



York Graduate Research School Board

Monday 27th November 2017, 09:00 – 11:00

H/G/17

MINUTES

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair; TS), Ms Susanna Broom, Professor Judith Buchanan, Mr Nigel Dandy, Mrs Heidi Fraser-Krauss, Dr Jeremy Goldberg, Dr Sally Hancock, Ms Fatma Layas, Professor Niall Mackay

Apologies: Professor Stuart Bell, Ms Charlotte Chamberlain, Ms Kate Dodd, Professor Brian Fulton, Ms Jo Horsburgh, Professor John Robinson, Professor Deborah Smith

In attendance: Mrs Josie Hanby (minutes)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the academic year and round-table introductions were given by members; apologies were received as above.

Category I Business

M17-18/01 - Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were **received** and reviewed. The Board agreed that the terms were accurate and the cycle of business appropriate with the addition of a report from Library and Archives. The casework report from GSA will be brought to the next meeting in February 2018, and annually thereafter. (**Action – GSA**)

M17-18/02 - Minutes from 30th May 2017

The minutes of the meeting of 30 May 2017 (YGRSB/17-18/02) were **approved**.

M17-18/03 - Matters arising

The Chair **noted** the actions from the previous meeting and the following was **reported**:

- A previous issue with SkillsForge relating to HYMS staff supervising non-HYMS students (M16-17/32) has been resolved.
- The bids to the National Productivity Investment Studentships Fund did not receive as many studentships as hoped. A second round is expected to be announced in January/February 2018, focussing on the following skills gaps:
 1. Ageing Society

2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Clean Growth
4. Autonomous Vehicles

The Chair **reported** the following:

- The Chair is set to visit China in March 2018 and will meet with the China Scholarship Council.
- The Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships applications were submitted in September 2017; the outcomes are expected imminently.
- The AHRC bid was submitted in October 2017 and a response from peer reviewers is expected in January 2018.
- The British Council SPHEIR bid was unsuccessful, but work will continue in this area.
- The Research Misconduct Policies and Procedures have been modified to allow investigation of allegations against PGRs, and a separate Assessment Misconduct process for PGRs has been created. These were approved by Senate in July 2017, and Research Forum notified in November 2017.
- The Chair and Anna Grey are continuing to consider how to add PGR data into PURE.
- External examiners for PGRs are considered consultants and thus the University does not need to perform right to work checks, but critical friends for REF2021 will have to be classed as employees.

M17-18/04 - Annual YGRS Report

The Board **received** the Annual Report on YGRS. The Chair welcomed comments and suggestions on the format and detail.

The following was **noted** from the Board's discussion:

- To include key objectives in all annual reports.
- The report goes to URC and UEB.
- A better understanding of existing training and support across the institution for GTAs is required and ASO will take the lead.
- Consider taking advantage of the institution's research expertise, including that of PGR students, through an internal consultancy process for major projects.

M17-18/05 - Chair's Report

The Chair **reported** the following:

- The Chair has been elected to the Executive Committee of the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE; <http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/>).
- The Chair has been elected to Vice-Chair of the UKCGE's Research Supervisors Network. The network provides core face-to-face and online training in good practice and the external constraints in the PG sector.
- HEFCE has announced a Catalyst fund call: Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing for Postgraduate Research Students. The deadline is 20 December 2017 and York's Mental Health Research Group are proposing to arrange a cohort study, led by Dean McMillan, to

provide hard data on the effects of interventions such as Mental Health First Aid training. The HEFCE funding would help to integrate data across the University (Colleges, Open Door, SITS and Departments). The other White Rose universities have been invited to join as partners. It was noted that the Faculty of Arts and Humanities is collecting a light touch record of the statistics for students who have met with Chairs of Studies as a marker for reporting on mental ill-health issues. The Board agreed that there needs to be an institutional policy to flag Mental Health issues in all processes and accurate terminology to be agreed. Academic Registrar to consider. (Action - HFK)

- David Willetts, when Minister of State for University Science, proposed that more nursing staff should have PhDs and funding would be provided under a new scheme. To pilot this the Yorkshire and Humber Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRC) is setting up a process for collaborative PhDs in nursing as part of the Clinical Doctoral Nurses and Allied Health Professionals regional Pilot Network or CARDINAL. The PhD students will remain employees of the NHS and be released to conduct their research.
- The Quality Assessment Agency's Quality Code consultation is not being received positively across the sector. The Chair will add comments on PGR programmes to the University's response.
- Feedback from the YGRS PGR Induction has been collated, with 91 respondents in total, 90 of whom would recommend the event (one did not comment); overall very positive feedback. Another induction, on a smaller scale, will be held in January 2018.

