POs POLICY AND PROGRAMMES SUB-COMMITTEE
Monday 15 April 2019, 15:00 - 17:00
H/G09 (Heslington Hall)

MINUTES

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair, TS), Professor John Robinson, Dr Jeremy Goldberg, Charlotte Chamberlain, Susanna Broom, Dr Juliet James, Dr Jenna Ng, Dr Dani Ungar, Dr Carolyn Snell

In attendance: Dr Kirsty Holley (Secretary), Dr Jane Dalton (RETT),

Apologies: Professor Mike Bentley, Dr Kelly Redeker, Dr Karen Clegg, Dr Sally Hancock

Category I Business

18-19/22 Apologies were received as above

18-19/23 The Committee approved the Minutes for the meeting held on Friday 08 February 2019 (PPSC/18-19/01)

18-19/24 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

18-19/25 The PPSC Action Log (PPSC/18-19/02) and APR Action Log (PPSC/18-19/03) were reviewed. It was noted that:

- M/18-19/17 (re: 2.3) - meetings had been scheduled with History of Art and Biology, to discuss managing progression and reduce stress in PGR students.
- M/18-19/17 (re: 2.10): The Chair spoke to Planning regarding CWS’ issue with staff workload. The Chair was advised that the department needs to improve their agreements with contributing departments. The Chair is to talk to CWS regarding Planning’s advice.
- M/18-19/17 (re: 3.2): The Chair discussed Education’s issue with SB. The Committee and RSA are willing to reconsider the proposal for two distance learning programmes, if given clear steer from the YGRS Board on the value of DL programmes with small student numbers.

18-19/26 The Committee received an oral report from the Chair (including a report on Chair’s Actions):
18-19/26.01 Chair’s Actions:

- The Chairs of PPSC and UTC approved the following 4-year programmes in the Department of Environment and Geography:
  - PhD in Environmental Science
  - PhD in Environmental Geography
  - PhD in Human Geography
  - PhD in Environmental Economics and Environmental Management
- The Chairs of PPSC and UTC approved the withdrawal of MA (by Research) in Education as an entry point to PGR study, which will come into effect after September 2019 intake. The MA (by Research) in Education will remain as an exit award.
- The Chair of PPSC approved a PhD exchange agreement between the Department of History of Art and their counterpart department at the University of Cologne.

18-19/26.02 Chair’s Report:

- Research Special Cases - The Chair of SCC, RSA and TS are organising a training session for academic departments on 21 May 2019. This event would focus on how departments can prepare special cases request and how best to support students through the process. Departments are required to send at least one delegate to the event.
- Widening participation - The Chair noted that the current focus of interest for UKRI and Office for Students is widening participation and diversity of PGRs in the HE sector. The Chair noted that York should focus on improving socio-economic and BAME diversity within the PGR community. PG Admission were currently cleansing data so admissions analysis could be completed in order to inform an action plan.

18-19/27 The Committee received an update from the GSA:

- PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing - the GSA were running a number of events focusing on managing stress and anxiety during the summer term.
- Staff and PGR students have raised concerns regarding recent changes to HR guidance on coming to work with children and pets, on health and safety grounds. GSA have discussed this with the Academic Registrar and TS.
- Nominations for May’s GSA elections to open 29 April 2019. Voting to close on 31 May 2019, with result due to be announced the same day.

18-19/28 The Committee considered the proposed amendments to the Policy on Research Degrees (PoRD) for the 2019/20 academic year (PPSC/18-19/04)

- SB noted that the document was a work-in-progress, and would be ready for approval in June’s PPSC meeting.
- It was noted that the 2019/20 PoRD should include more detail on the Data Management Plan to convey its importance and provide an explanation why this was required by all PGR students.
- Point 12.15 of the PoRD re: poorly presented theses to be replaced with clause on unexaminable theses. The more robust wording is an attempt to reduce ambiguity around this area, and reduce the number of requests for 1 month extensions on grounds
of a poorly presented thesis. Comments were made on whether this guidance also included a re-submitted thesis, following referral.

- Point 12.3: additional information with regards for the requirement of a written element to be submitted along with any creative products for research degrees by creative practice. Comments were made regarding current practice, as recent submissions for creative practice research degrees had not included this. The Chair noted that in order to fulfil the criteria for a research degree, written commentary addressing specific research questions was a required. JJ stated that a meeting was scheduled with the Graduate Chair of TFTV to discuss requirements of creative practice research degrees.

- A full review and approval of the PoRD amendments is scheduled for June’s PPSC meeting.

**ACTION:** SB to update PoRD 2019 Amendment document, and circulate to PPSC members prior to June’s PPSC meeting.

18-19/29 The Committee considered a paper on the withdrawal of ‘downgrade to MPhil with 12 month referral’ as an examination outcome (PPSC/18-19/05)

- The Chair noted that this outcome had been recommended by examiners on 13 occasions in the last 4 academic years, with the majority of students receiving this outcome female and Tier 4 visa holders. There were several reasons why the Committee should consider approving the withdrawal of this outcome:
  a. It limits the outcome for the student and examiners in 12 months time.
  b. Examiners are appearing to make a decision based on viva examination, rather than the thesis.
  c. PGRs who receive this outcome are often very distressed, and often appeal decision, many of which are upheld.

