Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 8 February 2019

Present:  Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Professor John Robinson (JR), Dr Kelly Redeker (KR), Dr Sally Hancock (SH), Ms Susanna Broom (SB), Dr Jenna Ng (JN), Dr Dani Ungar (DU), Dr Juliet James (JJ), Dr Jeremy Goldberg (JG), Ms Charlotte Chamberlain (CC)

In attendance:  Gem Kirk (minutes)

Apologies:  Professor Mike Bentley, Dr Carolyn Snell, Dr Sally Hancock, Ms Sehrish Shafi

18-19/12 Welcome and minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23 November 2018

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Friday 23 November 2018.

18-19/13 Matters Arising

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

18-19/14 To note the PPSC Action Log and APR Action Log

PPSC Action Log -

- M16-17/36: Online Final Submission:
  - SB noted that approval has been granted for a rapid improvement event on the PGR examination process from end to end. It is envisaged that online submission for examination and / or final submission will form a part of that review. Any proposals will be brought to PPSC for sign-off.

- M16-17/46: Student status beyond submission:
  - The issue of council tax exemption has been raised by students. Student Records have a process whereby a student in their continuation year completes a form which is signed off by their supervisor and returned to
Student Services. The supervisor is required to sign off a thesis submission date and to verify the student is carrying out at least 21 hours per week of study. This is currently a process outside of academic governance and the Chair asked the Committee for comments on whether this should remain without oversight. Discussion ensued and it was generally agreed that governance oversight is not required. However, it was suggested the form could be tweaked to put the emphasis on the student for confirming to the council if their circumstances change. It was suggested the wording for the supervisor’s signature could include “at the time of signing”.

**ACTION:** RSA to update form.

**ACTION:** All to pass any further, individual thoughts on this to TS.

- DLHE data: York has an unusually high number of students completing their degrees from ‘dormant’ status which means they are excluded from DLHE. On investigation, students who receive a referral outcome at examination are put into this status, which is an anomaly. The action to look into and change this has been passed to SB by Valerie Cotter.

- **M16-17/53: Academic Misconduct:**
  - TS notified the Committee that this policy was used for the first time in January, due to extensive plagiarism found at second attempt at first year Progression. The student accepted the decision and has now withdrawn. The process seemed to work quite well. There was a small ambiguity in the wording, where ‘Panel’ could have referred to three groups of people. This will be amended when the policy is revised.

**ACTION:** RSA to add noted ambiguous use of ‘Panel’ in Academic Misconduct policy to the PoRD review for amendment.

**Updates:**

- **Off-site research:**
  - JJ reported that some changes will be made to the PoRD to make it clearer that the main supervisor is responsible for overseeing the quality of the research that is undertaken off-site.
  - It will be suggested that there should be an additional approval stage (e.g. at BoS level) if the off-site research is over a certain length of time.
  - It was confirmed that external supervisors should have access to York’s training. Changes to the way we train supervisors should make this easier longer term.
  - It was noted that a framework is required for “Split-site” or “Off-site PhDs”, where a student is based at an institution overseas but under York’s regulations.
● Light Matters PhD from Chemistry
  ○ TS confirmed that the CDT bid was unsuccessful so they are not going ahead with this at present.

● EPSRC:
  ○ It was reported that the IGGI CDT has been renewed.
  ○ TS also noted a freedom of information request has been sent to every university, requesting 2011 and 2017 mid term reviews and feedback plus the expression of interest for the current round. Most was blocked on the grounds of commercial sensitivity but, following appeal, has been released in redacted form. TS warned that a lot more freedom of information requests can be expected in this area, with attempts to reverse engineer decisions made over funding.

● BBSRC:
  ○ The call has been announced, with a deadline in May.

● Wellcome Trust:
  ○ York put in one bid as lead institution and one as second institution to the call for CDTs for the first stage and should hear back about this in next six weeks.

APR Action Log -

● All on this log is either closed, moved to the other Action Log or on the agenda.

ACTION: RSA to create new APR Action Log as of this meeting.

18-19/15 To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair’s Actions)

18-19/15/01 Chair’s Actions:

The Chair reported that some amendments to the Centre for Women’s Studies’ Progression Policy have been approved.

