



YORK GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL BOARD

Friday 29 May 2020, 10:00-12:00

Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Professor Tom Stoneham (Chair), Professor Matthias Ruth, Professor John Robinson, Professor Brian Fulton, Professor Ambrose Field, Dr Wayne Campbell, Dr Pürnur Altay, Ms Jane Baston, Ms Susanna Broom, Dr Jeremy Goldbery, Dr Kelly Redeker

Apologies: Dr David MacBeth, Professor Stuart Bell, Mr Nigel Dandy, Dr Sally Hancock

In attendance: Miss Hannah Smallpage-Hurst (minutes), Ms Karen Payne, Beccy Shipman,

M/19-20/14 Welcome and apologies for absence

- Apologies were received as above.
- The Board welcomed and introduced themselves to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research.

Category I Business

M/19-20/15 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2020 (YGRSB/19-20/21)

The minutes from the last YGRS Board Meeting on 24th February 2020, were **approved**.

M/19-20/16 YGRSB Action Log (YGRSB/19-20/22)

The Action Log was reviewed. It was **noted** that:

- M/19-20/08: Guidance on the format of vivas has been superseded due to the situation regarding COVID-19, however some detailed guidance has been created in relation to online vivas. **[ACTION: Proposed training for internal examiners postponed until next academic year.]**
- M19-20/09: The requests for action plans from departments on supervision compliance has been postponed until the next academic year. **[ACTION: Requests for action plans on supervision compliance to be postponed until the next compliance report is available.]**
- M19-20/10: **[ACTION: SB to add the withdrawal data to the PGR Outcomes report at the end of the Autumn term.]**
- M19-20/11: The action regarding written guidance for staff containing advice on formal procedures is now closed.
- M19-20/12: The report for best practice on PGR mentoring was presented at the previous meeting in February.
- M19-20/07: The Chair updated the Board on the Thesis Mentoring Scheme at York and noted that a pilot scheme had been launched whereby PhD students in their final 18 months can apply to be

mentored by a Post-Doc. The Learning and Development team will be providing the training for the mentors. The scheme will be run as a pilot over the next 6 months.

- M/19-20/10: SB **reported** SK had been briefed on the paper detailing the number of visiting students who are not getting registered. SK will take this information and input it into a wider piece of work that is being carried out on visiting students. **[Action closed.]**
- M19-20/10: The GSA President updated the group regarding requests to cap fees for PGR students and stated that this is an ongoing issue. **[ACTION: Clarify in action log that this relates to overseas fees rate.]**

M/19-20/17 Matters arising from the minutes

WC **noted** that it may be easier to put documents for future meetings into a united PDF document so they are easier to access. **[ACTION: SB to feed this back to her team.]**

M/19-20/18 Oral report from the Chair

The Chair **reported** that:

- There has been a vast amount of change through the various contingency groups around the PGR experience which was all reported to Senate on the 5th May 2020.
- Work on UKRI funding extensions is ongoing. The Chair **reported** that he has written to the PGR community, explaining the nature of what the University is offering, whilst also stating that support for first and second year PhD students has not been ruled out, but that it is inappropriate to make provision about that now as this would need to be considered on a case by case basis. The Chair also **reported** that the University of Sheffield is not offering UKRI-level extensions to their own funded students; it is only doing so for UKRI match-funding. It was also **noted** that University of Sheffield funded students only get access to a hardship fund.
- The University will not be charging continuation fees for any students who would have become eligible for one from 1st of January to the end of October. All students have been written to individually, with confirmation that they would not be charged the fee.
- A mentoring scheme for final year PhD students has been implemented, with Post-Docs being trained to deliver the mentoring.
- Departments have been notified that the University will be introducing a system of Temporary Remote Research (TRR). The Chair explained that this is distinct from distance learning as many funders will not fund distance learning programmes so the University has created a distinct approach. This will be decided on an individual case. The Chair **noted** that it will also be possible to use this for continuing students who are not able to get back to the UK, but who are able to continue with their research. The Chair also **reported** that the University is offering to write individualised letters to funders to explain that TRR is not classed as distance learning, and students will have access to all resources needed to continue their research.
- There have been two successes with regards to funding matters since the last board meeting: The EPSRC Mobility Pilot in Green Chemistry has been funded, and the University has also been awarded a European Joint Doctorate Innovative Training Network called CHEMARCH.
- There are three bids going in within the next three months: a Leverhulme bid, a UKRI Food systems CDT, and NERC's CDT call on Ecotoxicology.
- The MRC's DTP call has been postponed, but the University has managed to join the Sheffield-led DTP, and been accepted as an additional partner.
- The Dean of Science **noted** that a vastly increased number of communications have been going out over the past few months, which had not been delivered consistently to different groups. The Chair

explained that he was aware of this and is considering how best to communicate with different groups on certain matters. **[ACTION: Chair to consider how best to deliver communications in the future]**

- The GSA president raised a query regarding communication around no continuation fees. SB mentioned that these students have been emailed. The GSA president also queried an email regarding information around informal supervision. The Chair mentioned that an email had been revised but was not sure whether this had been sent out yet.

