Bangor University  
Doctoral School Board (DSB)  
Minutes of the meeting held on 9th May 2019

Present:  
Doctoral School  
Professor John Turner [JT] (PGR Dean, Chair), Penny Dowdney [PD], Aashu Jayadeep  
College Directors of PGR  
Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira [HM-C] (CoAHB), Prof Debbie Mills [DM] (CoHS)  
Heads of DTPs/DTCs and other centres  
Professor John Healey [JH] (Envision)  
School PGR Leads/ Representatives  
Dr Wei Shi (Law), Dr Robin Mann [RM] (H,P&SoS), Dr Line Cordes (OS), Dr William J Teahan (CS & EE), Dr Sion Williams [SW] (HS), Dr Richard Binney (Psy), Dr Ross Roberts (SHES), Dr Jane Wakeman [JW] (MS)  
PGR Administrators  
Gwenda Pritchard [GP]  
Students’ Union Representatives  
Arpita Gargesh [AG]  
PGR Student Reps  
Eluned Hudson [EH] (NS), Ashleigh Johnstone (Psychology)  

Apologies:  
Dr James McDonald [JM] (CoESE), Prof Robert Rogers (ESRC DTP), Dr Manon Jones (ESRC DTP), Dr Gwion Williams (BBS), Dr Eirini Sanoudaki (LLL), Dr Aled Lion Jones (Welsh), Prof Pwyll Ap Sion (MM), Dr Neal Hockley (Natural Sciences), Dr Nathalie Fenner (Biology), Dr Martina Lahmann (Chemistry), Mr Graham French (Ed &HD), Dr Richard Ramsey (Psychology), Julie Boulton, Christine Parry, Everil McQuarie, Janet Thomas, Anwen Williams, Mark Barrow [MB]

ACTION

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Board members introduced themselves and the Chair welcomed members to the third meeting of the Doctoral School Board for the Academic year 2018/19.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS/ACTIONS

1. With reference to minute 2.3 - page 1 (PRES reporting), JT appreciated that most of the Schools have submitted the PRES Action Plans to the DS (except for Business and Education).

2. With reference to minute 3.1 - page 2 (Financial situation & PGR concerns), with the unfortunate situation in Chemistry, meetings have been organised with the department. Dean of the College has assured all that funds will be made available to support the PGRs as far as possible. PGRs attended the meeting. EH commented that PGRs are still very apprehensive about the situation. Concerns regarding continued supervision, funding and technical support were noted. JT assured them that continuing discussions will take place case by case and requested the Board to inform the DS should any interventions be needed.

3. With reference to minute 3.2 - page 2 (PGR Monitoring 2018), JT informed the group that all except Education had now completed Monitoring in 2018.

4. With reference to minute 3.3.c - page 3 (Research Degree Result Report), the Chair reiterated that PGR Leads should convey that supervisors ensure that candidates submit
their thesis with minimal errors, rather than treating submissions as a draft. Supervisors must check theses prior to submission and recommend the document to be proof read if necessary.

**PGR Leads**

WT enquired whether there is any policy on proof reading. PD commented that it was discussed in Teaching & Learning task group and will enquire about the action taken and report back to the Board.

**PD**

5. With reference to minute 3.3.d - page 3 (Risks), JT reiterated that PGR Leads must be proactive in understanding the nature and risks associated with the proposed research fields during the direct application process and highlight them to supervisors before making offers. If required, the DS could be informed so that appropriate advice could be sought from legal experts in governance.

**PGR Leads**

6. With reference to minute 5.3.d - page 5 (PURE PhD Profiles), JT informed the group that we still do not have an update on the number of PGRs who have completed this. However, Review Committees should check that PGRs have completed their profiles. IT is still working on their priority to get PGR details onto websites.

