

**Extract from the minutes of the meeting of the York Graduate School Board Policy and
Programmes Sub-Committee held on Monday 05 February 2018**

17-18/12 Annual Programme Review 2016/17 report (PPSC/17-18/05)

Juliet James gave an overview of the report and commented that there were four main issues, the majority of which has already been highlighted in the previous APR round:

- Desk space – ongoing issue regarding lack of suitable PGR desk space. The Chair reiterated that the Timetabling Office were to undertake a space review for 2018 in terms of quantity and quality.
- PGR Annual Progression policy – some departments were now, after going through the process for the first time in 2016/17, recognising the need to review and potentially make changes to their internal progression procedure. Any requests for minor changes can be submitted to the Chair for Chair's approval.
- SkillsForge – this remained the biggest area of negativity. It was acknowledged that it was still a work in progress but that consistent improvements to the functionality and user experience were being made.
- Employability – it was evident that many departments felt that there was a gap in central careers provision for PGRs. The issue was recognised by YGRS as a valid one and continues to be high on the agenda for improvement.

One 'new' issue highlighted by most departments in the APRs was that of student well-being. The Chair commented that this was an issue high on the agenda for York (and HE) in general and was to become a particular focus of YGRS.

Juliet James confirmed that departments would all get individual responses from the Academic Support Office. Issues flagged with other support services at York will be sent directly to them to respond to.

There was a comment from a Committee member that some of the main issues raised were more of concern to particular faculties and that it might be more helpful to group issues raised by faculty rather than try to give an overall position. The Chair reminded the group that YGRS has oversight at institutional level – not faculty level - so it is relevant to consider issues that can be considered University wide. Juliet James commented that for the next round of APRs, ASO can attempt to align issues to faculty (if a pattern is obvious enough to comment on).

APR Actions in PPSC/17-18/05:

- 2.3 – action agreed.
- 2.4 - action agreed.
- 2.5 - action agreed. Although SkillsForge sees continual improvement, some departments still struggle to integrate SkillsForge into their workflow and are awaiting new functionality but it is an ongoing and improving project. The bi-weekly / monthly newsletter and 'How to' guides have improved communication.
- 2.7 – action agreed. A YGRS sponsored review of training offered within departments in 2015/16 informed the current provision of central training. In April 2018 however UKRI will take over the RCUK Training and Skills Group – this group has historically allowed RCs to have different rules around training grants, with some RCs requiring roll out of said training to unfunded students in the same cognate area. The potential for harmonisation of the RC training requirements post April 2018 will make it more straightforward for research organisations to ensure their central provision of training is fit for purpose.
- 2.9 - action agreed. Although there is not much data available to consult, the data currently available at York have suggests that mental health it is less of a problem for PGRs than at UG level. York currently has a bid into the HEFCE catalyst fund to enable cohort studies to take place. Reliable data is required first to then decide how to approach the issue.
- 2.10 - action agreed.

The Chair confirmed that he will also contact any departments directly with any individually raised issues YGRS can help with.