Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Professor John Robinson, Dr Kelly Redeker, Dr Sally Hancock, Ms Susanna Broom, Dr Jenna Ng, Dr Dani Ungar, Dr Steve King and Dr Juliet James.

In attendance: Ms Monica Bandeira (minutes)

Apologies: Ms Charlotte Chamberlain (GSA), Ms Fatma Layas (GSA), Dr Karen Clegg and Dr Carolyn Snell.

17-18/18 Welcome and minutes of the 05 February 2018 meeting

18.1 The Committee approved the minutes from the meeting held on 05 February 2018 (PPSC/17-18/10)

17-18/19 Matters arising from the minutes

The Committee received the PPSC Action Log (PPSC/17-18/11) and APR Action Log (PPSC/17-18/12).

With respect to the PPSC Action log it was noted that the following actions are still open:

- **19.1 (M16-17/26 refers)** - To consider a proposal for PGR examiners and right to work implications - ongoing pending review of full suite of forms by RSA.

- **19.2 (M16-17/36 refers)** - Online final submission - no progress following cancellation of meeting organised by the Library.
  
  **Action:** Susanna Broom (SB) to follow up with the Library.

- **19.3 (M16-17/46 refers)** - Student status beyond submission - the Chair has discussed the issue with Liz Waller and Michelle Blake, who were supportive. This now needs Heidi Fraser-Krauss as the Director of Information Services (and acting Academic Registrar) to make a decision and implement.
  
  **ACTION:** TS to follow up with HFK.
19.4 (M16-17/56 refers) - MSc by Research in Interactive Media - This action is now completed.

19.5 (M7-18/03 refers) - Amendments to the Terms of Reference - ongoing. The Chair/ASO will conduct this review at the end of the academic year and make a proposal. Review of the ToR a standing item on the agenda for the first meeting of each academic year.
ACTION: TS/JJ to make proposals for first meeting of 18-19.

19.6 (PPSC 17-18/10 refers) - Quality assurance for off site supervision for PGRS - the Chair clarified that the issue is about PGRs working in external institutions which provide supervision of the research. This action should be completed next year.
ACTION: TS/SB/JJ to consider issues and consult with Departments. Initial proposal to be brought to PPSC in Feb 2019.

19.7 (17-18/13) - Library web presence - this action can now be closed.

19.8 (PPSC 17-17/13 refers) - PGRs laptops - the Chair confirmed that, after some discussion with IT and the Library, a laptop loan scheme will be rolled out for PGR students. Discussions are ongoing regarding the location of the laptops and length of loan.
ACTION: TS to follow up with IT and Library managers.

With respect to the APR Action log it was noted that the following actions are still open:

19.9 (action 2.3 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Space Review
ACTION: TS to follow up with Ops Managers

19.10 (action 2.4 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Progression policy review - the Chair reported that departments have not raised any issues with the policy so it seems that changes are not required at this point.

19.11 (action 2.5 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Skillsforge and Yellowfin - SB reported that survey has been circulated asking users for feedback on any problems encountered with the user interface. She also reported that Yellowfin access had been suspended while permissions were sought for the server migration. This has now been resolved. This action can now be closed.

19.12 (action 2.7 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Training Needs Analysis - the paper from PPSC was sent to the Employability Operations Group. A response has not been received yet. We need to move forward with developing a recording system for all training in SkillsForge.
ACTION: SB to follow up with RETT and provide advice on SkillsForge implementation.

19.13 (action 2.9 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Student wellbeing and mental health - this action is now completed and the topic will be an Key Objective for 2018-19.
• 19.14 (action 2.10 of APR paper PPSC/17-18/12) - Review of distance learning PhD - the review has been postponed to next year when there will be more DL students registered.

17-18/20 To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair’s Actions)

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair:

• The Chair reported the approval of a flexible PhD-level exchange agreement between the Department of History of Art and the University of Florence. There are 13 PhD students currently researching Italian art in History of Art. Florence will be sending up to 3 undergraduate or Masters students for 9 months. In return, York will send either 3 undergraduate students for 9 months or up to 9 PhD students for 3 months each; the expectation is to have a higher number of York PhD students than York undergraduates taking part in the exchange scheme. Florence will be undertaking supervisory responsibilities. The agreement will be overseen by the Centre for Global Programmes.

• The Chair reported the approval of minor changes to the progression policy for the Centre for Women’s Studies (CWS) and the Department of English and Related Literature. CWS changed the timing of the progression for current first year students. English has realised that the original departmental approach creates an unnecessary burden on staff and has agreed to mirror the process in the Department of History.

