

# UNIVERSITY *of York*

## York Graduate Research School Board

Monday 11 June, 2018, 9am

H/G09

### MINUTES

Present:	Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair; TS) Professor Deborah Smith Professor John Robinson Professor Brian Fulton Professor Stuart Bell Charlotte Chamberlain (GSA President) Dr Jeremy Goldberg Dr Kelly Redeker Dr Sally Hancock Nigel Dandy
Apologies:	Heidi Fraser-Krauss Jo Horsburgh Professor Judith Buchanan Fatma Layas (GSA Vice President)
In attendance:	Dr Kate Giles (for Dean of Arts & Humanities) Susanna Broom (Secretary; SB) Robert Simpson, Secretary to SCC (Minutes)

### Category I Business

Chair welcomed attendees - noted apologies

#### **M/17-18/17 Minutes from 26 February 2018**

The minutes of the meeting of **26 February 2018** (YGRSB/17-18/17) were **approved**.

#### **M/17-18/18 The Action Log (YGRSB/17-18 /18)**

The Action Log was reviewed. It was **noted** that:

- Open items to action include:
  - To continue the supervision compliance report.
  - To create a breakdown of formal and informal meetings.
  - To ask Careers to change their reporting on DHLE figures.
  - For TS to investigate how does the University knows it is doing well in PGR recruitment. TS proposes that, over the summer 2018, he will do an online consultation of graduate chairs and administrators in departments to ask for their suggestions for metrics. That will report back at the start of the 2018/19 academic year - a discussion and feedback session will then confirm some agreed metrics.

### **M/17-18/27 Chair's Report**

The Chair **reported** that:

- EPSRC CDTs - six were submitted as lead, two as partners and one as AI call - three as lead and one as partner have have been invited to enter the next round, including one from Chemistry. The AI one did not get invited. Of the bids as partners - the Durham-led proposal did not get approved, but the Sheffield Hallam-led proposal did. In total, approximately 50% outline bids were invited to progress to full bids, so this result was on-target in terms of the success rate.
- The Health Improvement Studies Institute bid - both our two bids were unsuccessful. Feedback suggests bids were not clinically-focussed enough.
- The HEFCE Mental Health catalyst bid was not successful. Successful bids were felt to be small proposals, such as proposals to modify apps, rather than fundamental research of the kind York was proposing.
- The two NERC bids have gone in - SPHERES and ACCE. There is an issue with the ACCE bid, in that students can be in one of three departments with different length programmes, leading to problems with equity across the students in funding arrangements. Local DTP leads have discussed this issue with TS and they will try to design a specific four-year programme which all students will be on, but which can be registered in all three departments.
- China Scholarship Council (CSC) results announced: York only received 3 this year, which is down on previous years. The Council had believed we had strong applicants. Reasons for the fall in numbers included:
  - A very late change in the rules, possibly even after nominations, whereby a Masters degree was required.
  - Some nominees do not ultimately end up applying to CSC to come to York. They can be nominated by multiple institutions, so being nominated by York does not mean they will necessarily follow up.
- Wellcome Trust has changed Masters funding at short notice - the deadline was 11 June 2018 to bid for programme funding for three years. English/History programme in Medical Humanities put forward.
- Wolfson - their long-term plans are still unclear. TS going to their symposium next month and hopes to gain some information from that. The current arrangement was set up a long time ago and York puts in a generous level of matched funding. This will need to be reviewed at the point Wolfson's new scheme is announced.

- Wellcome Trust is also funding PhDs in Arts/Humanities and Social Sciences. These only require department-level support, meaning previous bids have been largely invisible to YGRS. It is proposed that YGRS be more proactive this year to develop applications early - few previous bids have been successful.
- TS has been elected Honorary Treasurer of the UK Council for Graduate Education.
- TS attended the European University Association's annual Council for Doctoral Education meeting. 23 UK HEIs are members, including 8 Russell Group universities. York is a member of EUA, but not the Council; subscription is expensive. The Council is not a funding body, but membership would help in engagement with a good international network. Membership is 1300 Euros per annum. If York joined, this would be to act as an influencer rather than a consumer. It was noted that several N8/WRUC partner institutions are members, including Newcastle, Manchester, Leeds, Lancaster and Liverpool. TS to approach Debbie Smith with a proposal on this.

