York Graduate Research School
Awards and Funding Sub-Committee

Friday 13th November 2015
10am
HG19

MINUTES

Present:          Professor T Stoneham
                  Professor S Bell
                  Professor C Brown
                  Mrs A Grey
                  Dr A Kirby
                  Professor D Smith

Apologies:        Professor M Festenstein
                  Professor M Ormrod / Dr K Giles
                  Mr S Willis

In attendance:   Mrs S Broom
                  Ms M Haworth
                  Mr J Holliday
                  Dr H Jones (Secretary)
                  Mr D Lean
                  Mrs R Pendlebury

15-16/10 Minutes of the meeting held 5 October 2015
A correction was requested to minute 15-16/6, to make it clear that a final
decision on the best way forward on this issue had not actually been made. A
further request was made that the term “Associate Dean” be amended to
“Associate Dean for Research”. Otherwise, the minutes were agreed to be an
accurate record.

15-16/11 Matters arising from the minutes

a) (15-16/1). Updated Terms of Reference for this group were received (paper AFSC 15-
16/5).
b) (15-16/4). The recent press release on the PSS scheme was noted (paper AFSC
1516/6).
c) (15-16/5) A paper on the updated “Bench Fees” proposal was received (paper AFSC
1516/11, tabled). This was an update on a proposal that had gone to the recent Planning
Committee, with revisions that committee had asked for. Planning Committee had
requested a better understanding of our competitor position; clarification that the
proposal complied with consumer protection law; clarity on the practical implications for
recruitment, admissions, Departmental assessors, supervisors and fees; and clarity on
the position for any applicants already holding an offer for 2016/7 entry.

The paper provided more detail on the competitor position. Advice had been sought from
the Legal Office that the proposal complied with consumer protection law, which was
also confirmed in the paper. It was discussed that in fact this proposal might increase
our compliance with consumer protection law, given an alternative possibility that such
fees were charged informally on an ad hoc basis. Roxanne Pendlebury confirmed that
the implications for admissions and for assessors had been considered and would be
relatively minor, with assessors simply having to select the appropriate extra fee from a
list of options (which would include “nothing”). Confirmation that the Fees Office were
happy with the proposal was still awaited.

There was some discussion on the question of applicants already holding offers for
2016/7, most of whom were deferrers from the previous cycle. It was felt that terms of
offer should not be changed for these people, but numbers were quite low: Roxanne
Pendlebury agreed to send these to Tom Stoneham for the paper to Planning. It was
also agreed that applicants currently in the system would have their offers held up,
pending this proposal going through, which it was hoped would happen at the next
Planning Committee.

Action: Tom Stoneham, Roxanne Pendlebury

d) (15-16/6) An update on the issue with MA fee-waivers from the AHRC and ESRC was
received. The Finance Office were still working out the best way to manage the
discrepancy for Departments. It was noted that Departments would essentially be asked
to accept that these students were coming in at a lower fee level, and that this might be
easier to handle if they were aware of this at the planning stage. It was agreed that
affected Departments should be notified of this fee issue for AHRC and ESRC funded
MA students.

Action: Kate Giles, Matthew Festenstein

e) (15-16/7) An update on recruitment to Marshall and Fulbright scholarships was received
(paper AFSC 1516/10). It was noted that the new Marshall agreement had been signed
in July 2014, and that it had not then been possible to recruit a starter under the scheme
in time for the 2015/6 academic year. It was further noted that there was some lack of
cohesion between recruitment to varying different international scholarship schemes,
and that more coherence here would be helpful. The International Office were hoping to
achieve this, and Tom Stoneham and Hilary Layton would be writing a paper for the
proposed International Committee on the management of these international
relationships. Tom Stoneham also would be writing to Departments to advise them of the
strength and prestige of the Marshall programme.

It was noted that the number of Fulbright scholars recruited this year had been as
planned.

Action: Tom Stoneham
f) (15-16/7b) An update on the merging of the former UACG budget and scholarships section of the Development Budget into a single scholarships budget, to be owned in Finance, was received. It had been agreed that this was an appropriate move, and there would be no detriment to the University from the proposal. The budget would be moved for Quarter 2, as it was too late for Quarter 1. It was confirmed that there would still be potential flexibility to move funds between the scholarships budget and the rest of the Development Budget if required.

15-16/12  **Chevening Scholarships**
Tom Stoneham spoke to paper AFSC 1516/7. The University had hoped that developments between Chevening and the N8 might lead to the opening up of Chevening to support Chinese PGR students, but this had not happened and the focus remained solely on PGT. It was noted that we currently took c. 20 Chevening scholars a year, mostly not from China, onto PGT programmes, and that under our current agreement (not being a Chevening partner), Chevening paid 80% of the fees for these students. If we became a Chevening partner, we would lose this income, which amounts to c. £250,000. The benefit of becoming a partner would be in the prestige involved, especially noting that many other Russell Group Universities were partners. However, the committee agreed that it would not benefit York to become a partner at this time, noting that there was no reason to think that this would erode our current recruitment pattern of Chevening scholars.