• The Chair reported that the Department of Chemistry has experienced some difficulties implementing the progression policy. It is intended that TAP meetings feed into progression panels, but variation in the timings of TAP meetings has caused difficulties and inconsistencies. Following a meeting with Kirsty Penkman, the Chair indicated that an approach and been agreed and Chemistry will work on laying this out in writing for formal approval by Chair’s action.

• The Chair reported that part of the process for registering with the Office for Students includes a requirement that institutions submit a Student Protection Plan (SPP). The Chair relayed some wording which has been included in the SPP around the University’s commitment to the replacement of specialist supervisors. This will be added to the list of amendments to the Policy on Research Degrees to be reviewed at the next meeting, at which point a substantial discussion on this point can taken place.

17-18/21 To note the final PGR examination outcome letters following the 2017-18 Policy on Research Degrees review (and 05 Feb 2018 PPSC consideration) (PPSC/17-18/13)

The Committee agreed that a letter should also be issued to students who pass with no corrections, as a PDF attachment containing the signature of the Assistant Registrar: Student Progress. This will be beneficial for students who need to prove their current status or examination outcome to funders or employers.
ACTION: RSA to implement.

Professor John Robinson raised inconsistencies about the wording and coding across the downgraded letters. SB explained that the latter is likely to be caused by the way the codes are set up on SITS, which generates the letters.

ACTION: RSA to check inconsistencies and correct as necessary.

17-18/22 To consider a proposal from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television for a PhD by Distance Learning (PPSC/17-18/14)

The Committee considered the proposal in detail, noting in particular that the following points needed to be addressed:

- Identification of all programmes for which DL mode was being requested
- Consideration of PhD by Creative Practice separately
- whether the proposal been approved by their Board of Studies;
- How students might access research methods training;
- Clarification on how campus visits for non-October starters would be managed;
- Build social and research culture engagement into campus visits expected programme costs for students - visa, travel, accommodation, subsistence;
- question 16 (taught elements) - should be answered in line with other programmes;
- duty of care to students, especially in ensuring they understand UK research integrity and ethics
- Ensure SCC approval is required for variation to plan of campus visits which falls below Policy threshold
- Clarify which meetings can be by video and which must be face to face (question 15)
- Develop a plan to stimulate engagement with online social networks and blogs across the whole PGR community so DL students are engaging with research environment (question 22)

It was suggested that the wording used in question 11 regarding the requirement of a remote contact should be reviewed as it lists family member in first place. The Chair agreed that ‘close friend’ should be listed first, to avoid any cultural assumptions.

The Chair noted that TFTV has used the proposal model submitted by Computer Science and that the one submitted by History of Art would have been more suitable as a more comparable department and programme structure.

The Committee agreed that an external perspective on this proposal and other proposals for Distance Learning programmes should be sought. The Chair indicated that the University of Birmingham is leading in this area.
The Chair agreed that the Committee raised significant points to feedback to TFTV which warrant an initial conversation with the Department to clarify some points directly before asking TFTV to rework the proposal in time to come to the next meeting (which should allow time for the programme to be set up for an October 2018 start, if approved).

**ACTION:** JJ to write to TFTV to seek clarification on the areas of concern raised by the Committee.

**ACTION:** TS and JJ to identify an external assessor for DL programmes.

**17-18/23  Any other business**

The Chair noted that following points:

- To date, the recent industrial action has generated only one case of an external examiner resigning. Other instances may surface, but RSA is not aware of any other cases at this time.

- Requests of Extension to Submission Deadline - it is proposed that students are no longer required to submit insurance copies of their thesis in hardcopy while their extension request is pending approval by SCC (and where that decision will not be made until after the submission deadline has passed). RSA will move to electronic-only submission of contingency copies and, in the interests of version control, will send the submitted version to be printed in the event that the extension is not granted. Departments will be required to underwrite the costs of this printing where they are in support of an extension request, and a box requesting a work order number will be added to the extension request form. The Committee welcomed the change as it will reduce the financial burden on students (for whom in most cases the extensions are granted) and the associated waste where theses are printed unnecessarily. The Chair proposed to check with Departments if this would not be an unreasonable request as the intention is not to burden their finances.

  **ACTION:** RSA/Chair to memo Departments. SB to draft and send from YGRS.

- The Chair alerted the Committee that the list of proposed changes to the Policy on Research Degrees will be circulated one month before the next meeting in order to give members plenty of opportunity to review the document because it will need to go to Senate shortly after the meeting.

**17-18/24  Date of the next meeting:** Tuesday 19 June 2018 09:00 - 11:00 H/G09