Bangor University
Doctoral School Board (DSB) – PRES 2018 Analysis
Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2018

Present: **Doctoral School**

Professor John Turner [JT] (PGR Dean, Chair), Dr Penny Dowdney [PD], Aashu Jayadeep
College Directors
Dr James McDonald [JM] (ESE), Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira [HM-C] (AHB), Prof Debbie Mills (HS)
School PGR Leads
Dr Eirini Sanoudaki[ES] (Languages, Literature & Linguistics), Dr Stefan Machura[SM] (History, Philosophy & Social Sciences), Dr Pwyll Ap Sion (Music & Media), Dr Wei Shi (Law), Dr Gwion Williams (BBS), Dr Neal Hockley [NH] (Environmental Science), Dr Nathalie Fenner (Biology), Dr Martina Lahmann[ML] (Chemistry), Dr Line Cordes(Ocean Sciences), Dr William J Teahan [WT] (Computer Science & EE), Dr Ross Roberts [RR](SHES), Dr Jane Wakeman (Medical Sciences),Dr Beth Hall [MH](Library & Archives Services), Mairwen Owen[MO](Library & Archives Services), Rob Samuel[RS](SU)

Apologies: Dr Raluca Radulescu, Prof Gerwyn Wiliams, Prof Huw Pryce, Dr Lucy Huskinson, Dr Steffan Thomas, Dr Robin Mann, Prof Chris Collins, Dr Jean Ware, Dr Sion Williams Dr Richard Ramsey, Danielle Barnard, Mandy Angharad, Mark Barrow   **#**

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Professor John Turner welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the Doctoral School Board which had been arranged to discuss the PRES 2018 results.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS/ACTIONS

The Chair expressed his appreciation to all the Schools who had submitted a comprehensive PRES Action Plan to the Doctoral School as an outcome of the previous year's PRES DSB meeting (**Dated: 21/09/2017**). This data has been useful during the Institutional Review process and has clearly improved the overall PGR experience, as can be seen in this year's PRES results. The PGR experience at Bangor University has shown good progress over the years and achieved an affirmation in the Institutional Review, which took place between 21st - 24th May 2018.

3. INTRODUCTION

Overall the University's PRES results were very good with 85% overall satisfaction (87% in 2017) against a sector average of 80% (82% in 2017). This placed us in the top ten (10th) out of the 65 institutions participating in PRES this year. The University's results for each section, bar one (Progression), are in the top or upper quartile. Most section scores showed improvement. Similarly, Bangor did extremely well compared to other Welsh institutions, except in the sections Progression & Resources. The University's overall response rate was 54%, which was the same as in 2017. The University would like to see this response rate increase to at least 60% in the future to give more reliable data.

The results varied considerably across Schools, with some Schools consistently having highly positive scores and others evidently dipping in certain sections. Schools with overall satisfaction scores below 80%, and any sector score below 80% need to specifically address areas through specific actions, and monitor that these actions are implemented and effective. The aim of this

meeting was primarily for College PGR Directors and School PGR leads to explain outstanding, good and poor scores in order to highlight examples of good practice, and to identify lessons learned.

Full PRES reports (including student comments, redacted where appropriate) were compiled by the Student Engagement Unit for: Biological Sciences, Chemistry, English Literature, SENRGY, Law, Linguistics and English Language, Modern Languages and Cultures, Music, Ocean Sciences, Philosophy & Religion, Social Sciences and Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences. Reports without students' comments were available for Business, Creative Studies & Media, Computing, Education, Electronic Engineering, Health Studies, History and Psychology. Schools which failed to meet publication thresholds included: Cymraeg and Medical Sciences.

