MINUTES

Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Dr Alun Kirby, Ms. Helen Poyer (Secretary), Dr Kate Stephenson (GSA), Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Dr Marjan van der Woude, Dr Dani Ungar, Dr Karen Clegg, Dr Jenn Ng, Dr Carolyn Snell, Dr Zoe Devlin, Jane Iddon

Apologies: Dr Beatrice Szczepek-Reed, Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Dr Steve King, Prof. Mike Bentley, Prof. John Robinson, Dr. Juliet James

M16-17/16 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the group and as a new member, Dr Carolyn Snell, had joined, introductions were made.

M16-17/17 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2016

Kate Stephenson should have been included in the attendance but otherwise, the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

Action: Secretary to amend and forward to Digital Marketing & Comms

M16-17/18 Matters Arising:

3.1 M16-17/02 2.1 Terms of Reference for Policy and Programmes Sub-Committee

The Chair reported that the University Governance Officer had confirmed that a quorate membership would be at least one third of the Committee present. Attention should be given the position of the attendees to ensure appropriate academic representation.

3.2 M16-17/04 4.3 YGRS Community on Google + / YGRS webpages - update

The Chair reported that the Google + PGR group now had 214 members. The committee suggested that the group should be advertised via the Staff Digest also.

Action: Chair

The Chair also reported that the YGRS webpages were still undergoing reconstruction. Digital Marketing and Communications were ensuring applicant and fee related information was solely on the Study at York pages and the YGRS pages were to focus on current student support. The YGRS pages would also be restructured to ensure that the most popular pages were easier to link to and the homepage was to be redesigned.

3.3 M16-17/06 Departmental PGR Progression Proposals -update (PPSC/16-17/12)
The committee received an update which confirmed that all departments now had approved progression proposals (or had received substantive feedback and were preparing a response) except for PEP. PEP had not recruited any students in 16/17 and so their proposal could be prepared over the coming academic year. DU remarked that there had been some concern in Biology about oversight of supervision and TAP records from the Graduate Administrator’s point of view. AK confirmed that this was because the reporting capability of Skills Forge was still in progress however it was hopeful that this function would be enabled in the next few weeks. AK agreed to contact Biology ASAP to assist with any urgent queries.

**Action:** Alun Kirby to contact Biology Graduate Office

### 3.4 M16-17/08

Periodic Review of the Department of SPSW - update

CS updated the group that the recent comments had been taken on board in the department - career development was always flagged up in departmental induction activities, career development had been built into the departmental progression point criteria and departmental funding for external training and development opportunities for PGRs had been increased.

### 3.5 M16-17/09

i. Four Year PhD programme in Physics - update

JJ had contacted the Department of Physics to ascertain the urgency of the approval and there had been no indication of a problem with a delayed decision.

ii. Four Year PhD programme - framework update

DU reported that he and JJ had met to start discussions on this and that a paper would be forthcoming to the next PPSC meeting.

### 3.6 M16-17/13

External examiners outside of EU

### M16-17/19

To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair’s Actions)

18.1 Chair’s Actions -

18.1.1 Approval of changes to the training requirements for the IGGI programme in Department of Computer Science

The Chair reported that IGGI had made the following amendments:

- The Literature Review was now part of the progression criteria rather than a module
- The demonstration was no longer a module but taken to be equivalent to 100 hours and students who did not complete it would be dealt with through ‘probation’
- The 2 + 6 week internship scheme was now 8 weeks in total (it should be noted for future programme approvals at PPSC that this was employers’ preference)

18.1.2 Change to PoRD in response to OIA recommendation

The Chair reported that the OIA had recommended a clarification to 12.24 of the 16/17 Policy on Research Degrees (PoRD) and, following a discussion, the group agreed on the following change of wording:
Each examiner should prepare a preliminary report on the thesis, on the correct form, which reflects their independent academic judgement and which identifies the principal issues they wish to raise in the oral examination. The preliminary report should be brought to the oral examination and may be exchanged beforehand.

