



## York Graduate Research School Board

Monday 26 November 2018, 10am

H/G/15

### MINUTES

**Present:** Professor T Stoneham (Chair; TS), Professor Stuart Bell, Charlotte Chamberlain, Valerie Cotter, Dr Ambrose Field, Professor Brian Fulton, Dr Jeremy Goldberg, Dr Kelly Redeker

**Apologies:** Susanna Broom, Nigel Dandy, Jo Horsburgh, Dr Sally Hancock, Professor John Robinson, Professor Deborah Smith

**In attendance:** Louise Bleakley (Secretary; LB)

### Category I Business

**M/18-18/01** Apologies were received as above.

**M/18-19/02** TS welcomed comments on the Terms of Reference (YGRSB/18-19/01). SB raised some general issues about co-ordination of governance structures and reporting lines across the institution, but no changes to the ToR were proposed. Clarification was sought over the specification of the second GSA representative on the Board. Agreed that this would change to state one vice-president of GSA (academic or welfare).

Given that GSA Advice Service PGR Casework Report is usually produced later than the November meeting, it was agreed that this would move to the February meeting going forward, which would fit also in better with timescales and PGR element of SCC annual report to Senate.

***(Action - LB to amend Annual Cycle of Reports and ToR wording)***

**M/18-19/03** The minutes of the meeting of 11 June 2018 (YGRSB/18-19/02) were approved as they stand.

**M/18-19/04** The Action Log (YGRS/18-19/03) was reviewed. It was **noted** that

- Supervision Compliance Report has been now been produced covering 16-17 and 17-18. In future there will be 3 year rolling comparative data.
- Paid Parental Leave proposal is going to Faculty Exec Groups.
- Fees for Visiting PGRs - TS inviting PVC for International Development to comment
- PGR Submission Report - Anna Reader still to look at Athena Swan implications.

**M/18-19/05** There were no matters arising from the Minutes.

**M/18-19/06** The annual YGRS Report (YGRSB/18-19/04) was received. This follows the same format as last year, reporting actions against the 2016-18 Key Objectives. Objectives for 2018-19 were also presented.

- Discussion took place regarding KPIs for the Objectives. On the current format, activity was demonstrated but not measurable success.
- TS explained that in relation to Objective 4 'Recruit high quality students who will produce excellent research' we had previously seen a high decline rate in Overseas Research Scholarships due to low value of award compared to competitors. In 2019 we will therefore be offering fewer but with full stipend and RTSG.
- Overall, success in PGR recruitment is hard to measure given relation to funding and varying nature of application process.

***(Action - TS to add success measures to 2018-19 Objectives)***

**M/18-19/07** TS reported that:

- We have been awarded three DTPs: WRoCAH have be awarded 32 Studentships, ACCE NERC 14, and PANORAMA (previously SPHERES) 13 studentships respectively. We have lost one studentship in SPHERES/PANORAMA as NERC have implemented a policy of more but smaller DTPs. However, other consortia, such as those led by Oxford and Bristol, have lost a 20 studentships in comparison.
- WRoCAH have appointed a new Director from September 2019: Professor Dawn Hadley (Professor of Medieval Archaeology and member of the Centre for Medieval Studies).
- Jamie Khoo, who won the York 3-Minute Thesis Competition, won the People's Choice award at the national finals for her presentation "'But is she pretty?" How women respond to beauty ideals'.
- In July, York took part in a Professional Development Doctoral Summer School held in Münster, Germany, as part of a collaboration with Münster and Maastricht, with 5 students from each University attending. Next year, we will host the summer School on 9 - 12 July.
- PGR Inductions have been scheduled for September and January. September induction was attended by Gill Houston from UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE). Received 100% feedback that the students would recommend the event to someone else.
- There is a programme of wellbeing being created by current PGR students. The idea is that is does not replace existing services, but provides peer-to-peer support for good mental health. 800 'How to Survive Your PhD' booklets have been distributed and a website has been created. So far there have been several 1000 visits, with each visitor spending at least a minute on each page. 50 students attended a workshop in October, with almost another 50 signed up to attend the next one in February. 100% of attendees rated the workshop in the top 2 positive categories.
- the PhD Spotlight Competition has received an increase of applications. This will take place in the Ron Cooke Hub on 9th January 2019 and the idea is that students bring something practical to engage the attendees, and not just a poster about their research.
- When YGRS was created, the current structure for Student Services was created, with a new Head of RSAT role. However, the structure of Student Services has developed with Research Student Administration and Student Financial Support now being brought under one line manager, who will remain as Susanna Broom. This will give depth and breadth to the team and align greater expertise on financial side. This will also provide resilience within administrative support. Susanna will still maintain the external facing PGR activities.

