UNIVERSITY OF YORK

York Graduate School Board

POLICY AND PROGRAMMES SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2017

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Professor Mike Bentley, Dr Steve King, Dr Jenna Ng, Professor John Robinson, Dr Carolyn Snell, Dr Kate Stephenson (GSA), Dr Dani Ungar, Professor Marilyn Vihman, Dr Marjan van der Woude

In attendance: Dr Juliet James

Apologies: Ms Susanna Broom, Dr Karen Clegg, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Ms Jane Iddon, Ms Helen Poyer.

16-17/49 Minutes of the April meeting

The Committee approved the minutes from the meeting held on 19 April 2017 (PPSC/16-27/32).

16-17/50 Matters arising from the minutes

The Committee received the PPSC Action Log (PPSC/16-17/33) and PPSC APR Action Log (PPSC/16-17/34).

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

- 50.1 (M16-17/26 refers) – PGR examiners and right to work implications - final checks on the process for checking the right to work status of PGR examiners were being undertaken but in the meantime, the guidance given by Human Resources in March 2017 would continue to be used
- 50.2 (M16-17/36 refers) – Online thesis submission – policy work on online thesis submission was ongoing and the Committee would revisit the issue in 2017/2018
50.3 (M16-17/37 refers) – *Distance learning PhD programmes and English language entry requirements* - there was an ongoing action on the Committee to ask departments proposing distance learning PhD programmes to confirm that their English language entry requirements for non-native speakers of English were appropriate within a distance learning context and to provide details of how they would ensure that distance learning students would be provided with English language support, if required. There was still considerable concern within the Committee about the decision not to allow distance learning PhD programmes (unless clearly distinct from the department’s other PhD programmes in more respects than simply the mode of delivery) to have higher English language entry requirements. The Chair noted that this decision had been taken on the basis of advice from Student Recruitment and Admissions and the University’s legal adviser

50.4 (M16-17/46 refers) - *Student status beyond submission* – student status beyond submission was a complex area but that it had been agreed that research students who were awaiting an oral examination (or the possibility of an oral examination in the case of some MA/MSc by research students) should be viewed as being subject to academic obligations and could therefore apply to the council for exemption from council tax under certain conditions.

With respect to the PPSC APR Action Log, it was noted that the following actions were still open:

50.5 (M16-17/42.4.2 refers) - *Recruitment of PhD students* – the Chair was attending ADDR meetings and would report back to the Committee following the completion of the ADDR cycle

50.6 (M16-17/42.4.3 refers) – *Space needs of PGR students* – the planned space review had not yet taken place due to resource constraints but PGR space remained a high priority. Work was ongoing to increase the number of desk spaces in the Berrick Saul building.

50.7 (M16-17/42.4.4 refers) – *Supporting research degree provision through DTPs* – this was an ongoing action on Chair with respect to approval of DTP bids

*Secretary’s note: this issue was raised at University Research Committee (URC) at its meeting on 28 June 2017 and M16-17/140 of the URC minutes states that ‘it further noted the importance of robust governance arrangements for DTPs, ensuring that an institutional view is included at the top level.’*
• 50.8 (M16-17/42.4.6 refers) – Light touch review of formal reviews of progress – this would take place in Autumn 2017
• 50.9 (M16-17/42.4.7 refers) – SkillsForge usage – a major report on the delivery of the SkillsForge project would be presented to the YGRS Board in November and then considered by the Committee
• 50.10 (M16-17/42.4.9 refers) – Tracking PGR students post award – an email for life was not an option but Graduate Administrators from departments would shortly receive training to enable them to access OPPA’s alumni database which held contact details for the vast majority of former students
• 50.11 (M16-17/42.4.11 refers) – Light touch review of distance learning PhDs – this would take place in 2017/18.

16-17/51 To receive an oral report from the Chair

The Committee received an oral update from the Chair as follows:

MA in Law by Research
The Chair reported that the MA in Law by Research (M16-17/44 of the minutes refers) had now been approved by Chair’s action following a number of revisions to the proposal considered at the last meeting. The decision to keep the award title as MA (rather than LLM) had been subject to a long discussion with the School about the audience for the programme.