**Action:** AK / HP to action change in PoRD

### 18.2 AHRC DTP2

- The Chair reported that the AHRC would shortly be releasing further information on the call for bids. A townhall meeting was planned for January 2017 and a call for expressions of interest would likely be in April 2017. Final submission of a bid would be in September 2017. The White Rose Consortium had already formed a writing group of which the York representation was the Chair and Dr Kate Giles.

### 18.3 Leverhulme Doctoral Scheme

- The Chair reported that Leverhulme would also soon be inviting bids for a 15 PhD studentship grant. Only one bid could be received per institution so expressions of interest would be received by the Chair, working with the Research and Enterprise Office, and a successful bid chosen.

### 18.4 Distance learning programmes

- Student Recruitment and Admissions (SRA) had raised an objection to the IELTS score for a DL programme being different than a non DL programme in the same department. They felt it created an inequity between the programmes and therefore for applicants. PPSC approve DL programmes with a higher IELTS score as the support for academic writing on campus is not as easily accessed as it is for student based in York and therefore are satisfied this is a reasonable requirement for the type of programme. The Chair however has invited SRA to submit a paper to the next PPSC meeting so that the issue can be discussed and a final decision made. The GSA remarked that a review of English Language scores across the board would be welcome.

### 18.5 The Chair reported two issues from the recent Russell Group PGR SIG:

#### 18.5.1 Tier 4 students

- Tier 4 students were at a disadvantage due to the UKVI ruling that a student failing their first attempt at a formal progression point meant an outright fail and the student’s Tier 4 visa was curtailed despite a the availability of a resit attempt. Other institutions within the Russell Group reported that they had changed the wording of a failure of the first attempt to ‘referral’ which would not require any change to the student’s visa. The group agreed this was the sensible option for York and it was agreed to change the wording of the progression policy to replace references to 'resit' with 'referral'. Immigration Advice should also be consulted.

**Action:** Chair and AK / HP to amend PoRD and associated forms / guidance. Departments will be asked to update their handbooks and inform first year students.

#### 18.5.2 Funded parental leave

- Some institutions were discussing the provision of funded parental leave for institutionally supported PGR students. The general feeling was that the cost implications would be too high and it would also create an inequity for self-funded students. It was agreed that a general statement on parental leave for PGR students should be forthcoming which confirms that all students are entitled to it and that the University will support them in line with the funder terms and conditions.

**Action:** Chair to consult with Chair of SCC
M16-17/20 To receive an oral report from the GSA representative/s

The GSA reported that their course rep elections were now complete as were the faculty reps. There was now a functioning GSA council and the first meeting was due soon. Focus groups would be set up to target new and completing students to ascertain their views on employability issues. The GSA were also checking with Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni as to the ‘email for life’ process.

M16-17/21 To approve a proposal for a PhD in Education by Distance Learning (DL)

JN and CS gave their comments on the proposal:

- Very detailed
- Impressed by several initiatives especially during induction
- Very practical and substantive
- External comments addressed well
- Section 9 - re funding arrangements for students. “Those who face unexpected hardship but have demonstrated excellent academic progress will be supported where possible”; it would be helpful if this was more specific with respect to the funding support available for students. “In terms of conference participation, distance learners will likely be able to attend events local to their area of residence”. Members noted that this statement assumed that local opportunities were likely to be available and that this may not be the case. It was therefore suggested that this be amended to, for example, “…distance learners may be able to….”. Members also commented that students could be advised to time their campus visits to best take advantage of conference opportunities in the UK.
- Section 14 - Progress and review arrangements refers to a 20,000 word progress report (page 7), this is a typo and should be 2000 words as per the Progression Policy for Education.
- Section 10 - Selection, admission and induction. “Whether the applicant has appropriate internet connectivity, software and hardware to support research and video-conferencing, or that such will be provided by the Department”; members noted that this should be rephrased as the Department is not in a position to provide support for internet connection.
- Members noted that whilst the proposal did address the issue of integration for DL students into the student cohort the Department could further consider ways to actively strengthen their integration. For example, lecture capture is useful but often difficult to demonstrate and learn techniques from. Members suggested that the Department consider cohort-building experiences such as real-time discussion boards, and a student mentor or buddy system. It was also suggested that the programme leader give consideration to co-ordinating student campus visits to allow the cohort to experience activities as a group. Other departments had done so and it was considered to be good practice.
- Members noted that it was not clear whether the reference to “mentor” (page 5) was a reference to a mentor for the DL supervisor or the supervisor as mentor for the DL student. The Committee requested that this section be rephrased to clarify.
- Careful thought needs to go into selecting supervisors who can support DL students.
Members noted that the proposed IELTS score of 6.5 overall and 6.0 in writing was a possible concern given that it is potentially more difficult for the University to provide language support to distance learning students. Distance learning students will have fewer opportunities to improve their English language in comparison with their on-campus counterparts who would have regular opportunities to practise speaking and listening in English in an academic context. Members requested that the Department give further consideration with respect to whether the IELTS requirement for distance-learners who are non-native speakers of English is appropriate. It was noted that the issue with respect to whether a varying English Language requirement between an on-campus programme and a distance learning programme was permitted had not yet been resolved (minute 18.4 above refers) and therefore approval of a different English Language requirement would be subject to the outcome of SRA’s paper (to be considered by PPSC in February 2017).

