Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Dr. Alun Kirby (acting Secretary), Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Mr. Peter Gorbert (GSA), Prof. John Robinson, Dr. Marjan van der Woude, Dr. Beatrice Szczepak-Reed, Dr. David Gent.

Apologies: Mr. Nigel Dandy, Ms. Kate Dodd, Prof. Michael Bentley, Ms. Helen Poyer (Secretary)

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M15-16/13 Welcome
The Chair welcomed the Members and apologies were noted.

M15-16/14 Minutes of the meeting of 6th October 2015
The minutes were approved without further amendment.

M15-16/15 Matters arising from the Minutes

M15-16/2; Helen Poyer (HP) noted subsequent to the meeting that the wording of the PoRD section 12.9 (replacement of ‘endorsement’ with ‘advice’) was not changed as it was decided on review that this change was not required.

M15-16/3.1; The Terms of Reference have been amended as requested.

M15-16/5; Tom Stoneham (TS) confirmed he had consulted with Prof. Jon Timmis and together had decided not to progress with a proposal to change practice as some students were lab-based. This decision is open to future review dependent on considerations including, for example, market sensitivity to fee rates.

M15-16/8; Alun Kirby (AK) confirmed that the changes to the Confirmation of Registration process was communicated to Graduate Administrators on 21st October by email and briefing note, together with the new ‘Extension to Confirmation of Enrolment’ form.

M15-16/15.1 Terms of Reference and Membership
The Terms of Reference were approved for the current academic year; to be reviewed annually.

M15-16/15.2 Amended PGR Progression Policy
The amended policy was reviewed by the committee.
Resit timing for RCUK-funded students was raised, as there may be (i) a time cut-off for progression to year 2 and / or (ii) issues around HESA returns and how failure prior to 12 months may affect completion rates in these cases.

**Action:** RSAT to check current status with DTPs and this issue to be considered in the next phase of policy implementation.

Section 1.19; TS confirmed external examiners are not involved in the progression process. Additionally, it was noted that current issues around departmental variation in timing of appointment of external examiners for vivas are being investigated prior to any policy development.

Section 1.15; TS clarified that flexibility is deliberate to allow departments to implement as appropriate.

TS also clarified that the QAA demand that supervision reports are recorded, and that the progression panel should be non-supervisory.

**M15-16/16 Oral report from the Chair**

The Chair provided an oral report as follows:

Colleagues in the Russell Group (Leeds and Manchester in particular) are willing to share existing processes around setting up joint degree programmes and the responsibilities of departments in this process.

An update on the Skillsforge project was provided. The interface design is ongoing to ensure the best experience, and the initial pilot has begun. There may be the opportunity to record leave and sickness within the system. The Committee indicated a preference for student-reported sickness recording, with leave being seen as potentially problematic. Privacy issues, and clear communication to students as to the need for sickness reporting should be considered as part of any development.

**Action:** Skillsforge Group to explore possibilities for sickness reporting.

**M15-16/17 Chair’s Actions**

**M15-16/17.1** This proposal was for a standard part-time route to be added to an existing programme.

**M15-16/17.2** These are exit routes for students failing confirmation only.

**M15-16/18 Oral report from the Graduate Student representatives**

Ms. Rasha Ibrahim reported to the Committee as follows:

Clarity is needed on the consequences of Leave of Absence for Tier 4 students, especially regarding the 60 days per annum ‘authorised absence’ permitted by the Home Office. TS noted that Jim Irving (Registry Services) will provide a formal statement on this by the Spring Term. Currently other institutions and the Home Office are being consulted.
Similarly, Prof. Vihman reported issues around visas and conflicting guidance from the University and the Home Office in interpreting ‘date of completion of study’.