7. With reference to minute 8- page 6 (Athena Swan PGR representation), JT requested PD to follow up on the Action.

8. The minutes of the meeting held on 17th January were confirmed as a correct record.

3. **BRIEF REPORTS**

   a. **PGR Dean’s Report**
      1. The Dean reported that he gave a presentation at BU Senate on March 5th regarding the progress and development of the Doctoral School; highlights of which are covered in the RDC minutes (7th March 2019). *(Both documents have been circulated)*.
      2. **Progress Reviews/ Exam boards**
         JT emphasised that while setting up new review committees and Exam Boards, care must be taken to ensure equality and diversity among the panel. Members discussed that problems mostly arise due to lack of awareness about the concept and not necessarily gender equality. PD commented that perhaps this should be included in the supervisors training to improve awareness.

   b. **Doctoral School [DS] Report**
      PD gave the Board an update on the work and developments within the Doctoral School:
      1. **Training & Development –**
         i. The third DS Induction for the academic year is organised for the 17th May. Very few candidates have signed up. She requested PGR leads, admins and representatives to encourage new candidates to attend the event. She reminded members that all Doctoral School resources including the Panopto recordings for these Inductions are available on the DS Blackboard site and on the DS website. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to them.
         ii. The DS have been organising drop-in sessions to support PGRs facing the current financial situation in BU. More sessions will begin in July.
         iii. More supervisory workshops have been organised during summer- July 10th & 11th.
iv. The DS will be working on the training and development programme for the next academic year over the summer. We welcome all suggestions from Schools & Colleges.

v. Interviews will take place in first week of June for the summer Internship with the DS.

2. KESS 2/KESS 2 East

KESS2: PD reported that KESS2 is celebrating Europe day today. Recently a meeting was organised with partners to assess progress. Currently KESS2 is running with 120 live projects in Bangor of which 83 are PhD and 27 Masters by Research. The KESS 2 call to recruit new Masters by Research projects is now open and will be closing soon. Another round will open in June. No PhDs are available for KESS2.

KESS 2 East: The call is now open for both PhD and Masters by Research. 30 projects are available for each in Bangor.

Discussions have begun with HEFCW & WEFO about taking the KESS scheme forward beyond 2023.

c. College Directors Reports

1. HM-C (CoAHB) reported the following:
   - The College has completed its PGR Skills workshops for this Academic Year. Even though the sessions had low attendance, the CV/jobs session was deemed useful by those who attended.
   - Data is still being collated for PGR funding in the college.
   - With the change in regulations regarding conducting of the viva, the College has successfully conducted a viva in Catalan language. The Academic discussions which followed were also in the same language.
   - The College has received some concerns from PGRs regarding fees for attending local conferences. A discussion is ongoing with the college management to develop a policy to give discount rates or some kind of fee waiver for local conferences as is the case for international conferences.

2. DM(CoHS) reported the following:
   - The College is planning to organise a conference on June 26th which will include poster sessions for 2nd and 3rd year research candidates.
   - Poor attendance was noted for an open surgery organised for candidates in respective years of study. The College is looking for ways to make the sessions more welcoming.
   - DM along with Alison Wiggett (Athena Swan Coordinator), and the Management Board for Tir na n’Og Nursery and Child Research Centre has created a survey in response to a concern from Athena Swan affecting PGRs - especially women PGRs. The survey has been sent to the DS for comments.
   - The PRES completion rate has increased compared to previous years.
   - Mr Graham French has been appointed as the PGR Lead for the School of Education and Human Development.

3. JT reported the following representing JM (CoESE):
   **Support for Chemistry PGRs**
• The recent announcement that Chemistry degrees will be discontinued will impact Chemistry PGRs.
• Concerns have been raised by PGRs about impacts on their supervision, supervisory committees, technical support, maintenance of equipment and demonstrating allocations.
• The senior management have held two consultation meetings with Chemistry students, with representatives from the College and the Doctoral School also present, and the issues raised by PGRs will be considered during the decision-making process.
• Regular meetings will continue going forward and support for individual PGRs on a case-by-case basis as new information emerges.

PGR admin. support

• Due to staff shortages and reorganisation of staff in the admin Hub, CoESE has temporarily lost one of its PGR administrators.
• There are concerns about the erosion of PGR admin support and effective administration of PGR matters going forward.