The Chair highlighted that, based on the 'Happiness in UK Postgraduate Research' report by the HEA based on the 2013 and 2015 PRES cycles (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/happiness-uk-post-graduate-research-uk-heis), some of the factors associated with higher and lower levels of satisfaction are in priority order:

- Quality of Supervision
    - supervisors should have relevant skills and knowledge in the students' core research area.
    - bilateral exchanges of information and ideas for development underpin this key student-supervisor relationship.
- Professional skills development
    - ability to communicate to different audiences, time management, project management and networking
- Research skills and development
    - includes analytical skills and understanding what 'good' research is, it goes beyond this to include creativity and original thinking
- Shared Responsibilities
    - students should know the broad role of their supervisor, what is expected of them as students, and who to see if they want feedback
- Resources
    - Capital investments in working environments, computing and IT, libraries, and other specialist research resources have a modest effect on the student experience
- Progress and assessment
    - Induction processes, formal monitoring, assessment procedures, and standards

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS - PRES 2018

The Questions in each section were presented, along with the BU scores, compared to the sector. School results by section were screened, and PGR Directors and PGR Leads were invited to comment/explain as appropriate, highlighting good practice or reasons for issues.

The Academics raised concern about the accuracy of student data in Banner which reduced the number of PGRs being invited to complete the survey. ES and ML pointed out that the Schools struggled to reach above the 50 % response rate as some of the students included in the list had already completed or withdrawn. The Chair informed them that this issue has already been taken up with Student Administration and Planning and Governance and hopefully once it is resolved will provide accurate data for the PGRS online monitoring system, PURE and PRES.

SECTION 1 – SUPERVISION Average score 89 (+3)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q2.1 My supervisor/s have the skills and knowledge to support my research	93	91
Q2.2 I have regular contact with my supervisor	92	88
Q2.3 My supervisor/s provide feedback	89	88
Q2.4 My supervisor/s help me identify my training and development needs	81	76

Bangor had a variation from 98 to 78 across the Schools with most Schools performing very well with only History & Archaeology below 80%. Comments from the Schools included:

CAH	ES pointed out that Languages has relatively good results which would have resulted from the Action Plans devised after last year's PRES results. The School would continue to look into supervision expertise and admission process. HM-C commented that shortage of Academic staff due to members leaving would have affected the results from Linguistics and other low performing Schools from the College.
Chemistry	ML commented that the expectations of research students' needs clarity. Most of them are expecting clear guidance and want to be directed towards their targets and goals, which could be the reason for the variation in results.
CNS	The School has performed well. JM commented that it is important that the PGRs are made aware of the Schools' expectations and should be given opportunities to give feedback.
SHES	RR pointed out that it would be interesting to analyse the difference in opinions from MScRes and PhD cohorts. This could also be the reason for the variation in the results.
SU	RS commented that discussions with PGRs at various SU events indicated that they expect more skills development activities and are keen to undertake project management workshops to boost their confidence.
Chair and overall comments	All Schools are encouraged to ensure postgraduate researchers are given clear direction during inductions and supervisory meetings, and develop focused aims and questions to be addressed by their projects. Colleges/Schools should also be encouraging the researchers to attend the Training & Development workshops for PGRs for each stage of their programme organised by the Doctoral School. The supervisory and review committees needs to be supported with adequate staff. The changes in regulations need to be conveyed to the researchers at induction and hopefully this will bring more clarity (eg. requirement for 2 supervisors)

SECTION 2 – RESOURCES Average score 81 (-1)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q4.1 I have a suitable working space	83	77
Q4.2 There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities	82	78

Q4.3 There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and on-line resources)	82	84
Q4.4 I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research	78	76

Bangor had a variation from 93 to 54 across the Schools. SENRGy scored highly and Business and History & Archaeology scored very low. Comments from the Schools included:	
CAH	ES pointed out that all Schools from CAH have improved from last year's results. The English Literature School is still working on finding a PhD room. HM-C pointed out that when library resources become unavailable word spreads quickly. This leads to students seeking resources publically which leads to a bad reputation. Hence it is important that we should be looking into the impact of the reduction of library resources and cutting of journal subscriptions.
Chemistry	ML commented that some journal subscriptions had been cancelled by the Library.
CNS	JM commented that representatives from the Library have given presentations during School Inductions and it has helped to raise awareness. Schools should perhaps frequently email researcher groups about the available resources.
Chair and overall comments	Schools performing below 80% need to look into measures of good practice to bring up the scores. The Chair emphasised that the Schools should aim to provide good quality space and equipment to every PGR and PGR Leads should ensure that everything is in place before the student arrives. BH & MO informed all that the Library is working along with different Schools on the availability of some of the key resources for PGRs but it is equally important to educate the researchers on what is already available and how to obtain them (eg. through inter library loans which are free to postgraduate researchers up to an annual limit). The Library workshops organised by the Doctoral School are beneficial for the PGRs and help to spread awareness. WT offered training from the School of Computer Science if required. Members also discussed that students should be encouraged to access and share free resources from outside where appropriate. The Chair encouraged Schools to continue to oversee student intake based on the available resources. It would be good practice to talk to colleagues in other Universities about sharing resources- for example DTPs in the UK now work as a consortium to share equipment and resources.

