental handbooks.”

Induction

(vi) It was agreed that this section should begin:

“Students will be offered an induction programme by the department.”

Research and professional training

(vii) It was agreed that to this section should be added:

“The University will seek to implement the training requirements adopted by the research councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board.”

Supervision

(viii) It was agreed that the second sentence of this section should read:

“Formal supervisory meetings, at which substantial discussion of research progress and plans takes place, should be held at least twice a term, unless this requirement is temporarily waived by the department concerned where the student is absent on academic grounds.”

Thesis advisory panels

(ix) It was agreed to retain the proposed requirement that, for full-time students, the thesis advisory panel should meet with the student at least twice a year (or, for part-time students, at least once a year). It was agreed to make it clear to departments, however, that not all meetings of the thesis advisory panel need involve the review of substantial work by the student.

(x) It was agreed that the University should produce a specimen pro forma for use by thesis advisory panels.

Upgrading

(xi) It was agreed that the second sentence of this section should read:

“Upgrading to PhD registration should 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).”

Students who exceed the normal period of registration
It was agreed that the second sentence of this section should read:

“Extensions of this period, if requested by the student and recommended by the department, may be approved by the University.”

**Intellectual property rights**

It was agreed to ask the Research and Industry Officer to comment on this section.

**Role of students in teaching and demonstrating**

It was agreed that the third sentence of this section should read:

“Teaching or demonstrating should not be undertaken if it will delay the completion of the student’s research.”

It was agreed that the draft policy, modified as set out above, should be considered at the next meeting.

**03/72 Working Party on Research Training**

Arising out of M03/44, the Board received the record of the meeting of the Working Party on Research Training held on 29 September 2003 (agendum 8c).

The Board also received a paper from Dr Hutchinson and Dr Partridge, prepared in response to the requirements of the research councils following the Roberts Review, which set out a model for the recording of skills training completed by research students (centrally or departmentally, or outside the University). The model assigned points to a range of training activities, and required PhD students to complete training activities to the value of 120 points.

In support of this model, the view was expressed that the University should take steps towards ensuring that all research students were required to undertake skills training, as an enhancement of their research degree programme. The requirement would apply to all research students - not only those funded by research councils - but students should be able to choose from a range of training activities in order to satisfy the requirement. In this connection, it was noted that Regulation 2.1(b)(ii) specified that, in order to qualify for a higher degree, a candidate should “satisfactorily complete any course work that may be required”.

It was agreed that the model should be considered by the Working Party on Research Training.

It was noted that the Teaching Committee’s Skills Training Working Party was considering what skills training should be available to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

**03/73 Proposals for joint doctoral programmes in Economics with the Universities of Bologna and Padova**
Arising out of M03/48, it was reported (agendum 8d) that, in response to concern expressed at Senate, the arrangements for the appointment of examiners set out in section (f) of the Annex of each proposal had been amended, with the Chair’s approval, to read:

“The final assessment will be based on submission of a thesis and a viva voce examination. At least two internal examiners (one from each of the participating institutions) and two external examiners will be appointed. Neither supervisor can be appointed as internal examiner. Where a candidate is a member of staff at one of the participating institutions, the number of examiners external to the participating institutions shall exceed the number of internal examiners.”

03/74 Provision of facilities during the vacations

Arising out of M03/51, the Board received a reply from the Director of the Computing Service concerning the use of the Wentworth Graduate College computer room (W/036) by conferences (agendum 8e).

The Board was of the view that it would be reasonable for W/036 to be kept available only for graduate students and staff. It was agreed to write to the Conference Office to ask what use had been made of W/036 by conferences during the vacations, and what the implications would be of restricting its use to graduate students and staff, given that there were other facilities on campus which conferences could use.

03/75 Revised policy recommendations on postgraduates who teach

Arising out of M03/54, the Board received a paper, prepared by Dr Hutchinson and Ms Cooper-Harvey, setting out revised policy recommendations regarding postgraduates who teach (agendum 8f).

It was noted that the paper was a shortened and re-ordered version of the proposed code of practice on graduate teaching assistants which the Board had considered at its last meeting. References to employment and to parity of terms and conditions with academic and academic-related staff had been removed, and the term “graduate teaching assistants” had been replaced by “postgraduates who teach”.

With regard to section 1.1, it was noted that the Centre for Medieval Studies and the Centre for Women’s Studies had no undergraduate students, so that the Centres had to find teaching opportunities for their postgraduates in other departments. It was agreed that this might necessitate a change of wording.