GP also commented that she is temporarily administrating short courses as well as PGR due to staff shortages. RB also raised concerns about the Admin support in Psychology. JT remarked that Admin posts are yet to be filled and hopefully the situation will improve. He requested all members to keep the DS informed of consequences of lack of support in case the situation worsens.

PRES 2019

• PRES action plans for all schools have been implemented; thanks to PGR leads, administrators and PGR reps for their hard work.
• JMC ran PGR Refresher induction sessions & afternoon tea for MScRes candidates and year 1-4 PhD researchers on Friday May 3rd.
• Hard copy letters highlighting the PRES survey and School PRES action plans and interventions were posted to every PGR in the college.
• Current PRES completion rates: CSEE 33%, SNS 38%, SOS 52%.
• CoESE PGR focussed staff and reps will have a final push to boost completion rates.

d. SU Report

JT informed the Board that MB has submitted a PGR Lead responsibilities for appointing PGR Reps document for consideration (document circulated). The SU believes that there needs to be greater clarity in relation to who has responsibility for ‘engagement’ with PGR representatives. There currently appears to be a disparity, across Schools, as to whether the Director of Student Engagement or PGR Leads should have this responsibility. The following was suggested:
To ensure consistency for PGR engagement across the University the SU would recommend the following;
• All Schools move to a model where PGR leads are responsible for PGR Student engagement, as opposed to the Directors of Student Engagement.
• All schools clarify within their structures that it is the responsibility of PGR Leads to liaise with the Students’ Union with regard to the election of PGR Reps.
• The PGR Leads work closely with elected PGR Reps within their School.
• The PGR Leads work closely with the Students’ Union VP Education, to engage and work with PGR Reps.
- The Doctoral School to promote PGR Leads to work closely with the Students’ Union.

The Board accepted the proposal and confirmed adherence to the suggestions.

AG raised the issue of the University not offering opportunities for interested PhD candidates to teach. She pointed out that after discussions with various Schools and the SU it was raised that there is disparity across the Schools on how PGRs gain teaching experience.

JT pointed out that the University policy and code 17 does not allow PGRs to teach without appropriate training and reward. Some Schools work out a teaching schedule for their candidates, depending on their funding and the candidate’s commitment towards obtaining the PGCertHE.

SW suggested that a validated programme in Human Sciences could be looked into with the possibility of extending it to all PGRs through the DS. JT suggested that a small task and end group should be formed including SW, DM and PD to look into it and coordinate with the SU.

**DTP Reports**

JH informed the group that 5 DTP students will be starting this year- 3 SNS and 2 SOS. For the CDTs, 2 studentships will be filled in CS. A collaborative conference event ‘Dr Forest’ is being organised in Birmingham. The PhD candidates themselves are given the responsibility of organising the event. JT commented that it is the expectation of a DTP to involve students and give them responsibilities in order to empower them.

DM attended the ESRC Wales DTP meetings on behalf of BU. There is a new round of DTP studentships opening in July.

JT informed the group that he will be attending the NERC DTP meeting in Bristol. It would be an opportunity to network among the DTP leads.

He requested PGR leads to take up initiatives in widening discussions in Schools in order to develop ideas for DTPs/CDTs, since this will be the channel for most UKRI PGR funding.

**PGR Leads**

4. **PGR RECRUITMENT – main issues and discussion**

The Chair mentioned that recruitment is now a highly prioritised agenda for the University. Comparing to the sector, the University should have at least 150 more high quality PGRs. He referred to the RDC (document circulated) presentation by Angharad Thomas, Director of IEC on the recruitment initiatives of the University (RDC minute 5, 7th March). The main issue we are facing is funding to attract high quality Home students and visibility in the case of International students. From the Senate presentation given on March 5th (RDC minute 6, 7th March), the following depicts the current situation:

Applications increased recently by 80% for Home/EU students and 20% for International students from last year.

But International applications have dropped by over 300% in the last 5 years.