**M/18-19/08** GSA reported that:

- In July GSA met with the OfS to discuss Postgraduate issues. Most of this discussion centered on explaining fairly basic concepts such as the importance of the relationship between student and supervisor, the % of PGRs who are international, the different funding models for PGR, and the difficulty in finding a widening participation definition for PGR students. The OfS had been proposing to use similar categories of priorities for work on the student experience for UG and PG, this was suggested to be a mistake by the GSA.
- GSA saw a record number of students at Welcome Week events. Whilst there is incomplete data on the level of study of these students, anecdotally we saw a number of returning 2nd/3rd year PGR students at events, alongside the new starters.
- 'Secret Life of a PhD' event held on 16th November was once again a success. The GSA may repeat this later in the year as event was sold out.
- GSA working on increasing the representation of PGR students within departments. This may well include the reinstating of forums allowing PGR reps to meet termly with the Dean of YGRS.

**M/18-19/09** The Board **received** the annual Supervision Compliance report.

- It was noted that the implementation of SkillsForge at York has been the most technically difficult the company has faced. This is because we are requiring full integration with SITS as primary database rather than letting SkillsForge be the primary database for PGRs.
- Supervision meetings -
  - TS wants to highlight that the policy of holding supervisory meetings every 6 weeks has been in place since 2010. Only the reminders in SkillsForge are new.
  - Gradual upward trend recorded. However, there are three rows that are just Tier 4 students - less than 100% compliance is worrying. Some of these may be students who have returned home.
  - Visiting students have only 36% completed RDEs. These are students who are paying us fees, so should receive supervision. Funders may ask for evidence of this in the future.
- TAP meetings -
  - A lot are happening late, which is a significant issue.
  - When a student appeals or makes a complaint, we look at what is recorded on SkillsForge. Every case has had missing TAP meetings.
- Progression meetings - we are getting to 100% eventually.

After much discussion regarding the Supervision Compliance report, the following points were noted:

- Incomplete RDEs refers to events that have not been signed by all parties. This includes meetings started but has not been signed by the student and also those not signed by the supervisors. It is not easy to distinguish these incomplete records of events that happened from missing events centrally, but Graduate Chairs/GrAdmins can generate lists of those within their departments. There is a particular worry about Tier 4 students.
- Best practice may be that supervisors and students complete the meeting write up at the meeting itself.
- Supervision meetings could be more light touch - the text boxes are there for the benefit of the student and supervisors and is only read by them. The text box does not need to be detailed. Supervisory meetings do not need to last a certain amount of time, and there is no requirement on how many supervisors need to be present.

- The report will be distributed to all Graduate Chairs and ask for comments on how they will improve their own compliance rates.

***(Action - SB to distribute report to departments)***

**M/18-19/10** The PGR Outcomes Report (YGRSB/18-19/06) report was received. This consists of three years worth of data. Overall, the failure rates are low.

- Comment was made regarding the change to the WRoCAH submission deadlines from the 2019 entry, whereby they require students to submit within 40 months (or up to 48 months with some projects). There is expectation that requiring submission within funded period will be standardised across all research councils.
- Average age of PGR students is 31, with 15% being over 45. Therefore, there is a high level of significant personal and health issues affecting progress for these students. Whilst we can't control these issues, we can control how we manage this, such as early intervention in the form of leave of absences, mode change to part-time. etc.
- Whilst withdrawal rates are low, Jamie Holliday is working with Susanna Broom on a retention project. Key elements have been included in the departmental handbooks, including clear instructions on the escalation process and routes to discuss issues out of the departments.

**M/18-19/11** The Board received the annual PGR DHLE Report (YGRSB/18-19/07):

- Overall, the report was rather short and was not the most useful.
- On page 4, reference is made to significant numbers of students completing from 'Dormant' status. This is how we are reporting students with Corrections and Referrals to HESA. There have been previous issues with these students securing accommodation etc. but these issues have now been resolved. However, it seems we are out of line with the Russell Group in this respect and it may be affecting DLHE data.
- There is some suggestion that there is correlation between years when Careers ran their Careers in Research event and when peaks are visible on the report. However, there is no concrete evidence of this. This event will be running next year.
- Research Councils are becoming more interested in this information but this is not a priority for Careers due to the overall PGR numbers being lower. TS has requested a dedicated PGR Career Officer but funding not available.

**(Action: Valerie Cotter to look into why students in referral period are being reported as Dormant)**

**M/18-19/12** The Complaints Report (YGRSB/18-19/08) was received. This formally needs to be reported but does not require many comments due to low numbers overall. Students cannot appeal on against academic judgements or on grounds of poor supervision, only on bias or procedural irregularity. They are free to make a complaint about everything except academic judgement.

Category II Business

No Category II Business was discussed at the meeting.

**M/18-19/13 Minutes of the Awards and Funding Subcommittee (YGRSB/18-19/09)**

**M/18-19/14 Minutes of the Policies and Programmes Subcommittee (YGRSB/18-19/10)**

**M/18-19/15 AOB:** None

**M/18-19/16** It was **noted** that the date of the forthcoming meeting will be:

- Monday 25 February 2019, 10am - 12pm (H/G15)
- Tuesday 28 May 2019, 10am - 12pm (H/G15)