SECTION 3 – RESEARCH CULTURE Average Score 68 (0)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q6.1 My dept. provides a good seminar programme	72	70
Q6.2 I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students.	68	63

Q6.3 The research ambience in my dept. or faculty stimulates my work	67	59
Q6.4 I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my dept.	64	59

Bangor had a variation from 84 to 37 across the Schools, with a number of Schools scoring very low, including Law, Chemistry and History & Archaeology Comments from the Schools included:	
Chemistry	Chemistry is still scoring low and it was noted that the School does organise events for their PGRs but will now work to welcome and engage PGRs into more diverse programmes. International students often find it difficult to travel away from Bangor to attend conferences due to family commitments.
CNS	A PhD club, run by the PGR representatives, has proven very successful. Multiple research program talks are also organised. Staff are invited to talk on topics (eg. Publishing a paper, REF) and completing PGRs give a talk on their thesis.
CAH	ES stated that the Linguistics score has improved from last time. They have continued their efforts in providing PGRs with an inclusive environment and have included them in research events along with staff. Practice on presentation skills are organised prior to conferences and PGRs are also encouraged to apply for grants/projects etc. HMC commented that it's important to monitor seminar programmes.
SU	RS suggested that probably a buddy system like the undergrad peer system involving PGR Reps would encourage researchers to actively participate in the events organised by the Schools.
Chair and overall comments	The Chair praised the Schools for their continuous efforts in organising various events for PGRs. Schools/Colleges should inform PGRs about their School Research Seminar series during their inductions. Schools are also encouraged to consider their PGRs more like staff than students, and to encourage them to be aware of the wider research environment even if it's not relevant to their particular research field. PhD clubs run by the PGRs have been successful. PGRs should be encouraged to attend and where possible contribute to, seminars, lectures and talks across the Colleges.

SECTION 4 PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT Average score 79 (+7)	**BU PRES 2018**	**Sector PRES 2018**
Q8.1 I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme	74	78
Q8.2 I understood the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	85	86
Q8.3 I understand the required standard for my thesis	81	80
Q8.4 The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me	78	76

Bangor had a variation from 94 to 62 across the Schools. **Although there was an improvement from last year, Bangor scored in the Lower quartile for this theme with an average score**

below the sector and this is an area which we must make every endeavour to improve. Modern Languages and Philosophy and Religion scored highly but Health Studies, Psychology, History and Archaeology were very low. Comments from the Schools included:	
CNS	NH pointed out that Induction programs and Viva sessions organised by the College have really helped in disseminating information and building confidence. (CNS runs a second and third year induction for PGR which proved successful).
Chemistry	ML commented that since the PGRs start at different times the School is finding it difficult to arrange fixed dates for progress reviews as per their expectations. It was also noted that students did not like the ownership of organising their meetings.
Chair and overall comments	The Chair emphasised that it is important to inform the PGRs early on about the support available throughout their research. They should be made aware of the standards & expectations, the process and procedures to be followed, and should be directed to attend the various Induction programmes happening across Colleges/ Schools. Supervisors and PGR Leads need to explain what progression involves (ie how to prepare for review meetings) and should ensure PGRs see similar theses, and provide pre-viva briefings. The training workshops organised by the Doctoral School are an important platform for the PGRs to improve and develop their skills throughout their tenure. It is important to provide them with a supportive environment.