Year 1 Progression:
  - Presentation length reduced from 15-minutes to 10-minutes
  - Presentation rescheduled from Week 8 Summer Term, to Week 9
  - Written submission to be uploaded to Skillsforge 24 hours in advance of presentation (previously was on the morning of presentations)
  - Reduced word count of reflection on giving presentation from 400-500 words to 250-300 words in pro-forma.
Year 2 Progression:

- Addition of short abstract for an upcoming conference paper, for students who have yet to give a conference paper/poster presentation

**18-19/15/02 Chair’s report:**

PRES 2019: The University is currently awaiting receipt of the PRES survey which will run from 4 March until 17 May 2019.

A meeting between the Chair, Andrea Boam, Alison Loftfield (Marketing), Pete Gorbert and Charlotte Chamberlain (GSA), is being organised to discuss the promotion and communication of the survey to departments and PGR students, how the incentive will work and GSA's role, who have indicated they would like to lead on promotion.

The Committee was asked to make a decision on whether to include the optional questions in the *Well-Being* section.

The phrasing of the questions was seen as somewhat peculiar, however it was clarified that it matches the wording of ONS surveys so there is potential for benchmarking. It was decided that these questions need to be included from a reputational point of view, but it was suggested that a note of clarification be added for York’s PGRs.

**ACTION:** Chair to talk with ASO with regard to developing our own benchmarking for this set of questions.

**18-19/16 To receive an update from the GSA President**

CC advised that, following a suggestion from GSA, the library has received an external donation of £10,000 to fund tablet loans for all postgraduate students, mirroring the laptop loans scheme.

GSA are also revising how PGR reps are used, having taken over the management from YUSU. The Chair has agreed to set up meetings so issues can be raised directly with him.

**18-19/17 To consider the Annual Programme Review 2017/18 report (PPSC/18-19/05 & PPSC/18-19/06)**

Content changes were suggested as follows:

- Under “Progression Policy”, as well as “gone smoothly”, add that some departments made positive comments and some stated that failing at first attempt had actually been beneficial for students.
ACTION: JJ to add missing departments and update Progression Policy wording.

FURTHER ACTIONS:

RE. 2.3: TS, JJ and SB to arrange to meet with History of Art and Biology to discuss ways of managing the process to stress, which should be reduced, not increased.

RE. 2.9: SB to ask the Chemistry PG Administrator to present the voluntary annual leave tracking system at a Gradmin Forum.

RE. 2.10: CWS raised an issue about staff workload which seems out of date as resource tracks supervisor split. TS to speak with Planning.

RE. 3.2: Education’s response noted the faculty did not approve the two distance learning programmes that PPSC approved. TS to pursue with the Dean of Social Sciences.

It was noted that several departments report developing and extending their training programmes but at the moment there is not a single point of capture for both department and central training programmes.

ACTION: Karen Clegg to add to report that, now departments are developing these rich training and support programmes, it would be useful to capture students’ training and development in a single record.

KC reported a useful conversation she had had with Careers and Internal Comms regarding how to better signpost students to careers. It would be very helpful to have more case studies and examples to illustrate career paths following PG study. It is likely supervisors hold the information on where their former supervisees have gone onto work but this is not necessarily being captured centrally.

The Chair noted that Careers should be doing this but are perhaps not asking the right questions.

18-19/18 To consider a report on academic outcomes (PPSC/18-19/07)

The Chair invited comments from the Committee but none were made. In light of the information in the APR report and this data, it was asked whether further review was required or should departments simply be asked to continue to tweak their policies. The Committee decided on the latter.

There was brief discussion on withdrawal rates but these were not deemed as of particular concern. Research Special Cases Committee is very active, plus the recently introduced leavers process applies to PGRs also, so there are mechanisms in place to support students before they reach the final point of withdrawal.

Category II Business:

18-19/19 Revised Quality Code Advice & Guidance on Research Degrees
(PPSC/18-19/08)

18-19/20 Terms of Reference (PPSC/18-19/09)

18-19/21 Date of the next meeting:

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