### **M/17-18/28 GSA Report**

It was **reported** that GSA:

- Have added an additional sabbatical officer after a structural change. This may affect YGRS Board membership; this will be reviewed for the new academic year.
- Noted election of new officers: Sherish Shafi (President), Amy Tara Bullard (VP Wellbeing and Community), Charlotte Chamberlain (VP Academic).
- Have been invited to a meeting with the Office for Students (OfS) to discuss plans for how PGRs will fall under OfS and UKRI.
- TS congratulated GSA on being invited to attend OfS and noted that York having its own graduate students association clearly increases York's influence.
- YUSU excellence awards have been held - the winner of Research Supervisor of the Year was Ian Bancroft (Biology).
- Will run summer events for PGR students
- Written notes from Fatma Layas, Deputy President:
  - has updated the booklet for students with families.
  - is assessing policy and guidelines for students with caring responsibilities;

It was **noted** that the Equality and Diversity training module is now available to all to any PGR students. This had been requested by GSA. The module will be offered as a pre-arrival task for new PGRs but available at any stage through the VLE. The Chair noted that the Information Security Awareness module will also be available on the same basis.

### **M/17-18/29 Paid parental leave (YGRS 17-18/19)**

The Board **considered** a paper on paid parental leave. The following was **noted** from the Board's discussions:

- This paper was taken to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee in the previous week by SB. SB reported that the Committee were supportive of the proposal. The Committee considered parity between PGT and PGR students; this could be viewed as setting a precedent (it was noted that, if the policy were extended to PGT students, it would only apply where they were in receipt of a stipend, and

there are very few students in this position). A question was raised about how Masters by Research PGRs identify themselves. The other issue was concern about dual staff/student status. SB to explore different scenarios for staff/students and paid parental leave provision with HR contacts.

- This issue has been discussed extensively at Russell Group PGR Special Interest Group meetings, with three other members moving this way; we have a chance to be a leader in this area.
- It may be worth consulting HYMS - there is potentially a question about lack of parity between provision for York- and Hull-registered students, which was discussed.
- Students registered across institutions at DTPs are covered by Research Council rules, and would not be covered by this proposal. This proposal is for non-Research Council funded students, including White Rose Networks which may be associated with a DTP. The proposal is to put everyone in receipt of a stipend via UoY onto the same footing.
- It was agreed that a centrally-funded finance model is preferred; discussions on funding to follow later. Cost estimate has already been provided by SB.

**ACTION** : TS / SB to take proposal to UEB, YGRS supports central funding model.

### **M/17-18/30 Fees for visiting PGRs (YGRS 17-18/20)**

The Board **noted** that:

- Research by SB revealed that around 1/3rd of academic departments have visiting PGR (V-PGRs) students who are not registered and not paying fees.
- Having V-PGRs who are not registered raises concerns about compliance (e.g. visa issues) and consistency. There are also missed opportunities to develop reciprocal agreements and collaboration with other HEIs. Students also lose out on support from the University, such as Open Door access, if they are not registered. These issues should be addressed. The proposal to require registration is therefore welcome.
- The proposal is to waive fees for 6 months for all visitors and to develop a register to waive all fees for specific institutions to develop reciprocal agreements. The proposed list of partners for 12-month fee exemptions would likely need to be owned by International Committee.
- TS has consulted with Hilary Layton, and both she and the Centre for Global Programmes are supportive. The paper is going to International Committee this week. The International Strategy encourages enhanced mobility opportunities for UoY students, and the current proposal would contribute towards that through the development of reciprocal agreements.
- The likely costs of this proposal were discussed. It was agreed that further information will be needed on the likely costing. Where the costs of waiving fees should be absorbed was also discussed. It was noted that the fee waivers granted under the current process are being absorbed by academic departments, and if a blanket waiver was introduced the loss of income would fall on Departments.
- There was agreement that a streamlined process of registration should be developed; as well as fees, a complex application process for often short visits is overly burdensome.
- If this proposal is accepted, this may offer a less administratively burdensome solution for the increasing number of requests for joint PhDs being received.
- The risks of not addressing the issues outlined in the paper were also noted - both audit and academic risks.

