Minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2016, 09.30 - 11.30, H/G21 (Heslington Hall)

Present: Prof. Tom Stoneham (Chair), Dr. Alun Kirby, Ms. Helen Poyer (Secretary), Prof. Marilyn Vihman, Ms. Rasha Ibrahim (GSA), Prof. John Robinson, Dr. Marjan van der Woude, Dr. Juliet James, Karen Clegg, Jen Wotherspoon, Steve King.

Apologies: Mr. Nigel Dandy, Ms. Kate Dodd, Mr. Peter Gorbert (GSA), Dr. Beatrice Szczepak-Reed

Observers: Dr Jenn Ng, Dr Dani Ungar

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the meeting and apologies were noted. The Chair introduced Dr Dani Ungar who would, from 16/17, be attending PPSC on behalf of the Faculty of the Sciences.

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19th April 2016

The minutes were approved with the following amendment:

M15-16/44 - Remove the bullet point ‘The proposal suggests that the progression panel’s role is to validate the supervisor’s judgement which is acceptable’ and add in the bullet point ‘The proposal of an 8-week window for progression panel meetings is too long and needs to be revised’.

Action: HP to amend and forward to ASO to communicate to the department

Matters Arising

M15-16/43 - proposal from the Department of Theatre, Film and Television for an MA by Research - update

TS reported that TFTV had responded to the Committee’s comments and had amended their proposal accordingly.

M15-16/44 - proposal from the Department of Computer Science on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy - update

ASO recommended an alteration to the Committee minute regarding this proposal which will be updated and forwarded on to the department.

M15-16/45 - proposal from the Department of Economics on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy - update

TS reported that he and JJ had met with the department at a Faculty PGR Progression Policy meeting and that it became clear that more work needed on the proposal and, with advice from JJ, a revised version would be submitted in due course.

To receive an oral report from the Chair (including report on Chair Action’s)

Chair’s Action
- approval of TFTV MA (by Research) in Filmmaking, MA (by Research) in Screenwriting and MA (by Research) in Theatre following submission of revised proposal

TS proposed that going forward, a smaller working group would meet to consider departmental PGR progression proposals outside of the PPSC. AK, TS and JJ would meet on a weekly basis until all the proposals had been approved and any unusual proposals would be brought to the Committee for further discussion. This was agreed by the Committee.

TS reported on the following PG funding schemes:

- There had been some changes to the House scholarship scheme. The scheme would no longer support 12 x 1K awards but would support 2 x 5K awards and 2 x 1K awards instead. Applications will be managed initially by Student Recruitment and Admissions with the emphasis on applicants who meet WP or accessibility criteria. TS was currently in talks with Student Recruitment and Admissions as to the overburdensome level of evidence required to prove the applicant’s income.

- TS updated the group on the outcome of 16/17 YuFund scholarships for taught Masters; 19 departments put forward nominations and six were awarded in Computer Science, CMS, Maths, Music, Politics and SPSW.

- York nominated 12 candidates to the China Scholarship Council and five were successful. The awards comprise a fee waiver from York and a stipend / travel expenses from the Council.

- TS reported that the University was to accept distance learning students from King Saud University (KSU) who is encouraging its female staff to gain a PhD qualification. Computer Science has had two applications already and TS is meeting with the department to advise. KSU currently require the supervisor to travel to Saudi Arabia for 5 days each year however some staff in Computer Science are reluctant to do so and TS will try to negotiate with KSU to make it optional.

TS informed the group that the recent communication and Faculty meetings regarding the changes to the PGR Progression Policy have shown that PGR communications are not always being received by the right person / role/. A central list would be set up and departments required to update the contact list on a termly basis.

**Action: Yvonne Geden**

**M15-16/54**  To receive an oral report from the GSA representative/s

The GSA representative reminded that group that a new structure would take effect from September 2016. There would soon be two full time posts; one President, focussed on academic issues, and one Vice-President, focussed on welfare issues.

**M15-16/55**  To approve the revised PGR Progression Policy (PPSC/15-16/38)

AK outlined the main change to the PGR Progression Policy:

- Amended Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.8 to clarify that progression panels do not have to meet with the student in person as part of the evidence. In such cases, it would be expected that the department would have had two TAPs by this point.