SECTION 5 RESPONSIBILITIES Average Score 85 (+6)	**BU PRES 2018**	**Sector PRES 2018**
Q10.1 My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	74	60
Q10.2 I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	90	89
Q10.3 I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	88	87
Q10.4 Other than my supervisor/s I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme	86	77
Bangor had a variation from 98 to 59 across the Schools. Modern Languages scored highly and Psychology, Health Studies, History and Archaeology were low. Comments from the Schools included:		
SU	RS commented that the voice from PGR representatives feed into the DSB. It is a good practice to get PGR representatives involved in the activities concerning their development and welfare.	
Chair and overall comments	The Chair highlighted that this is one of the important areas according to the 'Happiness report' from the HEA. BU has scored well as we have come a long way in identifying pastoral support and care, with Co-supervision, personal Tutors, PGR Leads, College PGR Directors, Doctoral School and Student Support Services, and in monitoring engagement through meetings with supervisors be it face to face or by Skype Training in aspects of mental health and well-being are also increasing awareness. Action plans developed by Schools and followed through after	

	last years' PRES analysis seemed to have improved the communication.

SECTION 6 RESEARCH SKILLS average Score 89 (-1)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q12.1 My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	92	89
Q 12.2 My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	92	88
Q 12.3 My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	84	80
Q 12.4 My understanding of "research integrity" (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing to the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	88	86

Bangor is doing very well in this section with a variation from 97 to 57 across the Schools. Social Sciences scored particularly high and History and Archaeology low. Comments from the Schools included:	
CNS	NH commented that the lunch time informal/ formal gatherings organised in the School for PGRs seemed to have increased the %. It is important that we include the PGRs as part of the community.
Chair and Overall comments	Social Sciences and Sports Science scored high, largely because of the ESRC subject specific skills workshops Similarly, other DTP/CD/KESS 2 projects provided subject specific training and these approaches need to be built upon. The Chair reminded the PGR College Directors and School PGR Leads to encourage their PGRs to attend the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme workshops, in particular those in research skills such as *Literature Searching, Statistical Modelling and Research Data Management.*

SECTION 7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Average score 84 (-1)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q 14.1 My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	87	80
Q 14.2 My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	85	80
Q 14.3 I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	75	72
Q 14.4 I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	88	83

Bangor rated higher than the sector for each question in this section with a variation between 95 and 66 across the Schools. Philosophy and Religion scored very high, but History and Archaeology scored extremely poorly in this section. Comments from the Schools included:

Chemistry	ML commented that University wide programmes on professional development should be encouraged. Opportunities should be provided to improve media communication.
SHES	RR pointed out that as part of the pan-Wales DTP, PGRs are given the opportunity to talk about special topics such as : How to do presentations when technology is not available; How to capture an audience effectively etc.
SU	RS commented that the 3 Min thesis presentations organised during PhTea sessions have been very encouraging. DocSoc is also encouraging themes such as sessions on communicating your research to the public.
Chair and overall comments	The Chair reminded the PGR College Directors and School PGR Leads to encourage their PGRs to attend the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme workshops, in particular on *Project Management – Managing the PhD; How to be an Effective Researcher; Making Progress in the 2nd Year of Your PhD;, Surviving the Viva; Finish Up and Move on.* These courses provide important development training over and above the specific skills training such as literature searches, statistics. The Doctoral School is trialling a media and communications course for PGR through KESS. PGRS should be given more opportunities to get involved and give presentations and demonstrations in School events such as Open days etc. Our PGRs need to be able to communicate the impact of their research in a concise and easily understandable way to a wider audience, and we need to provide opportunities to do this (eg. visits to the university by government and agencies. . Opportunities to engage in project management, including managing a research budget, and presenting talks and posters at College level PGR conferences, are all elements of good practice that might be considered where these practices are not currently provided.

