

## **Report of the First meeting of the Doctoral School Board**

**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017

### **Present:**

#### **Doctoral School Staff**

Professor John Turner, Dean of Postgraduate Research

Dr Penny Dowdney, Doctoral School Manager

Aashu Jayadeep, Doctoral School Administrator

#### **DTP , School and College Directors of Postgraduate Studies**

Professor John Healey, Envision

Dr Neil Hockley, SENRGY

Professor Aziz Jaafar, BBS

Dr Gillian Jein, Modern Languages and Culture

Dr Martina Lahmann, College Director, Physical Sciences & Chemistry

Dr Anita Malhotra, College Director, CNS

Dr David Markland, Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences

Dr Helena Miguelez- Carballeira, College Director, CAH

Dr Richard Ramsey, Psychology

Professor Paul Spencer, Electronic Engineering

Dr Bill Teahan, Computer Science

Dr Jane Wakeman, Medical Sciences

Dr Jean Ware, Education

Professor Gerwyn Williams, Cymraeg

Dr Sion Williams, Healthcare Sciences

#### **PGR Administrators**

Iwan Davies

Gillian Griffith

Everil McQuarrie

Susan Metcalfe

Christine Parry

Gwenda Pritchard

#### **PHD Representatives**

Ibrahim Abdullahi , SENRGY

Gregg R Ashcroft, Biological Sciences

Megan Baker, Ocean Sciences

Laurence Jones, BBS

James Jackson, Computer Sciences

Gabriella Rosetti, SSHES

Victoria Somoye, Law

Stephen Taaffe, Chemistry

Angharad Wilkie, Medical Sciences

### **Undeb Bangor Representatives**

Danielle Barnard

Kieran Bold

Conor Savage

### **Also present**

Gaynor Mew, Head of Admissions

### **Secretary**

Karen Chidley, Academic Registry

## **1 WELCOME**

The recently appointed Dean of Postgraduate Research, Professor John Turner, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Doctoral School Board. He noted that the newly formed Board included College Directors of Postgraduate Studies, School Directors of Postgraduate Studies, Directors of DTP Centres, Postgraduate Admin staff, PHD representatives, Doctoral School staff and Academic Registry staff.

## **2 GOVERNANCE**

Professor Turner gave a presentation on the current situation, the PGR strategy and his vision for the Doctoral School and the committee structure. (Powerpoint slides available at <https://www.bangor.ac.uk/doctoral-school/documents/BUDoctoralSchoolGovernance>)

Professor Turner defined the ***PGR Strategy***

- grow PGR numbers, currently at 600; work was required to assess the optimum number
- attract new funding initiatives
- ensure high quality standards of training and support to secure funders
- provide an excellent experience to ensure sustainability
- contribute to world class research
- produce graduate as leaders in research and of professions

The presentation referred to the PhD and how it's changing, including the different types of Doctorate now recognised, including the Professional Doctorate, the Doctorate by Published works and the

growing trend in some disciplines to move away from the thesis toward integration of published papers. In addition to the changes to the PhD itself the PhD student is also changing with an increasing percentage of mature students, women, self-funded, international and part-time ,

The presentation also included the ***Vision for the Doctoral School***

- unifying mechanisms for strategic development and management across the university and partners
- distinct organisation promoting high quality graduate education and administration
- clear identity to represent PGR research student interests
- dedicated facilities and accommodation
- well regarded, well resourced, generate world class researchers
- inspiring research environment to support development of independent researchers
- supporting professional development of future research leaders
- prevent isolation
- research show case

The Doctoral School hope to bring all PGR matters together and in addition to its vision has produced a ***mission*** which includes the following:

- provide a stimulating and vibrant research environment promoting cooperation across disciplines
- bring early career and established researchers together
- ensure a critical mass of PGR researchers to prevent isolation
- to organise admissions, and to have transparent regulations and to guarantee quality assurance and processes for monitoring, extensions and appeals
- to provide a framework for regulations codes of practice
- to provide training in teaching and transferable skills
- to provide enhanced career development opportunities
- demonstrate research excellence

In order to be able to achieve its vision and mission the Doctoral School has established two new committees – the Doctoral School Board and the Research Degree Committee. The Doctoral School Board will report to the Research Degree Committee, which in turn will report to the Research Strategy Task Group (on matters of strategy and resources), and directly to the Senate on academic matters and QA. A copy of the membership and terms of reference of the two new committees was distributed (attached as Appendix 1 to the official copy of the minutes).