The Committee approved the revised policy subject to the following amendments:

- Section 1.40 states that the ‘...student will normally be present...’ and 1.41 states that ‘...students are not normally required to be present...’ in relation to the progression
panel meeting. This needs to be clarified so not to contradict one another. 1.41 could be changed to read: 'Departments can state that they are not requiring oral input from the student as part of the evidence'. It should however be a requirement that the progression panel offer the student an opportunity to meet with them if the panel feel there are problems with the student's progress and / or are agreed to recommend a downgrade or exit from the programme. This should be add to the Policy. Section 1.33 will then need to be clarified to reflect the above discussion.

- JJ reported that departments were still concerned with the four week window for progression panel meetings. The Committee proposed there could be more flexibility and this be increased to six weeks however there should be a standard deadline for the submission of evidence so as not to create inequity between students on the same programme. Section 1.25 should be revised to reflect this.

- The Committee noted that it may become the case that some departments will neither require their students to do an oral presentation, nor require the student to meet with the progression panel. This may appear a disadvantage to students in other departments who will get the chance to present however this is not something the Committee felt was enforceable.

It was agreed that the Policy could be approved by Chair’s Action following satisfactory revisions. TS thanked JJ and AK for all their hard work and commented that departments are beginning now to realise the advantages and opportunities of the new policy.

Action: AK

M15-16/56 To approve the proposed PoRD 2016 (PPSC/15-16/39)

AK informed the Committee that the major changes to the PoRD were highlighted and that more minor, factual errors had been left unhighlighted. The Committee had the following comments:

- Section 4.6 - the Information Security Tutorial (ISA) should ideally be compulsory however AK reported that currently there was no process to monitor completion and it was too late to implement anything for 16/17. It would be made mandatory in 17/18 and AK would work with Student Systems to implement completion tracking on SITS. BERT should remain as 'expected' completion however AK would ask Skills Forge to add a tick box to the online TAP form to monitor uptake.

- Section 5.4 - AK is checking with HR as to any issues around the assertion that 'Where a supervisor is not employed on an Academic, Research or Teaching contract, the Head of Department is responsible for approving the appointment'. This would refer to contracts where research student supervision is not a normal expectation, e.g. Associate Lecturer, Researcher or Teaching Fellow.

- Section 8.11 - there is an ongoing discussion regarding the Review of Supervision Form, student feedback and evidence from complaints and appeals suggests that students are not comfortable with the current process and find it difficult to be honest about admitting issues with their supervisor with the TAP member. The Committee was concerned that a usually helpful and reassuring conversation with a member of staff was being replaced with a form however TS stated this was not the case. The conversation would still take place and the form viewed as supplementary but to enable further action to be taken if appropriate. The form would be rewritten to encourage positive reflection and feedback and the student can state that they do not wish their information to be acted upon - in such cases it must be made clear on the form that the student does so at their own risk and they cannot use the information later on in an appeal or complaint. The Committee was also concerned that if the student has raised a complaint about their supervisor, and the student had asked for it to not be acted upon, but the information had gone to the supervisor’s line manager anyway, could this potentially affect the supervisor’s career
progression? One solution to this was to not send the form onto the line manager if the student had requested no action be taken. AK agreed to raise the issue at the next Graduate Forum and to discuss it further with Charles Fonge and HR. Training would need to be provided for Graduate Administrators as to what information they should consider urgent and outside of confidentiality requirements. AK and TS agreed to work on this project with advice from Charles Fonge and HR and report on progress in due course.

- Section 8.12 - Head of Research Student Administration should replace the reference to Assistant Registrar: Student Progress.
- Section 12.7 - the Committee discussed whether a student who becomes a member of staff at Grade 7 or above post-submission should be required to have a second external examiner and agreed that they should not.
- Section 9.5 - amend ‘will’ to ‘are expected’ in the first sentence.
- Section 9.13 - Policy on PGWT was no longer held in HR and this should be amended to read UTC.
- JJ raised an overall concern that the PoRD was missing any reference to personal PGR space - TS explained this was a conscious decision to not include in the PoRD, which was essentially a contract, provision which the University cannot guarantee. The PoRD does refer to central facilities and other space such as the Library, the HRC and ReCSS. The Committee agreed this was appropriate.