It was agreed that section 1.3 should read, “Postgraduates who teach should be informed at the start of each academic year what opportunities for teaching are likely to exist during the year.”

It was agreed that section 2 should be headed “Written notification” rather than “Letter of appointment”.

With regard to section 3.1, it was agreed to query with the authors whether a half-day’s central training was necessary if the department was offering similar training.

Finally, it was agreed that the paper should be circulated to departments and to the Teaching Committee for comment.
03/76 Draft regulations for the degree of Doctor of Medicine

The Board received draft regulations for the degree of Doctor of Medicine (agendum 9). These had been developed within the Hull York Medical School, and had been forwarded to the Board by a joint meeting of the York and Hull Teaching (and Learning) Committees. The joint meeting had asked for the Board’s comments on the draft regulations, and had also asked the Board to consider a number of possibilities for the further consideration of the regulations.

The Board had a number of comments on the draft regulations. In particular,

(a) it was unhappy with the proposal that, for a candidate whose previous experience in graduate work was deemed satisfactory by the HYMS Joint Senate Committee, the period of registration for the degree might be reduced to one year;

(b) it was of the view that candidates for the degree should meet the full criteria for doctoral programmes which had been adopted by the University in response to the QAA’s National Qualifications Framework;

(c) it felt that the draft regulations left it unclear whether a period of registration was required for candidates who presented published work, rather than a thesis, for the award of the degree;

(d) it felt that greater consideration needed to be given to issues arising from the presentation of published work, e.g.: the period of time during which the work should be published; whether work accepted for publication, but not yet published, was admissible; and the admissibility of co-authored work.

It was agreed to propose that the Chair (or Professor Sparrow) and Secretary of the Board should meet with their counterparts at the University of Hull and with the person in HYMS who had responsibility for graduate admissions, in order to consider the draft regulations further.

03/77 Awards Sub-Committee

The minutes of the meeting of the Awards Sub-Committee held on 18 July 2003 were received (agendum 10).

In connection with M03/5, concern was expressed at the proposed discontinuation of the part-time student bursary scheme. It was objected (a) that the scheme had made a very significant difference to the ability of some groups of applicants (e.g., single parents) to embark on a course; and (b) that such applicants needed to have the assurance of a fee reduction before beginning their course, rather than to be offered the possibility of support from the Hardship Fund once their course had started.

The Board agreed that the Sub-Committee should review its decision on this matter.

The remaining minutes were approved.

03/78 Periodic review visits and research students

The Board received a request from the Teaching Committee to consider whether the remit
of the Committee’s periodic review visits should be extended to include the experience of research students, given that the experience of those students was not currently covered in University-level reviews (agendum 11).

The Board, noting that the remit of the Quality Assurance Agency and of its audits included research students, agreed that the remit of the Teaching Committee’s periodic review visits should be extended to include the experience of research students. It was agreed to propose that the Board should have a representative on the review team; that the team might need to divide to conduct the review of the research students’ experience; and that the relevant part of the team’s report should be referred to the Board for consideration.

03/79 Periodic review of Environment Department

The Board received a request from the Teaching Committee to consider a matter arising out of its periodic review of the Environment Department (agendum 12).

At present, MSc students in Environment had access to the departmental common room, but did not have dedicated space. The Teaching Committee had agreed to ask the Board to consider at University level whether dedicated space should be made available to taught masters students, in relation to the proposed growth in taught postgraduate numbers.

The Board agreed, as a preliminary measure, to survey departments’ current provision for taught masters students in terms of space and facilities.

03/80 Overseas students and academic misconduct

The Board noted (agendum 13) that, in his determination of a petition by an MSc student, the Lord Chancellor, while dismissing the petition, had stated that the only criticism that could be made of the University was that the student’s supervisor could have explained the process of referencing original work in his course project in a more explicit manner; and that, in this regard, the University might consider in the future that, when dealing with overseas students, greater care should be taken in explaining the assessment process and the manner of acknowledging source material in project work.

It was agreed to ask the Standing Committee on Assessment, which was currently reviewing the procedures for dealing with academic misconduct, to make sure that this point was covered in the revised procedures.

03/81 Dates of meetings in 2003/04

It was noted that meetings in 2003/04 were to be held on the following dates beginning at 2.15pm:

- Tuesday 18 November
- Tuesday 27 January
- Tuesday 2 March
- Tuesday 15 June