Combating Infectious Disease: Computational Approaches in Translational Science (CIDCATS) PhD programme
The Chair reported that he had approved the withdrawal of Biology’s CIDCATS PhD programme for new entrants as the funding stream had come to an end.

Four-year PhD programme in Biology part-time route
The Chair reported that he had approved the addition of a part-time route for the four-year PhD in Biology with immediate effect and for entry and transfer. Whilst there was some concern about having 8 year programmes, a part-time option was required by the BBSRC.
History of Art PhD entry points

The Chair reported that he had approved a change in the number of advertised entry points for PhD programmes (including distance learning PhD programmes) in the Department of History of Art. In future, the Department would advertise entry points in October and January in order to align with University and departmental induction events.

Principles of Supervision

The Chair reported that the Principles of Supervision document (PPSC/16-17/35) had been approved by the YGRS Board at its last meeting. It had been decided that consideration of the Principles document should form a three-month milestone for research students, with students and supervisors required to acknowledge that they had read the Principles and understood their respective responsibilities. This milestone would help to raise awareness of the Principles document, and would be managed through SkillsForge. The Principles document would be owned by PPSC and reviewed, and updated as necessary, on an annual basis to ensure its continuing alignment with the Policy on Research Degrees. The Chair thanked Dr Stephenson for all her work on this initiative.

16-17/52 Policy on Research Degrees

The Committee received a table on the proposed changes (PPSC/16-17/36) to the Policy on Research Degrees (PoRD) and a version of the PoRD which incorporated the proposed changes (PPSC/16-17/37), to take effect from the 2017/2018 academic year. The proposed changes had been circulated to members well in advance of the meeting for their consideration.

The Committee approved the proposed changes with some minor amendments as noted in the revised version of the table (Appendix 1).

16-17/53 Postgraduate Research Degree Academic Misconduct Policy

The Committee considered a paper (PPSC/16-17/38) from the Chair of the SCA and Chair of the PPSC on academic misconduct by postgraduate research students. The initial work had been
undertaken in discussion with the Research Strategy and Policy team, and the aim was to provide greater clarity in this complex area.

It was noted that the proposal recommended that:

- a distinction should be made between possible misconduct occurring as part of the assessment process for research students, requiring investigation as assessment misconduct, and possible misconduct by research students outwith the assessment process, requiring investigation as research misconduct
- investigation of assessment misconduct should be dealt with under a new Assessment Misconduct Policy for PGRs (which would form an appendix to the PoRD) [or, in the case of taught modules only, the existing Academic Misconduct policy for taught students (in the Guide to Assessment, Marking, Standards and Feedback)]
- investigation of research misconduct should be dealt with under a revised version of the University's Policy on Research Misconduct [Secretary's note: the revision to the University’s Policy on Research Misconduct was recommended to Senate for approval at the URC meeting on 28 June 2017 - M16-17/145 of the URC minutes refers.]
- where there was any doubt as to which policy should apply, the Policy on Research Misconduct should take precedence
- the new Assessment Misconduct Policy for PGRs should draw on the Academic Misconduct policy for taught students, with a number of changes to take account of the particular circumstances relating to research degree programmes.

During discussion it was noted that:

- it was vital that the University took a robust approach to all academic misconduct in research degree programmes in order to uphold standards and the institution’s reputation
- nevertheless, it was important that the penalties for academic misconduct should be set appropriately, to avoid a risk of the under-reporting of, particularly minor, transgressions
- academic misconduct in a progression requirement and in the final thesis could, potentially, be treated differently
• decisions about academic misconduct in research degree programmes should not be left to internal and external examiners to decide
• there was general support for a proposal that when academic misconduct was detected in a thesis, as a minimum, the examination outcomes (i) and (ii) (i.e. pass, and pass with corrections) should not be made available to the examiners other than with the agreement of Special Cases Committee.

