POLICY AND PROGRAMMES SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23 November 2018

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Professor John Robinson, Dr Kelly Redeker, Dr Sally Hancock, Ms Susanna Broom, Dr Jenna Ng, Dr Dani Ungar, Dr Juliet James, Dr Jeremy Goldberg, Ms Charlotte Chamberlain, Dr Sally Hancock

In attendance: Dr Kirsty Holley (minutes)

Apologies: Dr Carolyn Snell, Shrehish Shafi (GSA president), Dr Karen Clegg

18-19/01 Welcome and minutes of the 19 June 2018 meeting

- The Committee approved the minutes from the meeting held on 19 June 2018 (PPSC/18-19/01). It was noted that minutes should be circulated shortly after the meeting, as opposed to just before the next PPSC meeting.
- The Chair welcomed the group and, as it was the first meeting of the new academic year, Terms of Reference were reviewed (PPSC/18-19/02). Charlotte Chamberlain (CC) requested that Vice-President of the GSA be altered to Vice-President (Academic) of the GSA. Juliet James (JJ) noted that UTC Terms of Reference had altered, to reflect that the PPSC could approve taught degree programmes that are only available to research degree students. JJ suggested that this should be reflected in the Committee’s Terms of Reference.

ACTION: JJ to suggest alternate wording for Terms of Reference. Kirsty Holley (KH) to update webpage.

18-19/03 Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere in the meeting.

18-19/04 To note the action logs: PPSC Action Log (PPSC/ and APR Action Log

PPSC Action Log:
04.1 (M16-17/36 refers): **Online final submission** - TS and Susanna Broom (SB) met with Chris Webb from the Library to discuss final electronic thesis submission, with WREO hosting. Electronic-only submission for examination also being investigated, albeit at the very early stages. The Committee raised concerns around student responsibility to pay for printing a thesis, if an examiner requested a printed copy, and possible inequities.

04.2 (M16-17/46 refers): **Student status beyond submission** - Library processes had changed to provide access to students beyond submission, but these accidentally reverted back to original system. Issue has since been rectified by the Library.

04.3 (M17-18/13 refers): **PGR Laptops** - TS reported that laptop loans were now available or PGR students, available for one month. Cases are also provided, so laptops can be taken to conferences and off-site research. [https://www.york.ac.uk/library/borrowing/laptops/#tab-5](https://www.york.ac.uk/library/borrowing/laptops/#tab-5)

04.4 (M17-18/13 refers): **Revised exam outcome letters** - now corrected and action completed.

04.5 (M17-18/22 refers): **TFTV DL programme** - clarification on areas raised by the Committee ongoing. **Update 26/11/2018:** revised pro-forma to be submitted for February 2019 PPSC meeting.

04.6 (M17-18/22 refers): **Identify external assessor for DL programmes** - JJ continuing to research suitable external assessor for all DL PGR programmes.

04.7 (M17-18/23 refers): **Electronic-only insurance thesis submission** - this is now in effect. RSA using University’s drop-box service. Guidance notes created and sent to students who request an extension, but submission deadline is before a Special Cases Committee meeting.

APR Action Log:

- **04.8 (M17-18/12 refers): Space review** - this is ongoing.
- **04.9 (M17-18/12 refers): Review of PGR progression** - still ongoing and working with YGRS Board.
- **04.10 (M17-18/12 refers): SkillsForge functionality** - RSA and SkillsForge continuing to work on improving functionality, as issues are ongoing. YGRS beginning to explore alternative suppliers.
- **04.11 (M17-18/12 refers): Training Needs Analysis** - this is ongoing with Karen Clegg (KC) and TS.
- **04.12 (M17-18/12 refers): DL PhD provision** - Light touch review to take place 2019/20 after first PhD students have undergone their final examination.

18-19/05  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 the PhD in Global Sustainable Development (PPSC 18-19/05). This is now being advertised as PhD in Interdisciplinary Global Development to start in October 2019.