The PoRD was approved pending the above amendments which would be approved by Chair’s Action.

**Action:** AK

**M15-16/57** To consider a proposal from the Centre for Medieval Studies on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy (PPSC/15-16/40)

The Committee felt the proposal was an excellent means of dealing with the interdisciplinary nature of Medieval Studies, within the context of a robust TAP system. The Committee approved the proposal subject to the following clarifications and amendments (Secretary’s note: some amendments added post meeting):

- Written evidence from the student i.e. (a)-(c) plus (d) will be considered alongside a report from the supervisors and agreed TAP forms
- Clarify the standard required of written evidence to be provided by the student and cross-reference the evidence requirements to the University’s progression criteria
- If the progression panel is minded not to recommend progression at the first attempt the panel must meet in person with the student prior to finalising this decision in order to give the student every opportunity to meet the University progression criteria
- Clarify that when the progression panel is required to meet a student (at the first or second attempt at progression) that this may be a sub-set of the progression panel (at least two academics) rather than the whole panel if that is felt to be beneficial
- Clarify the timing for the submission of a student’s written evidence (one date per cohort)
- If a student fails to progress there is the option to recommend withdrawal (first attempt) and termination of enrolment (second attempt), alongside the option to recommend a transfer to an alternative programme.

**Action:** Secretary to forward approved minute

**M15-16/58** To consider a proposal from the Department of Music on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy (PPSC/15-16/41)
The Committee felt the proposal was satisfactory. The Committee approved the proposal, subject to the following clarifications and amendments (Secretary’s note: some amendments added post meeting):

- Clarify the timings involved, in particular ‘week 1’ or ‘as soon as possible thereafter’ is too late to hold the progress review meeting and needs revision
- It is the progression panel (not the TAP) which makes the decision about whether a student has met the relevant University progression criteria and makes the recommendation about progression (although TAP reports will feed into this process)
- Clarify whether students will be expected to provide an updated PhD plan for the first formal progression point in order to meet the University progression criteria
- Clarify expectations with regards to the standards of the evidence submitted by the student for the first and second formal progression points
- Review the section headed ‘at the start of year 2’ for clarity (e.g. to remove the reference to confirmation and transfer)
- If the progression panel is minded not to recommend progression at the first attempt the panel must meet in person with the student prior to finalising this decision in order to give the student every opportunity to meet the University progression criteria
- Clarify that the Board of Studies will be responsible for overseeing progression, if the GSB effectively convenes as the progression panel.

Action: Secretary to forward approved minute

M15-16/59 To consider a proposal from the Department of Philosophy on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy (held over from last meeting - PPSC/15-16/35)

The Committee approved the proposal, subject to the following clarifications and amendments (Secretary’s note: some amendments added post meeting):

- Clarify that the progress review meeting is integrated with the second TAP meeting of each year (rather than the progress review meeting replacing the second TAP meeting, as wording in an earlier version of the policy suggested): integration means that the progress review panel (in the absence of the supervisor) will work with the student to deliver the developmental aspect of the TAP meeting and to complete the TAP form alongside the progress review form
- Clarify that for a cohort (e.g. October starters) there should be a single date for the submission of the written evidence (also the submission of written evidence 48 hours before the progress review meeting may not give the progression panel sufficient time to read the material, especially when second year PhD students are submitting a whole chapter).

Action: Secretary to forward approved minute

M15-16/60 To consider a proposal from the Department of Politics on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy (PPSC/15-16/42)

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not discussed and would be taken forward by the working group.

M15-16/61 To consider a proposal from the Department of Sociology on the implementation of the PGR Progression Policy (PPSC/15-16/43)

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not discussed and would be taken forward by the working group.
M15-16/62. 1 Consultation on part-time attendance

AK informed the group that he would be undertaking a consultation on increasing the options for part time attendance. This was to increase flexibility for students and for sponsors.

M15-16/56 To note the date of next meeting: 14th June 2016 14:00 - 16:00 H/G17 (Heslington Hall)