MINUTES

Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Ms. Helen Poyer (Secretary), Ms. Susanna Broom, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Dr Marjan van der Woude, Dr Dani Ungar, Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Dr Jenna Ng, Dr Carolyn Snell, Ms Jane Iddon.

Apologies: Prof Beatrice Szczepk-Reed, Prof. Mike Bentley, Dr Karen Clegg, Dr Juliet James, Dr Steve King, Prof John Robinson, Dr Kate Stephenson (GSA).

CATEGORY I BUSINESS

M16-17/41 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2017 (PPSC/16-17/26)

M16-17/42 Matters Arising:

42.1 Two issues from the recent Russell Group PGR SIG (M16-17/19 18.5 refers)

18.5.1 To report that the necessary changes to the PoRD to change the wording of a failure of the first attempt at progression to ‘referral’ so as to avoid any visa implications was now live in the online version of the PoRD. A verbal update will be given by the Head of RSAT as to any necessary changes to be made in Skills Forge.

RSAT and ASO confirmed that this action has been completed and the online version of the PoRD had been amended.

18.5.2 Parental leave for institutionally supported PGR students - to receive a verbal update on this issue from the Chair / Head of RSAT following Russell Group PGR SIG on 6 April 2017.

The Chair reported that this issue would be subsumed into a wider project which proposed to undertake a review of all scholarship funding at York. The Chair would inform Jamie Holliday of this. Once completed, the review will be considered at UEB and the Committee would then have sight of the review and UEB recommendations.

Action: Chair

42.2 To consider a proposal for PGR examiners and right to work implications (M16-17/26 refers)

The Head of RSAT reported that HR has now agreed that no right to work checks need be made by departments. There was ongoing discussion as to whether it was prudent to require examiners to ‘self declare’ on the examiner appointment form and this would be reported back on in due course.

Action: RSAT
42.3 Academic misconduct policy (M16-17/33 refers)

This item will be postponed to a future meeting.

42.4 Annual Programme Review (M16-17/34 refers)

ASO and RSAT reported back on progress made:

42.4.1 Role of YGRS (action 2.1 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

The Head of RSAT reported that the action to ensure details of YGRS committees are on the website was complete although further communication to ensure Graduate Chairs / departments were aware of the location of information was required. **Action: RSAT**

42.4.2 Recruitment of PhD students – funding, fees, and competition (action 2.2 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This was a future action and would be reported on following the completion of ADRR panels in July 2017. **Action: Chair**

42.4.3 Space (action 2.3 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This was an ongoing action and would be reported on following the completion of the space review earmarked for the 2016/17 academic year. **Action: Chair**

42.4.4 Research degree provision delivered through DTPs (actions 2.4 and 2.5 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

The support of collaborative proposals was an ongoing action (2.4). The concern regarding DTP allocation was relayed by ASO to DTP managers to follow up (2.5). The concern over the MRes in Social Research was referred by ASO to the Associate PVC for Teaching and Learning (2.5).

42.4.5 Research skills and professional development (action 2.7 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This action had been referred to the YGRS Operations Group.

42.4.6 Research student progression: policy and process (action 2.8 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This action would be completed in Autumn 2017 and reported on. **Action: RSAT**

42.4.7 Research student progression: policy and process (action 2.9 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

A report on Skills Forge usage was presented to the YGRS Board in February 2017 and progress since has been monitored.

42.4.8 Research student progression: policy and process (action 2.10 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)
ASO had responded to the department and RSAT had clarified the procedure.

42.4.9 Research student progression: policy and process (action 2.11 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This action was ongoing. The Chair had consulted IT Services on retaining the student’s York username to add on to a @alumni.york.ac.uk account but IT could not guarantee that the username would not be used again at a later date. OPPA were investigating the issue further and any alternative options.

42.4.10 Supervision and staff capacity (action 2.12 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

To note that ASO had responded to departmental comments directly.