The Chair reported the approval of minor changes to the progression policy for the Departments of Chemistry and Psychology. Chemistry have the timeframe of their TAP meetings and Progression Panel meetings, following academics’ concerns about workloads. Psychology has integrated Progression Panel meeting with the 9-month and 21-month TAP meetings and altered the format to accommodate this change.

The Chair reported that the University is involved in UK Council for Graduate Education’s (UKGCE) Supervision Recognition pilot scheme, which aims to raise the quality of PGR supervision. A call for participants to go out shortly.

The Chair reported the approval of changes to the Overseas Research Scholarship (ORS) 2019/20 competition by AFSC. 3-4 awards available, providing award-holders a full international fee waiver, stipend and RTSG at UKRI rates. These changes are hoped to reduce number of award declines and improve the recruitment of excellent international students.

The Chair reported that the YGRS are promoting a student-led programme to support and encourage good mental health and wellbeing amongst PGR cohort. 800 booklets entitled ‘Surviving your PhD’, have been printed and distributed, and ‘How to survive your PhD (and enjoy it)’ workshop ran in October. This was very well received with 50 attendees; further workshop scheduled for February 2019.

The GSA Vice President Academic reported that GSA event ‘Secret life of the PhD’ was very well received. GSA currently working on PGR representation within the departments.

18-19/05 To consider a proposal from the Department of Chemistry for a PhD in Light Matters: Interactions, Reactions and Applications (PPSC/18-19/06).

The Committee considered a proposal for a PhD in Light Matters: Interactions, Reactions and Applications from the Department of Chemistry, in preparation for the EPSRC CDT bid.

The Committee felt that the initiative was interesting and decided that the programme should be approved subject to the resolution of the following issues:

- Nature of the modules - there was ambiguity regarding whether the modules were credit-bearing and thus must be in SITS or not. The Committee suggested that the taught elements should be referred to as training courses, to avoid ambiguity and the need to be registered on SITS.
- Taught elements structure - it was not clear from the pro forma whether the courses would be completed within the academic year they were started and there were concerns about the appropriateness of expecting students to undertake taught elements into their third year.
- Progression - further clarification is required on how the training courses explicitly link to the progression process.
● Professional accreditation - this was referred to in the CDT bid, but not in the programme pro-forma. Clarification required.

● CDT and non-CDT students - the Committee raised concerns on the parity of student experience for CDT and non-CDT students. For example, CDT students guaranteed 2 supervisors, but not guaranteed for non-CDT students). Committee suggested that number of supervisors should be consistent, but CDT student’s supervisors could be across institutions.

● Interrupted study - it was not clear how the the training programme and CDT would manage with interrupted study (i.e. Leave of Absence, Parental leave), or part-time study.

The Committee decided that approval of the revised Programme Approval pro-forma could be undertaken by Chair’s action, following further review by the two assessors, Kelly Redeker (KR) and Dani Ungar (DU), in liaison with the ASO.

ACTION: Feedback to Chemistry - revised pro forma to be reviewed by KR and DU, and approved by Chair’s action.

18-19/06 To consider a report from the Academic Support Office on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2019 (PPSC/18-19/07)

The Committee considered the report and noted the following:

● Advance HE were making changes to what universities were allowed to report on, which now included Top 10 universities on any dimension of the survey were allowed to report their rankings.

● The Committee agreed that the University should participate in PRES 2019, to run 4 March 2019 to 17 May 2019.

● ASO, YGRS and GSA working together to improve promotion of the survey. GSA President requested survey link so that they could promote directly to departments and PGR students.

● The Committee approved the use of incentives for promoting PRES participation. The Committee noted that the use of incentives was politically sensitive for NSS, but this was not the same for PRES. Possibility of providing £250 to department with the highest participation rate, for a PGR social event.

ACTION: Chair to discuss with GSA on mechanics of promoting PRES 2019.