M/19-20/19 Oral report from Graduate Student Association representatives

The GSA President **reported** that:

- All campaigns have been stopped during the COVID-19 period and the GSA has instead been attending a number of Contingency Planning Groups.
- A 'Keep Home and Carry On' campaign was launched at the start of lockdown and aimed to minimise the shock of lockdown for students, and in turn provide them with an online community. It was **reported** that this has been received well by the student body and has had quite a number of interactions from students.
- The GSA have recently recruited a new Representation and Democracy Coordinator.
- The GSA are in an election period where all sabbatical officers will be running for a second term.
- The Chair thanked the GSA for all of their help during this period.

M/19-20/20 To propose a change to membership

The Board was invited to comment on a proposed change to the membership of the Board, for which three options were tabled. A discussion followed:

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research was in favour of having the Associate Deans serve as the alternates, with the understanding that there be good communication with the person that serves as the delegate on behalf of the Dean.
- The Chair **noted** that, were the Associate Deans to serve as delegates, copies of the agenda and papers would be sent directly to them.
- The Chair also **reported** that the Director of Research and Enterprise was unable to attend this meeting, but had shown a slight preference for option two, which suggested replacing the faculty deans with the associate deans.
- The Dean for Sciences agreed that the Associate Deans for Research do need to attend and should see the papers so that the Dean and the Associate Dean can discuss matters prior to the meeting. He stated that he would be happy for the Deans to remain as formal members, and the Associate Deans to be in receipt of the agendas and papers and recognised as valid alternatives for the Deans.
- There was a general consensus from the Board for option 3, amongst those who were present at the meeting. **[ACTION: The Chair to check this decision with the Dean of Arts and Humanities and the Dean of Social Sciences.]**
- The recommendation from those who were present at the meeting was that, if there are no significant concerns raised, it will be presumed that the decision has been made for the Associate Deans to serve as alternates, and that they will be added to the distribution list.

M/19-20/21 Report of PGR submission rates

The Board was invited to comment on the report of PGR submission rates which was presented by Karen Payne:

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- There was a general discussion from the Board about where variations would or would not be statistically significant.
- It was **noted** that for larger sample sizes annual variations were significant, however for smaller sample sizes annual variations were not significant and the general trend was more important.
- It was **confirmed** that withdrawal data in this report would not include those who secured an unconditional place but did not start.
- The Chair **noted** that departments would be expected to comment on data through the Annual Department Research Review process.
- The Board **noted** an overall positive trend of improvement across the institution.
- It was also **noted** that the Social Sciences Faculty had shown significant improvement across the most recent cohort.

M/19-20/22 Report on Early Career Publishing Prize

Secretary's note: Prior to the commencement of this item, the Dean of Sciences declared that, as an honorary secretary for the Institute of Physics, and Chair of the Board of its publishing company, he has - by association - a commercial interest in open access publishing. It was agreed with the Chair that he would leave the meeting to avoid any conflicts of interest.

The Chair introduced the item by noting that he himself, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students, and the Dean of Social Sciences, are all on the White Rose University Press (a joint York, Sheffield, Leeds non-commercial venture) editorial board and there was a recognised need to raise the profile of open access monograph publishing. The Leeds Early Career Publishing Prize was such an attempt and we may want to consider something similar at York.

Beccy Shipman (University of Leeds) presented a report on the *Early Career Publishing Prize*, which can be found [here](#). **[ACTION: Dean ex officio to follow up with BS in Autumn to find out how many applications were received.]**

Category II Business

No category II business was discussed at the meeting.

M/19-20/23 Minutes of the Awards and Funding Subcommittee held on 17 February 2020 (**YGRSB/19-20/26**)

M/19-20/24 Minutes of the Policies and Programmes Subcommittee held on 13 February 2020 (**YGRSB/19-20/27**)

M/19-20/25 A.O.B

M/19-20/26 To note the dates of the forthcoming meetings.