Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Dr. Alun Kirby, Ms. Helen Poyer (Secretary), Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Dr. Marjan van der Woude, Dr. Juliet James, Dr Dani Ungar, Dr Karen Clegg, Dr Jenn Ng, Prof. John Robinson, Ms. Jenny Brotherton (observer), Kate Stephenson (GSA)

Apologies: Mr. Peter Gorbert (GSA), Dr. Beatrice Szczepk-Reed, Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Dr Carolyn Snell, Dr Zoe Devlin, Prof Steve King, Prof Mike Bentley

M16-17/01 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the group and, as it was the start of a new academic year, introductions were made.

M16-17/02 To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2016

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2.1 To review the Terms of Reference for Policy and Programmes Sub-Committee

The following amendments were suggested:

- The reference to QAA HE Review is now outdated and it is more appropriate to state 'external (eg QAA) audit'
- Prof John Robinson's title is now PVC Teaching, Learning and Students.
- Membership: GSA reps should be noted according to job title.
- The 'Receiving minutes...' group: needs a clearer header on separate line

Philip Evans would be consulted on the representation required for the group to be quorate.

It was noted that Prof Marilyn Vihman was on research leave in Autumn and Spring 2016/17 but would still receive agendas and minutes. Dr Jenna Ng would continue attending as the A&H representative.

Action: Secretary

M16-17/03 Matters Arising

3.1 M15-16/58 Changes to membership agreed by YGRS Board

The Chair reported that Dr Carolyn Snell (SPSW) had been recruited to join PPSC as a Social Science academic representative. Kate Stephenson would also join PPSC as the new GSA Vice-President. Peter Gorbert (GSA) would no longer attend PPSC but would attend the YGRS Executive Group.

3.2 M15-16/60b IGGI continuation fee and 4 year programme working group
The Chair reported that, despite strong advice from PPSC to the contrary, the department was not prepared to pay the Continuation Fee for IGGI students and would be writing to them shortly to inform them if their liability for the fee once they enter their fourth year. The issue of a working group to look at four year programmes would be addressed later in the agenda.

3.3 M15-16/62 Tier 4 working restrictions - on call hours

The Head of Colleges forwarded the following update to the Chair:

- We no longer have a rota of tutors in each college. Rather the Assistant Head of College who is College Duty Officer (CDO) arranges to have a Tutor (usually from their team) on call to assist them if needed during term time (we do not anticipate needing the extra person out of term time).
- We have also changed the CDO rota timings so that the tutors are on call 9pm-9am on weekdays and in two shifts of 9am-9pm and 9pm-9am at the weekends. This means that there are 9 tutors shifts a week so on average tutors are on one 12-hour on call shift a month during term time.
- Assistant Heads are keeping an eye on the other work that tutors are doing in weeks when they have an on call shift to ensure they do not exceed the 20 hours a week limit and are averaging around 15 hours a week over the year.

M16-17/04 To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair’s Actions)

4.1 Chair’s Actions -

4.1.1 Approval of a proposal from the Department of History of Art for a PhD by Distance Learning following amendments (M15-16/61)

4.1.2 Approval of withdrawal of MPhil awards (as entry points only) for MPhil in Politics, MPhil in Post-war Recovery Studies, MPhil in Environment and Politics.

4.1.3 Approval of a PhD in Biology (four year route)

4.1.4 Approval of amendments to the Distance Learning PhD Approval Pro-forma (minor adjustment to section 14 adding the phrase ‘noting any differences from [the progress review arrangements for] other PhD programmes in your Department’ This will help PPSC understand what the dept are proposing, but also alert depts to the possibility of handling DL students differently should they want to.)

4.1.5 Approval of PhD by Distance Learning (Archaeology/Conservation Studies) (proposal included - for information only - PPSC/16-17/03)

4.1.6 Individual Aarhus agreement

4.2 The Chair reported that the ESRC White Rose DTP had now been awarded and was worth £16.8 million. The first cohort of students will start in 2017/18. The proposal was ‘highly commended’ by the ESRC.

4.3 YGRS welcome event in September went very well. 124 students actually signed in to the event but around 150 were thought to have attended. Of
the 64 who gave feedback, 100% said they would recommend it to others. The Chair informed the group that a smaller welcome event would take place in January for January starters.

4.4 The Chair informed the group that he had created a YGRS Community on Google +. It was accessible from the YGRS pages and students can join with their York log in and choose to receive updates and post items to the page. Anyone can also read the information without becoming a member. The YGRS newsletter will still circulate monthly but will likely be populated with relevant items from this page. All PGRs and Graduate Administrators had been notified about the new page. It was agreed that the link to the Google + page would be sent to SkillsForge for placement on the SkillsForge welcome page for students. The Chair also reported that the YGRS webpages were being overhauled and any suggestions should be sent through. Karen Clegg suggested a link on the YGRS homepage which highlighted all the support services available to PGRs would be very useful.

Action: Secretary to contact SkillsForge Team. Chair to liaise with Digital Marketing Team on links to support services from YGRS home page.

4.5 Chair reported that the Foreign Office and the UN were running events across the UK to try and get researchers involved in their work. An event at the University of Durham was taking place on 17 November and York had been offered five invitations for PhD students to attend. 50 students expressed interest and 25 submitted an application for consideration. The Chair was able to whittle this down to ten and has requested supervisor references. A final decision will take place shortly. The President of the GSA offered to take part in the final selection.

M16-17/05 To receive an oral report from the GSA representative/s

The GSA President reported that their Welcome Week and Network Week had gone well and they delivered 23 welcome talks across campus. Course representative elections had taken place and the outcomes would be know on 19 October. The Chair asked to meet the reps once appointed. Planning for PG Wednesdays were going well and academics from Maths had recently agreed to come and give some talks on research computing tools.