42.4.11 Supervision and staff capacity (action 2.13 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This action would be completed in Autumn 2017 and reported on. **Action: ASO**

42.4.12 Examination procedures (action 2.14 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

To note that ASO had responded to departmental concerns directly. RSAT would also clarify the process for extending an examination period. **Action: RSAT**

42.4.13 Library (action 2.15 of APR paper PPSC/16-17/21)

This action would form part of the PoRD review and / or the review of student status post submission (paper PPSC/16-17/31). **Action: RSAT**

42.4.14 Postgraduates Who Teach (PGWT)

To note that ASO had referred this issue to UTC.

General APR note: it was also noted that History’s PGR report was missing from the report but this had now been received and there were no issues for PPSC to consider.

42.5 Online final submission (M16-17/36 refers) (PPSC/16-17/27)

The Committee noted the Library’s response to the queries raised at the last meeting. It was clear that the Library was currently unable to provide a timeline as to the proposed archive system’s introduction at York and indeed decisions were still to be made within the three White Rose Universities as to a combined archive system or a single one for each institution. The Library considered that by January 2018 there would be enough progress made to provide a clearer answer to the Committee’s queries. RSAT would therefore monitor this and report back to the Committee in due course. **Action: RSAT**

42.6 Four Year PhD programme (M16-17/37 refers)

ASO reported that an updated paper on ‘Integrated PhDs’ would come to a future meeting for consideration (likely June 2017). The Chair remarked that the paper would need to consider
the fee structure of the programme since year 1 was equivalent in content to a PGT Masters and might merit a PGT fee. It was also noted that the four year programme would likely have a Continuation Year.

Action: ASO

**42.7 Examination outcomes - PGR joint examiners report (M16-17/40 refers)**

The Chair reported that he and ASO had agreed upon a form of words which would come to the Committee for consideration at the June meeting as part of the PoRD review. The Committee members also agreed that it was prudent to remove the requirement for the referred student to submit only after three months. It was up to the student and at their own risk if they wished to submit earlier and they should be allowed to do so. It was agreed to check this with the Chair of SCA and propose as part of the PoRD review in June. A further recommendation on requiring the examiners following receipt of a resubmission to make a decision on a second viva was also to be incorporated in the PoRD review (as was an action on RSAT to ensure the communication to examiners made this timeframe very clear).

Action: RSAT

**42.8 Distance Learning programmes and English Language requirements (PPSC/16-17/28)**

The Committee considered the legal advice received from Helen Shay, Legal Administrator and Case Officer and expressed frustration that the perceived risk of legal action was preventing proposed action taken by the Committee to protect the student. After discussion however the Committee agreed that the recommendation from SRA should be accepted. It was noted that the new progression forms required the supervisor to comment on the student’s language ability at each progression point, if a concern was raised here then the department would be expected to put in place additional support for that student. It was agreed however that 1. The Chair would discuss with those departments who had previously had DL programmes approved at PPSC to ensure they are aware of the issues and 2. Any future DL programme proposals which come to PPSC will need to be considered carefully to ensure that adequate support for DL students who only just meet the required IELTS level is in place.

Action: RSAT to inform SRA. Chair to discuss with Archaeology, Computer Science, HoA and Education

**M16-17/43. To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair’s Actions)**

43.1 Chair’s Actions -

43.1.1 Approval, pending revision to proposal, of a PhD in Health and Environment in the Department of Health Sciences as an exit route only for students wishing to transfer.

43.1.2 Approval of change to requirements for Masters by Research in English such that a viva is not a requirement for a first submission.

43.2 Leverhulme Trust

The Chair reported that the three shortlisted bids were to be interviewed on 10 May.

43.3 National Productivity Investment Fund
The Chair reported that the Spring Budget had set aside £90 million for 1000 additional PhD studentships as part of the Industrial Strategy and these were being offered for an October 2017 start. Research Councils were distributing these through applications from existing DTPs and CDTs with a 2nd May deadline but all had to be CASE studentships or similar. York was bidding through AHRC, BBSRC, EPSRC, and ESRC DTPs.

43.4 ESRC DTP recruitment

The Chair reported that offers had been made for the first cohort of the new ESRC DTP. York had won 14 studentships out of a possible 42.

