

YORK GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 23rd May 2016

Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Ms. Kate Dodd, Mr. Nigel Dandy, Dr. David Duncan, Prof. Mark Ormrod, Mr. Peter Gorbart, Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim, Prof. John Robinson, Prof. Brian Fulton, Dr. Marjan van der Woude.

Apologies: Prof. Debbie Smith

Attending: Dr. Alun Kirby (Secretary), Mr. Dan Cashdan (for item M15-16/27)

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M15-16/20 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Members to the meeting and received apologies as above.

M15-16/21 Minutes of the meeting of 18th February 2016

The minutes were approved without further amendment.

M15-16/22 Matters arising from the Minutes

M15-16/7.1 RSAT noted the Submissions Report as an annual requirement of the Board.

M15-16/7.2 The Board received an updated report on recruitment (YGRSB/15-16/19), which shows a reduction in firm acceptances leading to a gap of ~30 PGRs across the institution. It was noted that a focus on student quality may explain the drop associated with Computer Science, but other reasons remain unclear. SRA and TS will continue to monitor the situation.

M15-16/14 TS reported that the ESRC bid interview is in June, with Matthew Festenstein representing York. The number of studentships awarded to a bid depends in part on the peer reviews of the bid. The peer reviews for this bid were exceptional (four outstanding and two excellent) and so expectations are positive in this regard.

YuFund scholarships (£5k each) were awarded to Mathematics, Computer Science, SPSW, Politics, CMS and Music. All recipients are on course for a *1st.

M15-16/15 A discussion of the ongoing GSA project to assess academic facilities advised that individuals should not be contacted to provide information available centrally. The desire of the GSA to spread awareness of opportunities for students needs to be supported by accurate and up-to-date data without creating additional work for University staff. It was suggested that the most useful data should already be included in departmental PGR handbooks and the new handbook template will help to

improve the quality of these. It was noted that this is a good initiative and could be used to share best practice among departments

M15-16/16 The Skillsforge funding process is ongoing. Business case submitted to Planning Committee but as yet no response. The £20k cost in 2016/17 will need to be paid in August, so the matter is urgent.

M15-16/17 TS and DD discussed continuation fees and proposed to charge to funders where appropriate; RSAT are to follow this up with implementation. Offer letters have been collected by RSAT for review and development of a standard template for offers made during 2016/17.

M15-16/19 UKVI guidance on 'completion of previous degree' is being interpreted in another institution as meaning that students will not be allowed, for example, to begin a PhD before their Masters results are known. This means that Tier 4 students scheduled to move from M level to PhD in October may have their PhD start date delayed until January. It remains unclear at present whether this interpretation is correct and we are awaiting UKVI clarification on this matter.

Similarly, guidance is being sought on course transfer, and whether transferring students need to leave the UK and reapply for a visa.

M15-16/23 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair provided an oral report as follows:

Claire Anderson (Assistant Head of Wentworth) is leading on the PGR Research day, part of Welcome Week in September.

The Review of Research Training was agreed at URC. RDT have moved from HR to REO and are renamed Research Excellence Training Team (RETT). Karen Clegg and TS are taking forward the outcomes of the review.

PGWT Policy will move to UTC as it concerns primarily the quality of the UG experience. The expectation that all PGRs will be offered teaching experience will be avoided.

The oversight of YLTA may move to ASO, to fit better with PGCAP. YLTA to run as planned for 2016/17, with no intent to rush changes, but to ensure continuation of quality through what may be a complex move.

TS working with KC to review monitoring of TNA and ensure PGR training needs are identified and actioned. This will need to be in place to support the ESRC DTC in 2017, and so is a project for 2016/17.

TS met the China Scholarship Council, who will fund only 5 of 12 nominees. The Council would prefer a more collaborative approach to nominations in order to identify fundable candidates at an early stage.

A funding agreement is under discussion with King Saud University for a split-site PhD as distance-learning students in Computer Science. Intent is to allow female students to get an overseas PhD without having to spend 3 years in the UK. Students would be expected to be in

York 2 months per year, with a companion. York will not support visa applications for companions. All financial responsibilities will lie with King Saud and / or student.

Maastricht University has approached Health Sciences regarding supporting a PhD programme on a 50/50 cost basis. This would be a York degree (not a double or joint degree) but students would also be eligible for a Maastricht degree. Discussions are at an early stage.

M15-16/24 Oral report from the Graduate Student representatives

The GSA noted their reports to subcommittees. In addition, elections to the GSA are upcoming this month. Next year will see 2 full-time officers (a change from the current set up) with the President leading on academic / representation and the Vice-President leading on welfare / community.

M15-16/25 Changes to Membership of the PPSC

The business of the Policies and Programmes subcommittee is more substantive than expected, and consequently lacks sufficient delegation for pre-meeting work. Further, the committee is intended to work 'in conjunction with' SCA and SCC, but this process has not always been easy.

The proposal would see the addition of 3 more Faculty representatives, and changes to the ex officio members such that (i) the Academic Registrar would no longer attend, (ii) The Head of QA (or their representative) would attend from ASO, and (iii) the Chairs of SCA and SCC, and the Assistant Registrar for Student Progress would be included in all circulations and invited to attend any meeting.

Faculties are happy to offer a second representative to the committee; Sciences, and Arts & Humanities have proposed second representatives already.

The proposed changes were agreed.

Action: TS to implement changes in time for 2016/17 meetings.

M15-16/26 YGRS Key Objectives

TS spoke to YGRSB/15-16/20 with the aim of finding key objectives to share with departments and give direction for actions. Proposed objectives are not time-limited goals. There was general agreement, with further development proposed ahead of the next meeting. In particular the following were noted;

- A need for a statement on maintaining incoming student quality
- The inclusion of charity funding sources
- That the student experience should complement existing (non-university) provision
- Demonstrate the benefit of university level oversight of the PGR journey
- The objectives should 'communicate the sense of purpose which already exists'

Action: TS to consult, redraft and return the paper for further discussion with Board.

M15-16/27 PGR Submissions Outcomes

Dan Cashdan (BIU) was in attendance to speak to this report (YGRSB/15-16/21); the Tableau data, from which it draws, are now updated daily on MI Gateway. Departments comment on the data as part of the APR process, overseen by PPSC, who request actions on behalf of YGRS Board.

Congratulations and thanks were offered to Social Sciences for their work to improve submission rates across the Faculty. Other areas where improvement may be required have already been noted and these departments are receiving appropriate support.

The data were well received and opportunities were discussed for additional breakdown, with the following requests agreed;

- Breakdown by gender
- Comparison of Home vs Overseas submissions
- Regional breakdown i.e. China, Asia (ex. China), America

Action: Dan Cashdan to supply further breakdowns as above, for circulation to Board with draft Minutes from this meeting.

M15-16/28 AOB

GSA queried whether the PoRD could be more directive regarding supervisor and departmental responsibilities, particularly around supervisor training; more 'must' and fewer 'should' clauses. It was agreed that the GSA are welcome to review the PoRD and offer suggestions to the PPSC for consideration but we should be cautious about making requirements we cannot enforce.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.

The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday 28th November 2016, 14.00 - 16.00 in H/G19**