There had been some concern from students with caring responsibilities regarding the new extenuating circumstances policy and the GSA had been discussing this with the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students.

M16-17/06 Update from Chair on Departmental PGR Progression Proposals and implementation

The Chair gave an update and was pleased to report that in a period of around six months nearly all the departments have produced and had approved their departmental progression proposals. The Chair thanked Juliet James for all of her hard work in this. The outstanding ones were: Health Sciences, Physics and PEP. The latter was not urgent as they had not recruited any PGR students for 2016/17.

Action: Secretary to contact Health Sciences and Physics

M16-17/07 PGR Handbook 16/17 template
The Head of RSAT reported that they would be requesting a copy of all PGR Handbooks for 2016/17 to keep as a record. This does not mean that there can’t be any changes to the Handbooks but students must be consulted if before substantial changes are made.

M16-17/08  To consider the Periodic Review of the Department of SPSW (Social Policy Provision Only): Extracts From the Final Report and Action Plan Relating to Research Students

The Committee noted that research students in SPSW had been very positive about their experience within the Department. The need for research students to be exposed to interdisciplinary environments and for international students to be better integrated had been recognised and actions identified as a consequence. There was, however, a concern from the Director of RETT that the career development of PGRs was not covered in the action plan and also that it was implied that career planning was a third year activity when it should be encouraged from the start.

**Action:** SPSW

With respect to the action on the YGRS to consider whether departments might provide pastoral supervisors/mentors for research students, the Committee decided that there was no enthusiasm at present for a University-wide scheme of this kind (although departments could introduce a departmental scheme if they wished). Departments should, however, ensure that their international students are aware that it is acceptable to raise pastoral issues with their supervisors and also ensure that all students are aware of the routes (including the GSA and Dean of YGRS) by which they can raise pastoral concerns if, for whatever reason, they feel unable to do this with their supervisor or TAP members. Departments could also explore the use of peer-mentoring schemes as an additional means for supporting research students.

The Chair commended the department for the use of research staff in supervisory panels. The issue of social space would be of interest to the GSA who were looking into the possibility of a central PGR social space in 2016/17. The Head of RSAT also commented that there was YGRS conference funding provision for self-funded students who had exhausted their departmental funds. Details on the YGRS webpages.

**Action:** Chair to send feedback to Department via ASO

M16-17/09  To consider a proposal for a Four Year PhD in Physics

The group were concerned that they were being asked to approve a proposal on a four year PhD programme without a proper framework and approved guidance being in place and so it was proposed to postpone the decision pending clarity about the aims of four year PHD programmes at York and how these relate to the additional training content. Juliet James and Dani Ungar agreed to take this forward and produce a recommendation for the next meeting. Director of RETT also has training recommendations which she will forward to Juliet James. ASO will also check with Physics about the urgency of the approval.

**Action:** Juliet James, Dani Ungar and Karen Clegg

M16-17/10  To consider ADRR extracts relating to PGRs
The Chair informed the group that the ADRRs go to URC and then the Faculty Boards where a report is written for each department with feedback over the summer. The Chair invited the group to identify any good practice or issues for concern.

- Chair commented that the issue raised by CHE had been resolved. Their return was not being correctly represented due to the Planning Office not taking cross departmental students into account. The PURE system does take this into account and therefore the Chair has asked that the data be sought from PURE in the future as opposed to SITS.
- History of Art, Music and Philosophy were to be commended for the inclusion of PGRs on departmental committees.
- There was concern that Physics were offering a studentship to all new academic staff and this could have resource implications which means that mid-career academics might miss out on opportunities, and may also have quality control issues.
- It was noted that the majority of Arts and Humanities departments did not address employability for PGRs.
- History’s policy of international student mobility and desk exchanges was good practice.
- TFTV’s targeted marketing practices were very good.
- Politics appear to embed some of their PGR led activities into the main departmental activities programme which is commendable.
- Chemistry’s iDTC was very good practice. Chemistry should also be commended for identifying that a over a third of their REF2014 output being coauthored by PGR students.

M16-17/11 To note PGR academic waivers approved by YGRS to date

The Chair updated the group that since the agenda was circulated, there had been one rejection of a 2016 entry academic waiver request.

M16-17/12 To receive an update from the Director of RETT on PGR training provision

The Director of RETT reported that:

- Jo Hardy from the Health and Safety Office had put together a leaflet for PGWTs on the support services available at the University for student suffering mental health and well being issues. Jo Hardy was also to deliver three talks to PGWTs on awareness of the issue. RETT would also raise this issue in the compulsory Introduction to Teaching and Learning training sessions for PGWTs.
- York Talks would take place again in January 2017. There would also be a PhD ‘Spotlight’ competition for PGRs to display their research in the breaks, with prizes awarded by the VC.
- RETT had produced a leaflet which they distributed at the Welcome event covering their training framework. The group felt this would be useful to have in department reception areas.
- New RETT training model - a new focus would be on providing additional training for those staff who support PGRs and researchers at York.
- Two new Committees: the RETT Steering Group and the RETT Operations Group

M16-17/13 AOB
The Chair reported that HR have advised that external examiners coming from overseas will need to apply for a Permitted Paid Engagement visa. The visa takes around three weeks to process and costs £87. The Chair and The Chair of SCA would consult and circulate information to all departments in due course.

**Action: Chair**

**M16-17/14** Date of the next meeting: Fri 25th November 2016, 10:00 - 12:00 - H/G09

**M16-17/15** To approve a revised version of the Policy Framework for Distance Learning PhDs

The revised policy was approved.