M16-17/44 Proposal for an MA in Law (by Research) (PPSC/16-17/29)

The Committee considered a proposal from the York Law School to establish a new MA in Law (by Research) to start in October 2017 (offered as full time over one year or part time over two years). The programme had been reviewed in advance of the meeting by Beatrice Szczepek-Reed and Jenna Ng and had their support and that of two external assessors.

It was noted that:
- There is clearly scope to grow research student numbers in YLS, and the MA by research is designed as an excellent tool to draw good undergraduate students into research, and in turn for graduates to feed into the PhD programme
- The part-time option makes the degree attractive to interested practitioners
- Supervision and TAP arrangements seem similar to PhD and therefore appropriate
- Research training is a little limited (Section 18) but appropriate for a one year programme
- Similarly, a little more effort than that described in Sections 21 and 22 could be put into creating a vibrant research environment for PGRs (for example, PGR specific seminar series and/or reading groups). However, current numbers may not warrant this.
- There was some confusion over the name of the programme - several other institutions (and overseas applicants are often more familiar with) use LLM for a Masters programme in Law even when ‘by Research’.
- The Committee were concerned that section 10 does not specify any requirement for a research proposal at application stage and section 15 requires a proposal several weeks after starting the programme.
- Section 12 should have the reference to e:vision removed in this context. Skills Forge is the only tool used.
- Section 19 refers to space for all students on the programme, the Committee felt this needed further confirmation.

The Committee decided to approve the programme, subject to:
- Clarification on why the programme title is MA in Law (by research) and not LLM (by research).
- A change in admissions policy whereby applicants must provide a research proposal as part of the application process not after they have started.
- Confirmation that there will be sufficient study space for all recruited to the new programme as per the proposal.

The Committee agreed that the department should submit a revised proposal to the PPSC secretary when ready and it would go to the PPSC Chair for Chair’s Action. Once the Chair has approved the revised proposal (it was noted that approval has already been received from FLTGG) the programme can be advertised.
M16-17/45 Policy on Research Degrees 2017 and PGR Departmental Handbook template (PPSC/16-17/30)

The Committee noted the timeline of activity for the revision and approval of the Policy on Research Degrees 2017 and the Departmental PGR Handbook template. It was agreed that RSAT would circulate the spreadsheet of changes to the current PoRD to members at least one month prior to the 23 June meeting. RSAT would also send the PGR Departmental Handbook template to GSA to note.

Action: RSAT

M16-17/46 Student status beyond submission (PPSC/16-17/31)

The Committee agreed with the recommendation to revise the status of PENDMC to that of ERR and approved the project to go ahead. It was also recommended that any PGR student with the status of DUX should have Library access as they still have an important part of their examination to prepare for. RSAT would report back in due course. The Chair and the GSA President agreed to discuss outside of the meeting a perceived issue regarding the 3 month examination period and Council Tax which particularly impacted on Tier 4 students.

Action: RSAT / Chair

M16-17/47 AOB

The Committee requested a Skills Forge update from the Head of RSAT and the following was noted:

- Skills Forge communications have increased in quantity and quality; a bi-weekly newsletter was now being distributed across departments and anyone was free to sign up.
- A Skills Forge forum was taking place on Monday 24 April to share information, provide updates and respond to queries.
- Progression forms had been finalised on SkillsForge and were currently being tested. A new feature would enable the student to sign that they had read the form.
- Progression training had been organised for w/b 8 May and departments had been encouraged to sign up for one of the three sessions available.
- Reporting was progressing well. The Skills Forge team had bought in a new system (Yellowfin) which was currently being tested. RSAT had provided departments in April with an overview report of meetings met and missed since October 2016 and was receiving feedback on the format. In time, departments will have access to Yellowfin to run their own reports.
- Departmental milestones were ongoing. The Skills Forge team had been required to change their approach to this due to existing system requirements and therefore had taken longer than was hoped. The plan is for departments to be able to add their own departmental milestones from October 2017.

M16-17/48 Date of the next meeting: Fri 23rd June 2017, 09:00 - 11:00 - H/G09