In 2017/18 our International enrolments were 31% compared to a sector mean of 42%, and last year reduced to 20%.

It is important that all departments work to improve recruitment. Some of the actions which could be taken are the following:

- Improve the BU website information about specific areas and opportunities regarding PhD supervision.
• Increase visibility - this should be achieved by updating PURE profiles of Academics and PGRs and linking these. JR commented that visibility is an issue with PURE.
• Staff need to engage with potential PGRs at conferences and during visits to draw PGRs to Bangor.
• Only a limited number of staff are supervising and this culture needs to be changed – all T&R and T&S staff should be eligible, and the challenge may be funding but not the will to supervise.
  The DSB members discussed that lack of enthusiasm and lack of expertise among staff is noticed as a limiting factor in taking up supervision.
  JT commented that supervision is part of the job description for most academic staff and is linked to promotion, hence they should be encouraged to do so. Cross disciplinary supervision could be arranged in cases of lack of expertise. He also pointed out that the turnaround time for processing the direct applications needs to be reduced. We are competing for PGRs with some universities that are sending decisions within 24 hrs. PGR Leads in each school are the nominated officers responsible for admitting PGRs via the Direct Application process for PGRs. Clear guidance is now available for Direct Applications. It is also important that communication is done through the application so that a record of activity is maintained. This, in addition to regular reminders sent out, will hopefully speed up the turnaround time.

5. PGR REGISTRATION PERIOD & FEE
The Chair informed the Board that the RDC discussed the current PGR registration period and a proposal has been made to extend it with a nominal fee (RDC minute 4, 7th March).

The RDC discussed the following:
• A nominal fee should be charged only after 4 years for FT and 8 years for PT. - eg. around £200 - £250 for a normal extension and a higher fee of up to £500 if they are requesting use of facilities, such as laboratories.
• The proposal will be taken up by the Tuition Fee group and Recruitment and Admissions task group to be implemented from Sept 2021 for all PGRs, including new PGRs and those in their 5th year at that time.
• Special cases would always be considered according to University policies but candidates should be encouraged to suspend their studies in cases of a break due to illness. This would allow their grants to be paused and reinitiated again when they continue, and to exclude them from 4 year submission deadlines (which does not happen when extensions are granted).

JT further pointed out that these changes would ensure that our submission and completion rates and supervisor engagement are improved.

6. PROGRESS REVIEWS – implementation issues
The Chair commented that most of the Schools have now completed the review for Masters by Research candidates. PhD reviews are now being scheduled. PGR admins are requested to schedule these ASAP so that it gives sufficient time for a 3 month action plan in cases of unsuccessful reviews. HM-C commented that workload related to PGRS has increased considerably due to shortage of Admin support. JT commented that the work allocation model which is planning to be implemented from September might solve these problems. RM enquired about how the review meetings are expected to be conducted. JT commented
that the Chair and the internal reviewer is expected to look at the independent Student and Supervisor forms documents before the meeting. At the meeting the candidate should present for about half an hour, outlining the progress, achievements and timeline for future work for that particular year. This can be followed by a wider discussion and setting up of actions as a group. GP requested PGR Leads to notify Admins if there are any changes to be made to review committee membership.

Members also discussed issues arising due to restructuring of the Schools. He requested the admins/supervisors to contact IT and report problems in case of difficulties in configuring/conducting reviews through PGRS.

7. PRES
PD reported that as of 7th May, with 10 more days to go before PRES closes, we have reached 43% response rate. She requested members to keep encouraging the PGRs to respond to PRES.

8. PURE PhD profiles/ E thesis submission
JT commented that it was noticed that 5th year PhD candidates were facing difficulties in E thesis submission, via PURE, and for these, this must be done manually with the help of Library staff.

9. Publication and Bar on Access
JT noted that the DS is still receiving some embargo requests which did not have the required grounds for an embargo. He requested PGR leads to inform supervisors of the policy which can be found on the application for bar on access form.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next meeting of the Doctoral School Board needs to be scheduled for next Academic year.

PGR Admin/
PGR Leads

PGR Leads