SECTION 8 NEW SECTION- OPPORTUNITIES Please indicate which of the following opportunities you have experienced during your research degree programme (select all that apply):	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q 16.1 Agreeing a personal training or development plan	37	44
Q 16.2 Receiving training to develop my research skills	72	74
Q 16.3 Receiving training to develop my transferable skills	40	42
Q 16.4 Receiving advice on career options	28	27
Q 16.5 Taking part in a placement or internship	10	10
Q 16.6 Attending an academic research conference	70	71
Q 16.7 Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	56	60
Q 16.8 Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	32	36
Q 16.9 Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	39	39

Q 17 Please indicate whether you have undertaken paid (or equivalent) teaching work at your institution during your research degree programme (e.g. as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Demonstrator)	45	46
Q 17a. To what extent do you agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?	74	59
Q 17b. Did you receive formal training for your teaching? (e.g. teacher/lecturer training schemes or staff development classes run by your institutions; a PGCert course	52	67

This is a new section .	
Chair and overall comments	The Chair commented that rather than the % scored, PGR comments/narratives should be looked at School level Some low scores indicated lack of awareness of opportunities at Bangor. All PGR should be undertaking a Training Needs Analysis and developing a personal plan (Q16.1). Details of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework are on the Doctoral School website and should be highlighted at inductions and further guidance given by supervisors. Similarly, all PGR should be encouraged to engage with opportunities offered by the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme (Q16.3). We do need to do more to assist with career advice and link with the ECR network. Some PhD clubs do have presentations on research career advice such as applying for postdoctoral positions and fellowships (Q16.4). We are currently looking into training in media and communications (Q16.9) and see this as a priority. We recognise that teaching opportunities vary across the University, and that training/briefing is required as per CoP 17 (Q17). The PGCert HE is available to PGR and was oversubscribed last year, but non completion was high. We recommend such training in year 2 if supervisors agree (Q.17b).It is good to see engagement in conferences (Q16.6). DTPs are providing opportunities for internships (Q16.5). We recognise that papers and books may often follow on from PGR studies, but encourage PGR and supervisors to encourage such output wherever possible (Q16.8).

SECTION 9 OVERALL EXPERIENCE Average score 83 (-1)	BU PRES 2018	Sector PRES 2018
Q 18.1 Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme.	85	80
Q 18.2 I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	80	81

The University report at https://www.bangor.ac.uk/studentengagement/info-staff/documents/2018-PRES/UniverstyPRES2018.pdf combines all of the PGR comments from all sections of the School reports. We especially draw you attention to the 8 pages of comments on priority areas for improvement.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND ACTIONS

The Chair congratulated everyone involved for the improved PRES results and indicated that PRES will now be annual, providing us with a measurement of progress which needs to be monitored constantly. This exercise of identifying examples of good practice and undertaking actions to improve areas is vital to improve the experience of our PGRs in Bangor University (although we would have had greater insight if representatives from all Schools had been available to provide feedback). Now that we have followed a method of developing Action plans and undertaking measures to improve our services, our challenge is to raise the bar further to be even better. We must make sure that Action plans are followed through, and 'strategy' meetings between Doctoral School and Schools are being arranged for this purpose this academic year. We have already begun to put in place new processes but we must address those areas where concerns have been highlighted. The new regulations which will be in place after approval in October will standardise our processes, providing clearer guidance. NH pointed out that with the successful PRES results this year it is important that the result is given some publicity similar to NSS. The Chair agreed that this is underway through the 'Together We' campaign which will now have a PGR aspect to it. We may publish results externally but must refer to sectors rather than institutions, and must be contextualise correctly (ie refer to response rates and not just highlight best scores). The Chair reminded staff that the reports must only be used for internal purposes, and must not be distributed to PGR students electronically. Hard copies used at Action plan meetings should be returned to staff running the meetings.

Colleges/ Schools are requested **to hold School or College meetings with PGRs or the PGR representatives to drill down further into the issues underpinning the scores and comments**. The Student Engagement Unit and Doctoral School are available to help facilitate these meetings if required.

Secondly, **Schools with overall satisfaction scores below the sector average (80)** should draw up a comprehensive PRES Action Plan and submit this to the Doctoral School before the end of the autumn term.

Thirdly, **Schools scoring less than 80 in any section** should specify actions to address these specific areas, especially in relation to particularly low scoring questions, and similarly submit these to the Doctoral School.

Finally, Professor Turner thanked everyone for their participation and continued support to improve the PGR experience.