POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES SUB-COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 June 2019

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Dr Jeremy Goldberg (JG), Dr Sally Hancock (SH), Dr Karen Clegg (KC), Dr Dani Ungar (DU), Dr Juliet James (JJ), Ms Charlotte Chamberlain (CC), Ms Amy Bullard (AB), Dr Carolyn Snell (CS), Ms Susanna Broom (SB)

In Attendance: Maria Adlam (minutes), Jessica Main was present as an observer.

Apologies: Professor Mike Bentley, Dr Kelly Redeker, Dr Jenna Ng

18-19/35: Welcome and minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 April 2019.

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 April 2019.

18-19/36: Matters Arising. To note the PPSC Action Log

- M16-17/36: SB summarised the key outcomes of the recent Rapid Improvement Event:
  - Technology for viva examinations will be updated, SD cards will no longer be used and a suite of viva recorders will be purchased, one for each department.
  - A pilot for e-only submission for examination will take place over July/August. Five departments have volunteered to take part in the pilot and RSA hopes to roll out to all departments from September.
  - Managing the minor corrections process will be taken on by RSA to improve accuracy and timekeeping.
  - There will be an entirely electronic workflow for examinations forms.
  - A review of correspondence and communications will take place to ensure that students are receiving the right information at the right time.
TS noted that the online submission will be beneficial for the student experience. He noted that the electronic workflow via Google folders will be a familiar process for academics as it is similar to the peer review process. The Library has agreed to digital archiving. Minor corrections process being brought in-house will improve academic consistency, not just the student experience.

- M17-18/22: TFTV distance-learning PhD. There have been no responses from the department, JJ proposed we close these action points.

- M18/19/17 (action 2.9) Chemistry’s voluntary Annual Leave tracking system: a presentation on the subject was given at the Gradmin Forum in May. It was proposed that the action point is therefore closed.

- M18/19/17: Capture of training and development in Skillsforge is still ongoing (KC).

18-19/37: To receive an oral report from the Chair (including Chair’s actions)

- Chair of PPSC approved a 4-year PhD in Archaeology.

18-19/38: To receive an update from the GSA Vice-President: Academic

- CC reported positive feedback on the PGR Examinations Rapid Improvement Event by the GSA president.
- CC’s successor Jane Baston will be present at the next PPSC meeting.
- The GSA organised a survey on drink and drug use by students. The survey is now closed and results will follow shortly.
- York will be hosting the National PG conference on 26 July.

18-19/39: To consider the proposed amendments to the Policy on Research Degrees for the 2019/20 academic year

- TS noted that Category II amendments will be implemented automatically.
- DU noted that section 15 of the amendments should specify that placements as part of a studentship will not require reporting. TS noted that additional reporting will only be required if the placement was not reported at the beginning of the programme.

ACTION: secretary to add clarification to document.

All amendments not specified below were approved by the Committee.
Section 7.2
- DU noted that wording should refer to ‘the funder’, rather than Research Council specifically.

**ACTION: secretary to change wording to ‘the funder’**

Section 12.52
- DU raised concerns over the six week deadline as the examiner must complete their assessment by this point.
- TS noted that the six-week deadline is for an indicative assessment: they can arrange a viva even if the student is likely to pass. It can be cancelled at a later point if necessary. The amendment is to reduce potential distress to students.
- DU questioned whether the examiners are likely to read far enough through policy to know about the six week deadline.
- TS noted that the department will be expected to arrange the viva if they have heard nothing after six weeks.
- KC asked whether it is clear to students that there is an option not to take the viva.
- TS noted that communication will be clear within departments that students turn down the viva on the understanding that they will be downgraded.

TS also noted that OIA has released a new set of guidelines on academic misconduct. Mike Bentley will review with SCA in the coming year.

18-19/40: To consider the Code of Conduct on Research Student-Supervisor Relationships
- TS gave an overview of the subject: The 1752 group is working to implement a national Code of Conduct that clarifies professional boundaries. Until this is released, TS proposes that the University improves existing policies with respect to research students by adding an edited version of the australian *Principles for Respectful Supervisory Relationships* as an Appendix to the PoRD. If approved, will be category I at Senate in July.

- Colleges and SLAW have noted that the wording ‘legal obligation to report to the police’ conflicts with University policy on sexual assault, which was unintended but leads to a lack of clarity. Wording will therefore be updated to clarify that it is only in specific circumstances, e.g. a Prevent issue, that we would have an obligation to report..

- AB noted that being advised to report to the Head of Department may be overwhelming for the student. TS clarified that this can be another member of staff,
not necessarily Head of Department. The process should be supportive, not confrontational.

- There was discussion around some of the wording in the guidelines. AB and SB both suggested that a separate student-facing guidance for the student, with more supportive wording.

**ACTION: GSA will draft a student-facing version of the document.**

- CS noted that the code of conduct should be a part of supervisor training.
- There was discussion around a replacement for the word ‘demands’. ‘Suggestions or behaviours’ was the suggested replacement.
- The Committee approved the proposal and it will go to Senate in July.

**ACTION: TS to make amendments as discussed.**

18-19/41: To consider a proposal from the Department of English and Related Literature for a PhD in English with Creative Writing

The Committee **considered** a proposal from the Department of English and Related Literature for a new three-year PhD in English with Creative Writing to start in September 2019. The programme would have both full-time and part-time options, with entry points in September and January. An MPhil and MA (by research) in English with Creative Writing would also need to be set up as an exit route from formal reviews of progress and at the point of final examination.

The programme had already received approval from the Faculty Learning and Teaching Group. The programme, including comments from two external assessors, was reviewed in advance of the meeting by Tom Stoneham and Jenna Ng.

The Committee was positive about the new programme, noting that it would complement the Department’s existing provision and desire to grow this area of its provision.