M17-18/06 - GSA Report

It was **reported** that the GSA has run 'A Secret Life of a PhD' panel event, which was well attended and received positive feedback. The GSA are currently arranging the following events:

- How to survive your viva
- How to talk to industry and what to expect when applying to work in industry
- What supervisors look for when recruiting a Research Associate
- Research Ethics event

M17-18/07 - Supervision Compliance Report

The Board **considered** the Supervision Compliance Report (YGRSB/17-18/04), which has been approved by the Deputy Academic Registrar following revision of the content and format. It was agreed that, although the level of compliance is encouraging, more work is needed around user engagement and compliance following the implementation of SkillsForge twelve months ago. The main areas of concern are:

- Staff/students not signing forms in the system.
- Forms being signed, but subsequent amendments by other parties resulting in the form being unsigned, requiring earlier contributors to re-sign the form.
- Clarity around responsibilities: it was noted that it was the supervisor's overall responsibility to ensure both parties sign a supervision meeting record
- Clarity around who signs the TAP form, Progression Preparation form and Progression Review form: TAP – everyone signs; Progression Preparation Form – Main supervisor and student signs; Progression Form – Panel Chair signs.

The Board **decided** that, in order to gain accurate and useful information, a further year of data will be gathered and presented before explicit targets should be set. **(Action – SB)**

It was **decided** that an automated email will be sent to supervisors reminding them of any forms which require action, with an option for supervisors to opt out of these regular reminders if they did not need them. **(Action – SB)**

It was **decided** that, if possible, a departmental breakdown of formal supervision meetings and informal meetings would be presented in the next annual compliance report. **(Action – SB)**

The Board **noted** that a relaunch of SkillsForge would be useful, to allow departments to raise any concerns. **(Action – SB/TS)**

M17-18/08 - Proposal to impose a local cap on the enhancement of RCUK stipends

The Board **received** a report (YGRSB/17-18/05), following an instance of a student being offered a significantly increased RCUK stipend by the industrial partner on their training grant. If it had been agreed, the student would have been in receipt of a tax-free sum in the region of the taxable salary for a Postdoctoral position. The proposed increase also raised tax implications for both the student and the university.

The Board **approved** the proposal to impose a local cap on enhanced stipends for RCUK-funded students set at a value of 150% of the RCUK minimum stipend rate in the given year. This will give a rate similar to, but slightly less than, other prestigious awards such as those awarded by the Wellcome Trust and Wolfson Foundation. It was **noted** that this does not prevent companies topping up students' stipends directly, with the associated tax implications (where relevant); this is a cap on the value of the studentship which may be paid tax-free via the University.

M17-18/09 - Scholarship Administration Report

The Board **received** a report on PGR scholarship administration which identified a number of issues with the processes (YGRSB/17-18/06). It was **noted** that Research Student Administration (RSA) deals with a large proportion of PGR scholarships, but not all, and for some scholarships RSA is reliant on departments notifying the team that the scholarships are in the process of or have been awarded. The Board **considered** the issues outlined:

- If the scholarship is being paid for via the University, then there should be a central record, and the department should acknowledge the source(s) of the funding. At present, there is no system to allow such central oversight.
- Overseas Government funding: often this is paid direct to the student via their embassy, and the Government may expect progress reports from the University, despite no contract or formalised agreement being in place.
- Scholarship agreements and offer letters to communicate terms and conditions: there is no standardised template for scholarship agreements or scholarship offer letters, and thus no way of ensuring that students have accepted terms and conditions of their funding, nor reassurance that what is being expected of the student by an external sponsor is reasonable
- RCUK Audit: Je-S data was inaccurate, with 81% of student records highlighted as part of the audit requiring amendments by RSA.

It was **noted** that without central oversight:

- The University cannot develop and manage relationships with overseas and industrial funders at an institutional level.
- The lack of a centralised system creates inefficiencies which are a significant drain on RSA's time and resource.
- Relationships with non-UK funders not being nurtured effectively.

M17-18/10 - Annual PGR Outcomes Report

The Board **received** the annual PGR Outcomes Report (YGRSB/17-18/07) and **noted** the following:

- The report presents data about academic outcomes rather than timely submission.
- The report has been added to Senate cycle of business for January 2018, and replaces the previous report on timely submission produced by the Business Intelligence Unit.
- The report will come to the Board on an annual basis in November.
- On-time submission is still monitored at Department and Faculty level through Management Information Gateway.
- The report should be renamed to clarify the type of outcome is being reported.
- 94% of failures are due to a student not submitting.
- 'Did not start': the Board would like more specific details, if possible, as to why students do not commence their studies.
- The data presented excluded HYMS students.

M17-18/11 - Annual PGR DHLE Report

The Board **received** the annual DHLE data (YGRSB/17-18/08) which highlighted positive headline figures. It was **noted** that the gender difference was not insignificant and the Chair reported that the YGRS Ops Group are looking at gender across all PGR datasets from admissions to destinations. The Board **decided** that the report should include some analysis of employment destinations. **(Action: Kelly Macdonald (Careers))**

Category II Business

No further business was discussed.

The next meeting will be held on Monday 26th February 2018, 09:00 – 11:00, H/G09