18-19/07 To consider a guidance note on the design and delivery of cross-departmental and multidisciplinary PhD programmes (PPSC/18-19/08)

The Committee considered and approved the guidance document which comprised good practice for the development of new named cross-departmental multi or interdisciplinary programmes.
In discussion it was noted that:

- Small cohorts - concerns were raised whether small cross-departmental PGR cohorts could implement such guidance, and whether this would lead to fragmentation of groups within departments. It was, however, noted that the document was for guidance and if academically justified alternative approaches could be considered by PPSC.
- Retrospective implementation - concerns raised over implementing this on pre-existing programmes. TS noted reiterated that this was for guidance only, and would not be imposed.

18-19/08 To consider the latest Periodic Review of the Department of Biology from May 2018 (PPSC/18-19/09)

The Committee commended the department’s high satisfaction rate from PRES 2017 (92%). Section 8.4 on academic staff confusion about progression were noted and the Committee suggested improving communication on the processes. Sections 8.9 (disparity between DTC-funded and non-funded PGRs) and 8.18 (value of GTA work) was noted, and Committee highlighted that these were university-wide issues. The Committee suggested that Section 8.19 on restrictions to GTA teaching experience should be discussed at a future meeting.

18-19/09 To consider the latest Periodic Review of the Department of History of Art from June 2018 (PPSC/18-19/10)

The Committee observed that the report overall was positive, with the following sections noted by the Committee:

- Section 8.1 on research community: the Committee suggested that the action plan be revised, as currently it did not address the PGR engagement in department’s research culture, nor address low event attendance.
- Section 4.7 on GTA pay: the Committee wished to highlight that the a pay multiplier was now implemented, and reiterated that the Department should review the University’s GTA policy.
- Section 4.10 on GTA training: the Committee suggested that the first departmental GTA training session should take place before teaching started in week 2 of Autumn Term.
- Section 8.2 on PGR progression policy: the Committee wished to highlight that meeting a PGR student every 6-7 weeks was not a new policy, having been implemented 8 years ago. The Committee suggested that supervisory meetings were also used to ensure student welfare and key part of supervisory role is to mentor and support PGRs. The Committee noted the department’s frustration with SkillsForge, particularly the un-signing function, but wanted to remind department that forms could be saved without being signed.
18-19/10  To consider the latest Periodic Review of the Department of Theatre, Film and Television (TFTV) from May 2018 (PPSC/18-19/11)

The Committee observed that the report overall was positive, with the following sections noted by the Committee:

- Sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.5 on isolation of PGRs in different sub-disciplines and event attendance: the Committee suggested that adding a social aspect to the PGR conference might boost attendance. The Committee agreed with the report that creating more communal activities and peer-assisted learning may also reduce feelings of isolation in the Department’s PGR cohort.
- Section 7.10 on departmental graduate study space: the Committee endorsed the report’s recommendation that the space should be re-imagined in consultation with the PGR community.
- Section 7.17 more support for marking: the Committee agreed with the Panel’s recommendation that the department should provide GTAs with formal marking guidelines and training. The Committee also suggested that GTAs hold office hours in communal spaces to encourage interaction with UG students, and greater sense of community.

18-19/11  To consider the latest Periodic Review of the York Law School from May 2018 (PPSC/18-19/12 and PPSC/18-19/13)

The Committee commended the very positive rating of PGR supervision, with the following sections noted by the Committee:

- Section 4.10 developing PG and PGR programmes - the Committee noted the consideration of a Juris Doctor degree, and ASO concerns for reputation risk. Programme to be considered by UTC in due course.
- Section 7.2 inaccuracies in PGR handbook - the Committee suggested that the handbook is reviewed and updated. The Committee noted that PGR cohort is small, but induction events could be altered to better support the diversity in PGR cohort.
- Section 7.3 PGR training - the Committee suggested that department provide more training opportunities for all students, to ensure parity between UKRI-funded and self-funded PGRs.
- Section 7.6 PGR student community - the Committee suggested that academic staff could get more involved in ReCSS activities, to enhance staff-student interaction.

18-19/12  Dates for following meetings:

- Friday 8 February 2019, 15:00-17:00 (H/G09)
- Monday 15 April 2019, 15:00-17:00 (H/G/09)
- Tuesday 18 June 2019, 15:00-17:00 (H/G/09)