

YORK GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30th November 2015

Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Mr. Nigel Dandy, Dr. David Duncan, Prof. Debbie Smith, Prof. Mark Ormrod, Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Prof. Stuart Bell, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Prof. John Robinson, Prof. Brian Fulton, Dr. Marjan van der Woude.

Apologies: Ms. Kate Dodd, Dr. Beatrice Szczepek-Reed

Attending: Dr. Alun Kirby (Secretary) and Ms. Hannah Smith (Enterprise Systems; for item M15-16/9)

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M15-16/1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Members to the first substantive meeting of the Board.

From Category II business, the final approval of the PGR Academic Progression Rules for 2016 by the Policies and Programmes subcommittee was noted. No other category II business was brought forward.

M15-16/2 Minutes of the meeting of 21st April 2015

The minutes were approved without further amendment.

M15-16/3 Matters arising from the Minutes

The minutes **M14-15/5** and **M14-15/6** relating to the Subcommittees of the Board were addressed elsewhere (see M15-16/8, below).

M15-16/4 Board Terms of Reference and Membership

The Terms of Reference were approved for the current academic year; to be reviewed annually.

M15-16/5 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair provided an oral report as follows:

Two recent funding bids had been unsuccessful. Firstly, an MRC bid in collaboration with Aberdeen University; it was noted that even though geographical proximity is not currently stated by the funding councils as a prerequisite to success, there is concern that award panels take this into consideration. However, options for collaborative research with Aberdeen remain.

Secondly, the CIDCATS bid was not given further funding. The team leading CIDCATS have been asked to find ways to bridge the work until the next funding bids are open in 2017. The reviewers comments will be addressed as part of this process.

Regarding the ESRC DTC bid, the Chair reported that a writing team is now in place, with Prof. Tom Stoneham and Prof. Matthew Festenstein leading for York. The pathways / themes have been identified in alignment with internal and external strategies. Universities of Bradford, Hull and Sheffield Hallam have been agreed as partner institutions, with the potential inclusion of Manchester Metropolitan still under discussion.

The ESRC bid will require ESRC-specific training, with an MRes in Social Science Research likely to be offered in all involved departments; development is ongoing. The potential issue of resourcing where resources are not held by individual departments was noted, although it is expected that efficiency of training will improve. It was noted that this approach also offers opportunities for cross-department working and research. The importance of compliance with ESRC requirements in order to prove eligibility for funding was emphasized.

The successes of the YGRS Launch Event and subsequent Jorge Cham film event were noted, and are intended to become an annual YGRS Induction Event. The PhD Research Spotlight competition is ongoing, and 'Shut Up and Write' opportunities are being offered to PGR students by the Library.

It was noted that York's approach to establishing the YGRS is of ongoing interest to the sector.

M15-16/6 Oral report from the Graduate Student representatives

Ms. Rasha Ibrahim directed the Board to her recent contributions to the Policy and Programmes sub-committee meeting of November 26th, with no further items to note.

The Chair informed the Board that, following feedback from Russell Group colleagues, YGRS will work with the GSA to develop well-being opportunities for PGR students.

M15-16/7 Annual cycle of business

Dr. Alun Kirby presented data from RSAT and SRA on 2014/15 thesis submissions and the 2015-17 PGR cohorts, respectively.

The institutional RSAT data was requested broken down by department. The inability to distinguish according to funding source was identified as an issue in data analysis (noted for both RSAT and SRA data). This may be addressed by the implementation of the forthcoming Student Management System (Skillsforge).

From the SRA data, the difference in accuracy of prediction for PGTO and PGRO numbers was noted. While the reasons remain unclear, there may be stewardship lessons which can be learnt from PGRO to aid in recruitment of PGTO.

Action: RSAT and SRA to provide retrospective written reports together with departmental figures, and this report to come to Board annually.

Additional annual cycle items: The Chair noted that a Training Group comprising representatives of all teams involved in delivering PGR training, will report to Board annually,

at the final meeting of the year. At the Easter meeting, the Board shall receive a report on the proposed changes to the Policy on Research Degrees prior to these going to Senate.

M15-16/8 Terms of Reference for the Subcommittees to the Board

The clarification of delegation in the ToR for the Policies and Programmes Subcommittee was noted. The memberships, with Faculty Representatives sitting on the Policies and Programmes Subcommittee, and Associate Deans for Research sitting on the Awards and Funding Subcommittee were also noted.

The Chair reported that both groups were working well at present.

M15-16/9 Skillsforge Reports and oral report from Skillsforge Project Management Team

Ms. Hannah Smith presented an overview of the Skillsforge project and the pilot. Initial feedback is expected shortly from supervisors and students. Graduate administrators report appreciation of time saved and efficiency of process. Improvements to the UI, and YGRS branding of the interface continue.

It was noted that this approach should allow Training Needs Analysis and Training Records to be aggregated downstream for reporting.

The potential vulnerability of bespoke software was addressed; underlying software is solid, only the front end is bespoke, and Skillsforge is already used throughout the University for other tasks.

It was noted that the price of delivery is still under negotiation, with support from IT Services.

Action: TS to contact Procurement to check whether we need to tender.

The board indicated their positive approach and support for this project, with regard to both the issues it will address and the benefits it is intended to deliver. A business case will be required as the project moves forward.

Action: Project Team to provide a report, including a business case, to the February Board meeting regarding the initial pilot.

M15-16/10 The AHRC consultation

The Chair provided a background to the draft response. The Board made two suggestions:

Q.3. To expand on the current difficulties in facilitating cross-institutional co-supervision.

Q.9. To remove the first sentence from this paragraph.

It was noted that there will be no commitment on local partner institutions prior to publication of final guidance by the AHRC.

Action: TS to address the two points, above, in the final submission.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 18th February 2016, 10.00 - 12.00 in H/G17**