**Action: Jim Irving to add clarification on ‘date of completion’ to the statement he is preparing.**

Some complaints were reported around provision of statistics help by the Maths Skills Centre. It was noted that the Maths Skills Centre was intended for undergraduates (and taught PGs), and that supervisors are responsible for guiding PGR students to appropriate training, which in some cases would be departmental. This did, however, raise a broader issue of whether statistics training for PGR students, within the University as a whole, was sufficient for needs.

**Action: Maths Skills Centre to feedback to Dean of YGRS on requests for skills training from PGR students to inform discussion of future provision.**

**M15-16/19 Progression Policy Implementation Timetable**

TS reported that communication to departments was delayed to allow the Committee to input. A draft template for departmental handbooks will be made ready for departments.

It was noted that cross-institution DTPs should raise no issues other than known DTP-specific concerns.

It was noted that YGRS will provide an online link to which departmental web-pages can be linked in turn, slightly altering the proposed timeline.

It was reported that the Department of Education are reassured and grateful of the supportive and collaborative approach taken to these changes.

**Action: TS to define specific date in July 2016 for web changes; departments can then work towards this date.**

A potential issue around PGR student consumer rights was raised, centring on the need to inform students in advance.

**Action: TS to check compliance requirements and ask for addition to offer letters. Interview panels to be informed.**

**Action: January - April 2016 item to include student feedback.**

**M15-16/20 Thesis Embargo Policy**

AK spoke to a paper proposing changes to the thesis embargo policy.

It was noted that the proposal did not address concerns within Faculty of Science regarding protection of publication opportunities and intellectual property.

To address these concerns the Committee recommended that (i) the supervisor should have option to withhold, as well as the student, (ii) a public abstract should be included, but this need not necessarily be the thesis abstract, (iii) guidance on timescales should be included and, (iv) policy may vary dependent on the reason for withholding.
Action: AK and Kirstyn Radford (Libraries) to act on recommendations, above, and consult with Marjan van der Woude in advance of submitting an amended proposal.

Action: DG to inform Stephen Gow to add copyright infringement issues and opportunities for sources of guidance to the Research Integrity Tutorial.

M15-16/21 PRES 2015 Report

The sections from the support services were discussed.

Careers; now working to a 95% positive target; focus on non-academic careers to improve; publicity around PGR events could be better.

Libraries; it was suggested that the £2 ILL fee be waived / picked up by departments.

Action; DG / ASO to feed back to Libraries that proposals around this fee be sought from Libraries and Departments.

RDT; possibly look at Training Needs Analysis in terms of PDP failings and RCUK requirements.

IT; it was proposed that the laptop loan scheme be extended from 4 to 8 hours for PGR students. Further, that the availability of PGR space in the library be better promoted.

M15-16/21/1; The timetable for Departmental responses is to be reviewed in February, when APRs are available.

M15-16/21.2; TS proposed an action log for PRES, to be owned by this Committee, to ensure that actions arising from PRES and APRs are followed up.

Action: HP to develop action log, in consultation with TS and ASO.

M15-16/22 ASO Reports on Periodic Reviews

The Committee considered 5 reports, with the following items of note:

M15-16/22.2 Environment; It was good to see the Department responding positively to the match-funding policy. ASO noted concerns reflected by the number of actions reported for Environment.

M15-16/22.3 History; TS requests clarification of paragraph 6.2 relating to TAP.

It was noted that the Committee welcome an understanding of PGT issues within these reports, but any actions related to PGT remain a matter for UTC.

Action: HP/TS to add to the action log as appropriate (see /21.2)

M15-16/23 PhD in Applied Linguistics Proposal

This proposal was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

M15-16/24 AOB

Programme Submissions to this Committee: It was proposed and agreed that the submission flow should be lengthened to improve the Committee review process.
Action: DG to request that ASO move to submitting proposals to this Committee 3 weeks in advance of a meeting.

A request was made for clarity in agenda item and paper labeling / file sharing.

Action: TS, AK and HP to review process around file naming and communication.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 17th February 2016, 10.00 - 12.00 in H/G21