The Committee:

(a) **approved** the proposed amendments to the sections of the PoRD dealing with assessment and research misconduct;
(b) **decided** that the Chair and the Chair of the SCA should use the feedback from the Committee to inform the *Assessment Misconduct Policy for PGRs*, and should circulate a draft version of the policy to the Committee over the summer for comment. **ACTION: SK, TS**

16-17/54 **Postgraduate Certificate in Advanced Social Research**

The Committee **noted** it had received a proposal for a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Advanced Social Research (**PPSC/16-17/39**) from the Associate Dean for Research in the Faculty of Social Sciences, to be introduced from October 2017. The programme would provide PhD students with accredited generic social sciences training and was being introduced as part of the University’s commitment to the ESRC White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership (WRDTP).

The Committee **decided** that consideration of the proposal should be postponed pending agreement between the Chair and the PVC for Learning, Teaching and Students, in consultation with the Academic Support Office, regarding the approval and quality assurance of taught components of research degree programmes. **ACTION: TS, JR, ASO**

The Committee **noted** that there were some considerable concerns about the proposal and **decided** that members should send comments to the Chair for forwarding to the programme lead. **ACTION: members to send to comment to TS; TS to forward to the Associate Dean for Research in the Social Sciences**
16-17/55 Framework for an Integrated PhD programme

The Committee received a proposal for a framework for an Integrated PhD programme (PPSC/16-17/40). It was noted that some operational issues still required work and it was therefore decided to postpone full consideration until the next meeting. In the meantime, members were requested to send detailed comments to Juliet James.

16-17/56 MA/MSc by Research in Interactive Media

The Committee considered a proposal (PPSC/16-17/41) from the Department of Theatre, Film and TV for an MA/MSc by Research in Interactive Media, to be introduced from October 2017. The proposal had been considered in advance of the meeting by Dr Snell and Dr Ungar, and positive comments had been received from an external assessor.

Dr Snell and Dr Ungar noted that:

● there was a clear rationale for the new programmes and they were supportive of the proposal
● there was a lack of departmental and discipline-specific information in the documentation, for example with respect to section 14 on progress and review arrangements
● the difference between the MA and MSc programmes in terms of students’ research focus should be more clearly set out in the documentation
● the difference in the thesis requirements between the MA and MSc programmes should be more clearly set out in the documentation (for example, it would be helpful to specify that for the MSc it was expected that the final written submission would take the form of a technical report)
● the Department should confirm that the thesis requirements of the MA and MSc programmes were comparable in terms of student workload
● there were concerns that students coming directly onto the MA and MSc programmes from an undergraduate degree would not necessarily be properly prepared, in terms of research skills, for a large-scale research project and that the Department should either amend
its entry criteria or provide some initial research skills training in the first term (i.e. beyond that provided directly by the supervisor)

- the Department should provide training or a briefing to supervisors of students on the MA and MSc programmes
- the department should consider whether students on the MA and MSc programmes should be subject to more regular formal supervisory meetings than the minimum required by the PoRD.

[Secretary’s note: subsequent to the meeting two further points were raised with the Department, as follows:

- the Department should give further consideration to the space requirements for the MA and MSc programmes during term time
- the Department should consider how it might ensure oversight of student experience at the programme level, for example through the appointment of an MA/MSc by research student representative or a named programme leader.]

The Committee approved the programmes, subject to the programme documentation being amended by the Department in the light of the Committee’s feedback. The revised documentation should be considered by Dr Snell and Dr Ungar and, if they were satisfied, final approval would be granted by the Chair.

[Secretary’s note: the programme documentation was amended by the Department in the light of the Committee’s feedback and Dr Snell and Dr Ungar confirmed that they were satisfied with the amendments. The Chair granted final approval to the programme on 26 June 2017.]

It was noted that the new research degree programme pro forma should be amended to ensure that departments included relevant departmental-specific material rather than incorporating sections of the PoRD. ACTION: ASO

16-17/57 Date of the next meeting
The Committee noted the date of the next meeting as Monday 9\textsuperscript{th} October from 9-11 am in HG09, Heslington Hall.