- YGRS agreed on the need for getting all PGR visitors registered, and making it easier to register through better processes. There will be discussion of the appropriate length of fee waiver once further information is provided on costing.

**ACTION** - SB to collate additional data on the financial position.

#### **M/17-18/31 PGR submission report (YGRS 17-18/21)**

The Board **received** the annual PGR submission report.

It was **noted** that:

- Within the current period York is now comfortably meeting target of 70% on time submission and in all faculties.
- There is a proposal to change monitoring of completion rates to include part-time students and to focus more on extensions as well as non-completers.
- Whether there is a correlation between completion and self-funding was suggested. The data is not readily available to undertake an analysis of this question. BIU will be asked, however, to collate existing data on funding sources to analyse this.
- The data suggest that male PhD students are slightly more likely to submit on time. Anna Reader to be asked to look into this as part of Athena SWAN.
- **Agreed** that YGRS needs to get this monitoring changed as per TS's recommendations.

**ACTION** - SB to pass report Anna Reader to discuss further analysing data. TS to develop new monitoring report with BIU.

#### **M/17-18/32 Results of the survey of DNS applicants (YGRS 17-18/22)**

It was **reported** that:

- Students who do not start (DNS) make up the overwhelmingly most common reason for withdrawal each year. Following the outcomes report at the November meeting (YGRSB/17-18/07), the Board has requested that this be investigated further. A survey was run of all 46 DNS applicants from the 2016-17 admissions cycle, of whom 18 responded. All bar one of the respondents indicated that difficulties financing their studies was the obstacle to taking up their place; this was as expected.

#### **M/17-18/33 HEFCE-funded report on "Exploring wellbeing and mental health and associated support services for postgraduate researchers" (YGRS 17-18/23)**

It was **reported** that:

- The report authors note their respondents were not a good sample at sector or institutional level and thus no conclusions can be drawn about the prevalence of mental health problems in the PGR population as a whole. Nevertheless, there are clearly mental health difficulties in the PhD community, even if the causes of this are not primarily related to doing a PhD. The issues should therefore be

addressed by HEIs regardless.

- There are recommendations for HEIs on page 4. Many Supervisors are taking up mental health first aid training, but it would be useful to know how many. It was noted that York is currently working on an online package of training based on case studies which would include sensitivity to well-being issues.
- The supervisor-supervisee relationship was discussed in detail:
  - It was noted that some students and supervisors may feel inhibited from raising concerns about their working relationship.
  - RSA is putting a flowchart in PGR handbooks so students can see how to raise concerns. A best practice checklist for departmental induction is also being developed, following a survey of departmental practices. Improvements to the current Review of Supervision process are actively being considered. It was suggested that this work could be sent to the RET steering group.
  - It was noted that students are asked about their supervision at TAPs, without the supervisor present, but that supervisors are not asked about how the relationship is working; this could be introduced but would need careful consideration.
  - The cases where relationship breaks down have many common features: not reporting issues as they develop; a perception that the TAP is too close to the supervisor; students not accepting the offer of a different supervisor.
  - TS reported that the way supervisor training is delivered will be changed for the new academic year. This will involve moving away from the current day-long model to shorter thematic sessions dispersed through the year. It may also be worth exploring more training for students to think about managing their supervisory relationship.

**ACTION** - TS to ask Anne Haversham to read this report, noting point that support services are seen as UG specific.

#### Category II Business

No Category II Business was discussed at the meeting.

**M/17-18/24 Minutes of the Awards and Funding Sub-committee**

**M/17-18/25 Minutes of the Policies and Programmes Sub-committee**

**M/17-18/26 AOB:** None

It was **noted** that the date of the forthcoming meeting will be:

- Monday 26 November 2018, 10am to 12pm, H/G15
- Monday 25 February 2019, 10am to 12pm, H/G15
- Tuesday 28 May 2019, 10am to 12pm, H/G15