Members noted that the form template incorrectly stated that formal supervisory should be held at least twice a term. ASO had corrected the template to ensure that it aligned with current University expectations regarding the frequency of formal supervision meetings (two per quarter).

It was agreed that the above feedback would be sent to the department to consider and the response would then be sent to JN and CS for comment and subsequently be considered for approval by Chair’s Action.

**Action:** HP to send PPSC’s feedback to Education

**M16-17/22**  
To consider the Periodic Review of the Department of Chemistry

Members of the group expressed surprise that the comments on UG interdisciplinary programmes were unfavourable. The Committee noted that the strength of interdisciplinary programmes at PGR level should be highlighted at UG level.

It was noted that Chemistry appeared to be undertaking all discipline specific and transferable skills training within the Department’s iDTC programme and the Department should be reminded that there were central opportunities available. Encouraging PGRs to attend centrally run training would also create opportunities for networking across subject disciplines / facilities.

**Action:** HP to send PPSC’s feedback to Chemistry

**M16-17/23**  
To consider the Periodic Review of the Department of Health Sciences

Section 7.4 - the department should be informed that the recording of the PGR Welcome Event from October 2016 was now available to view online and that a smaller January welcome event would also be forthcoming from 2017/18 onwards. Section 7.10 - the Committee noted the ongoing issues of space and that this general issue was being handled by University Executive Board. Section 7.13 - It should also be noted that PGWTs are not restricted to teaching in their own department and can take up opportunities available elsewhere.

**Action:** HP to send PPSC’s feedback to Health Sciences

**M16-17/24**  
To consider the Periodic Review of the Department of Music
The Committee noted that the photoboard of all PGRs (para. 6.4) in the department was very good practice. The PGWT section (6.8-6.9) appeared to be confusing the one day mandatory training course for PGWTs with the longer 20 credit module over nine month ‘The York Learning and Teaching Award’. RETT should be contacted for further information if needed. If the department did not already have a Departmental PGWT Coordinator then it would be good practice to appoint one which would help with the NSS scores and the PGWT experience.

**Action:** HP to send PPSC’s feedback to Music

**M16-17/25** To consider participation in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017

The Committee agreed that PRES should run in 2017 and approved the recommendations of the paper. It was noted that several Russell Group institutions had opted out in 2017 and that the future of PRES was unsure.

**M16-17/26** To consider a proposal for PGR examiners and right to work implications

The Committee accepted the recommendation although it was noted that a viva by video-conferencing was not an ideal option for the student. The process for PGR examiners would be circulated to departments.

**Action:** HP to circulate to Graduate Chairs and Administrators

**M16-17/27** To consider a proposal for online final submission

The Committee approved the proposal and would receive a paper for consideration at the next meeting.

**M16-17/28** AOB

**M16-17/29** Date of the next meeting: Wed 15th Feb 2017, 10:00 - 12:00 - H/G09