15-16/13  **YuFund Scholarships Match Funding 2016-17**
Mary Haworth spoke to paper AFSC 1516/8. It was agreed that the committee should continue match-funding at the level requested. There was some discussion on the best use of the funding, as it was not restricted. There was agreement that the funding should be allocated to further our strategic objectives; it was suggested that they could be used as priming for a DTP bid, and Mary Haworth indicated that DARO would be likely to be happy with that. It was agreed that a proposal for use of the funds would be brought to the next meeting. It was also agreed that the match funding of £15,000 for this group should remain as an annual expenditure in the budget. It was noted that there needed to be broader institutional thinking about funding strategy for PGT students, noting the expected PGT loans scheme that it was hoped the Government would finalise soon.

  Action: Tom Stoneham / Associate Deans for Research

15-16/15  **Conference budget for self-funded PhD students**
Tom Stoneham spoke to paper AFSC 1516/9. It was noted that there is a significant discrepancy at present between the levels of conference funding made available to self-funded students by different Departments. It was noted that this proposed new budget would not on its own be able to address that inequality, but that it might help for the immediate term. There was discussion on ensuring that the budget was directed at those who had little Departmental support available, and it was agreed to amend the application form to require students to state that they had already exhausted any possible Departmental
support. It was also agreed to amend the form to make clear that students using the fund were expected to be presenting/contributing at a conference, not just attending. There were also discussions on the likely size of the pool of applications and whether a strategic purpose should be added to the criteria for allocation. After some discussion, it was also agreed that students could potentially bid into this fund in their writing-up year. DARO were asked whether they could provide match-funding for this fund; Mary Haworth indicated that they would be willing in principle, although to satisfy donors, clarity on the justification and assurance that Departmental inequities were being addressed, would be required.

The proposal to establish the conference budget, at £10,000 per year, with the amendments noted, was approved by the committee, and the item would be added to the scholarships budget.

Action: Tom Stoneham, Helen Jones

15-16/16 Scholarship Budget Update

The scholarship budget for 2015/6, 2016/7 and 2017/8, now amended to include both former budgets in one, was received. It was noted that the further costs of DTP match-funding, such as staff costs, had never been included in these budgets and that it would be helpful to quantify these, especially to inform future DTP bids, including forthcoming RCUK calls. It was agreed that there would be a large piece of work to include this in the scholarship budget going forward, but that this would be required.

The YuFund and Conference Budget items were confirmed to be included in the budget. It was noted that an update should be sought on recruitment to the Health Sciences studentship that had not yet started. There was some discussion about the PSS budgeting included, given the uncertainty of future plans nationally for PGT, and the reality that there would not be another Government-supported scheme like the PSS. It was agreed that this item should remain in the budget, but the strategic use of the funding should be discussed at the next meeting, by which time the Government would have announced its final decision on the national PGT loan scheme, and the university’s PGT working group would have reported.

It was noted that the 2017/8 budget inevitably carried quite a few unknowns, but that there was not much surplus budget still to allocate. However, a mistake in one budget line was adversely affecting the apparent total, which would be amended.

Action: Helen Jones, Jamie Holliday

15-16/17 Associate Deans’ (Research) Updates

a) There was no update from Science.

b) It was reported from Social Sciences that the Expression of Interest for the new ESRC DTP had been submitted; the proposal would involve the White Rose
partners together with other universities including Sheffield Hallam, Bradford, Hull and possibly Manchester Metropolitan University. The next phase was writing the bid. There were issues to be addressed, including the effect of fewer, thematic pathways and a new model for training.

c) It was reported from Arts and Humanities that the university would shortly be submitting a response to the AHRC's consultation on the next DTP. It was noted that there was no assumption that WRoCAH would simply continue. It was also noted that some of the AHRC’s principles in the proposal, such as the minimum size, the lack of a maximum size and the level of match-funding, were not coherently thought-through. Tom Stoneham would lead the response from York and was liaising with our White Rose partners, and also speaking to his N8 counterparts.

It was agreed that this committee would not fund a York/WRoCAH advert in findaphd.com this year, noting that hardly any applicants last year had used this source to find out about WRoCAH.

15-16/18 Any Other Business

a) It was noted that this would be Helen Jones’ last meeting of this committee, and the committee thanked her for her work as secretary to the committee and to UACG.

b) Tom Stoneham reported that at a recent meeting he had met his counterpart from Huddersfield who had advised that he’d recently surveyed other universities’ Graduate School websites, and advised us that York’s was the best.