The Committee **approved** the programme subject to the Department addressing the following conditions by 12th July 2019:

a) to strengthen the admissions process to ensure that students are admitted with the required skills for creative writing. This should include a requirement for all applicants to submit a sample of their creative writing alongside their research proposal. Where an applicant has limited experience of creative writing (i.e. no or a limited academic background in this area and is not a professional writer in their chosen genre) particular attention must be paid to ensuring the suitability of the individual;
b) to make it explicit that a student’s supervisor(s) should be able to supervise both the
critical and creative components of the student’s research project (i.e. either a single
supervisor with an appropriate background in both elements, or through the
appointment of co-supervisors with different strengths) but noting that the appointment
of Thesis Advisory Panel members may also help to provide additional critical and
creative perspectives;
c) to consider whether external co-supervisors or external Thesis Advisory Panel members
(for example, established authors in a student’s chosen genre) might usefully contribute
to the programme;
d) to consider further how the Department could support doctoral students in their
creative writing practice, for example, through the provision of peer writing workshops,
writing masterclasses, training sessions on author’s rights etc.;
e) to clarify that work submitted for formal reviews of progress should include both a
critical and creative component to ensure that a student is making progress in both
areas of their research;
f) to clarify that students on the programme could transfer to the PhD in English and
might be recommended to do so if their creative writing was not meeting expectations
for doctoral level study;
g) to clarify expectations around the creative component of the thesis (noting that the
critical component would be expected to be between 30000-40000 words), setting out
some broad parameters for the volume/nature of work that might be expected for
different genres of creative writing to guide students in their practice and to ensure an
appropriate balance between the critical and creative component (noting that the ‘with’
signifies that the creative component will be secondary to the critical component).
Students whose creative work would fall outside these parameters should be asked to
gain approval for their proposed creative writing submission from the Chair of the GSB,
having consulted their supervisor(s) and Thesis Advisory Panel.

It was agreed that the programme could be approved by Chair’s action, in consultation with
Jenna Ng and the ASO, following a Departmental response to the above conditions.

18-19/42: To consider the latest Periodic Review from the Department of Archaeology
from 4 February 2019

- JG reported that feedback has generally been positive. There is a dedicated space for
research, graduate students organise regular events, and there is a healthy research
community within the department. There is good support in place for GTAs.
- The review suggested that more conversation is needed between module leaders
and GTAs.
- TS commented that students in the department should be commended for
addressing the split site issue in a proactive way.
18-19/43: To consider the latest Periodic Review from the Department of Education from 21 February 2019

- TS noted that the department is reviewing their PGR induction process. There are a high number of non-standard starters for Tier 4 reasons. Department is aiming to ensure students have an equal experience regardless of when they start.
- PGR rep was absent due to illness and had not yet been replaced.
- TS noted that Education should be encouraged to instate three reps, one for each PhD programme in the department.
- Research methods training (mandatory modules at PGT level) have met some resistance from students. CS noted that this is a faculty-wide problem.
- TS cited recommendation to focus recruitment on sustained number of high-quality candidates. TS also raised the issue of students being assigned to supervisors who are not well-aligned to their research interests.
- DU: Will study space be moved from Berrick Saul?

Action: secretary to ask for a comment from Richard Ogden.

- SH noted that computer space within the department isn’t being used. Department is trying to make it a more attractive space. There are assigned desks as well as hot-desking spaces.

18-19/44: To consider the latest Periodic Review from the York Management School from 4 March 2019

- The staff-student conference took place in summer and received positive reports.
- Department-level training is taking place, supported by RETT.
- Students have raised issues around space and have explained that it is difficult to foster a sense of belonging and community in such a large department.
- Attendance at conferences/research seminars is poor.
- It has been suggested that a longer induction period may be helpful to improve engagement, and that better communications with students are needed to improve attendance at conferences and events.
- KC noted that a more robust action plan is needed.

Action: (for Secretary) By the start of Spring term the committee would like to see the updated action plan from Management.

18-19/45: To consider the latest Periodic Review from the Department of Psychology from June 2019
- The Early Career Research Forum has been praised. The Forum has been especially impactful because the Chair reports directly to the Head of Department.
- Concerns about overwork for GTAs were raised. DU noted that increased UG numbers are not being matched by increased GTA numbers. JJ confirmed that actions are being taken to address the issue of GTA workload.
- It appears there may be some inequity in funding for student conference attendance if departmental funds (which are the same for all students) are supplemented by supervisor funds.

18-19/46: To consider the latest Periodic Review from the School of Philosophy, Politics and Economics from 14 March 2019

- Concerns have been raised about inconsistency and inequality around support and supervision.
- It was noted that PEP is required to bring its PhD programme into line with University guidance on interdisciplinary PhD programmes Action: ASO will follow this up and ensure changes are in place for 2020 cohort
- The following points were raised about GTAs in economics:
  ● GTAs are expected to get through a high volume of materials in seminars and there are concerns that this is leading to reduced quality of teaching.
  ● The department has confirmed that support is in place for GTAs.
  ● The department has communicated to GTAs that they are not required to attend lectures relating to the seminars they will teach. PPSC noted that if GTAs are required to attend lectures, this would not need to be paid at the teaching rate, but the lower rate for marking etc.

ACTION: JJ to Flag to UTC. (Completed as of 20/06/19)

- SH noted that module leaders in Economics should be taking on a mentoring role for GTAs, not just supervisors. JJ noted that this is backed up by policy.

Category II Business

No Category II business was discussed at the meeting.

- 18-19/46: To receive a document mapping current policy and practice against the revised QAA Quality Code Advice and Guidance on Research Degrees

Date of the next meeting:

  ● Will be circulated on publication of the 2019-20 university timetable.