It was noted that a number of areas have been identified to be considered in the near future, including

Updating PGR Regulations including definition of & criteria for roles

Independent Personal Tutors (Review Committee Chairs)

On-line PGR Handbook with College/School specific information (to be accessible externally)

Final assessment procedures, Electronic thesis submission, Open access, Research data management support

KPIs for research degrees

Steering Groups for DTPs/DTCs

School PGR Strategies / capacity for PhDs

Induction frequency; online monitoring; admissions training

Training & accreditation for teaching

PGR student representation & responsibilities of PGR students

Cross disciplinary events & activities

Annual PRES analysis and Action Plans

Physical space for Doctoral School & PGR study spaces in libraries

In discussion a number of issues were raised by the board to be discussed including the use of the word “student” for PhD students, the status of PhD students, the budget for support and PGR admin across the University.

### **3 SCHOOL LEVEL MEETINGS**

It was reported that the PGR Dean and the Doctoral School Manager intended to visit each School and to meet the Director of Postgraduate Studies, the PhD representative and the Head of School, if appropriate. The purpose of the meetings would be for the Doctoral School to gain an understanding of PGR issues in each School, and to develop a PGR School strategy.

It was anticipated that most of the meetings will take place between now and Easter.

### **4 PGR EVENTS**

It was noted that amongst the Doctoral School’s mission was to arrange events for Doctoral students, with the intention to arrange at least one a semester. The Board was asked for suggestions on the type of events they would like to see.

Amongst the suggestions and comments were :

- fun, informal events worked well
- not all students would enjoy large events, it was suggested that there should be small, School based informal events
- there was support for arranging competitions and events, such as the 3 minute thesis, poster competitions etc
- there should be more emphasis on the uniqueness of the Welsh language and Welsh culture in the central events
- guest speakers
- budget available for refreshments always help attract people
- it was suggested that the students should be asked about their preference of event

Dr Dowdney agreed to look into the suggestions and hopefully a central event would be arranged in the next few months.

### **5 MONITORING**

The Dean thanked all those involved with monitoring in 2015/16 and noted that all but one School had conducted their review meetings and submitted the paperwork.

This year eleven students will, upon the request of the Schools, receive motivational letters from the Dean.

An on-line system has been produced and has been trialled in 2015/16 by two Schools, Healthcare Sciences and Computer Sciences, with plans now for it to be implemented across the University. A meeting/training session has been arranged by ITS for all School Directors on 20<sup>th</sup> January, with plans for further training and demonstrations in the future.

It is expected that monitoring for 2016/17 will be electronic and will take place between April and June, with review in - September 2017.

## **6 ADMISSIONS**

Ms Gaynor Mew, the recently appointed Head of Admissions was invited to attend the meeting to discuss the changes that have been made recently with respect to PGR applications.

It was noted that a review of admissions took place in 2015 and amongst one of it's recommendations was to consider the way PGR applications are processed. Currently it is a four stage process, including validation of documents; complete qualification, verification and equivalencies check; sent to School for an academic decision and returned to admissions to issue offer or reject. These checks by the Admissions team can be very time consuming and can cause a delay in the turn around times.

In addition to give the Board an idea of the numbers, Ms Mew reported that last year 1200 applications were received, each having to undergo qualification checking and of those only 150 offers were made with 50 enrolments.

The process has been amended to a three stage process – admissions carrying out basic checks; send to schools to make an academic decision, if the Schools decide to give the student an offer, it is only then that the qualification checks will be made; issue offer or reject letter.

A number of concerns were expressed but it is early days in working with the new system. Some Schools felt that they would not be able to make a judgement based on the research proposal alone and that they would require information on the applicant's qualification. It noted that the School PGR Strategies would be used to specify School specific requirements of applicants.

## **7 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Board was given a reminder of the training and development opportunities that are being arranged by the Doctoral School. The Doctoral School Manager asked for their feedback on the programmes, including to let them know of any training opportunities for which there is a demand that the Doctoral School are currently not offering.

The Board was given information on opportunities coming up which included the ESRC DTP , KESS II and Leverhulme Trust Doctoral Scholarships application

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **[i] PRES**

It was reported that the PRES Survey, revised after consultation, will become an annual survey with new questions reflecting the year and type of PGR degree. It will be well advertised and all Directors will be informed when the survey will be open, with guidance on how to maximise response rates. The Doctoral School will collaborate with Planning and Student Engagement to analyse and disseminate results

### **[ii] PLAGRISIM**

Dr Hockley reported that he had discussions with ITS regarding the use of Turnitin for assessing plagiarism in research proposals in applications. There was no immediate solution for Blackboard to link with the Direct Applications process, and that work to build this would require prioritising based on demand. Some Schools agreed that there was a demand for it and Dr Hockley encouraged members to contact ITS .

**[iii] CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENTS WHO TEACH**

It was noted that work was continuing with the implementation of the Code and in particular the delivery of the training through PG Cert module design

**9 THANKS**

The Dean thanked all for attending and noted that it was anticipated that the Board would meet once every two months, he encouraged members to bring forward any items they would like to be discussed.