- Comments were made regarding the wording of the revised PoRD regulation, with members suggesting that the examination outcome should state that the thesis had not met the required standard for a PhD, but thesis potentially could reach standard after 12 months’ revision. DU suggested that the PoRD should make the exit routes following referral more explicit. The Chair noted that the PoRD would recommend that examiners provide guidance on how the student can get the thesis to a PhD standard.

- Comments were also made on the whether the wording ‘if offered by the department’ was confusing in this instance. The Chair noted that it was previously believed that not all departments offered Masters by Research and/or MPhil degrees as exit awards, but that this should be checked by RSA.

- The Chair proposed that point 12.33(vi) be removed, replaced with alternative outcome as noted in the paper. The Committee approved the proposal.

**ACTION:** RSA to check if all departments have Masters by Research and MPhil degrees as exit awards.

**ACTION:** SB to remove 12.33(iv) and include alternate wording into PoRD review.

18-19/30 The Committee considered the proposed programme modifications for the new Intelligent Games and Games Intelligence (IGGI) CDT (PPSC/18-19/06)
• JJ noted that the first IGGI CDT had been successful, with five PGR cohorts currently on the course. As such, only 2 key changes for IGGI 2 were being recommended.

• IGGI taught modules - In the first two years of the course, IGGI students were required to completed taught modules. JJ confirmed that the proposal recommended that this now comprise of modules worth 15-credits, these could not be formed together to make an exit award. The Committee approved this part of the proposal, noting that some minor changes regarding module practicalities be made.

• Part-time mode - in order to comply with UKRI regulations, IGGI required to establish part-time mode. It was noted that 2 current students had requested to transfer to part-time but were unable to as this had not been approved at the time of establishing the first IGGI CDT. It was noted that the full-time year of taught modules equated to 180 credits, yet the proposal stated that the same modules on the part-time mode equated to 120 credits. The Chair noted that the IGGI CDT needed to ensure that training would be equitable for all students, regardless of their mode of attendance. The Chair also noted the requirement for all students to attend a 8-week co-located module on a full-time basis, was not compatible with part-time students, especially those with caregiving responsibilities. It was suggested that the taught component should be split over 2 years, to provide additional flexibility for part-time students.

• The Committee recommended that feedback be provided to IGGI. A more structured plan of a 90-credit Year 1 (50% FTE) for part-time IGGI students is required. The Committee also suggested that IGGI consider how to minimise accessibility issues regarding co-located taught components, and highlight what are the minimum requirements needed to successfully pursue research in the IGGI CDT.

ACTION: Feedback to be provided to IGGI CDT on issues listed above. Revised paper to be provided and considered by circulation.

18-19/31 The Committee considered a draft framework for a collaborative off-site PhD (PPSC/18-19/07)

• JJ noted that the focus for the framework was on international off-site collaboration, where students were supported by and imbedded in another research institute, with access to institute’s research facilities and community. As such, this was a different premise to independent Distance Learning programmes, and required a different set of guidelines.

• Comments were made regarding the requirement for students to visit for total of 8 weeks, with members suggesting that this should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with guidelines on expectations of scheduling visits (i.e. scheduling them for TAP and/or progression meetings).

• The Committee approved the proposal, noting that paragraph nine should be re-written to remove ‘near their home’ to ensure that focus of collaborative PhDs is on the research quality, not convenience.

ACTION: SB to add framework as an appendix to PoRD 2019/20.

18-19/32 The Committee considered a paper on PGR external examiner demographics (PPSC/18-19/08)
SB noted that data gathered to identify any opportunities to increase equality and diversity in examination process. Data gathered from responses to survey sent to appointed examiners, and although the was not a large sample, it was notable that 30% respondents were female, weight towards more white respondents. Only 6% respondents cited disability.

The Chair welcomed the report. Comments were made regarding potential to benchmark data with UK academic demographics or HESA data. It was also recommended that departments could more accurately monitor this, at the point of recommending examiners, especially departments involved in Athena SWAN. The Committee recommended that more data was required before more detailed analysis and proposals be made.

**ACTION: RSA to collect further 12 months’ of data, present again at 2019/20 PPSC meeting.**

**18-19/33** The Committee considered the latest Periodic Review from the Department of Philosophy from November 2018 (PPSC/18-19/09):

- The Chair welcomed the report. It was noted that PGR desk space and its geographical location was a perennial issue across the University, which was being examined in the PGR Space Review. JJ noted that University GTA policy was the peer-observation should take place, and was not merely encouraged. It was also noted that the department used gender specific pronouns throughout the report, which could potentially make participants identifiable.

**ACTION: RSA to provide feedback to the Philosophy department.**

**18-19/34** Date of the next meeting:

- Tuesday 18 June 2019, 15:00-17:00 (H/G/09)