Bangor University
Doctoral School Board (DSB)
Minutes of the Teams meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Present:
Doctoral School
Professor Andrew Hiscock [AH] (PGR Dean, Chair), Penny Dowdney [PD], Aashu Jayadeep

College Directors of PGR
Prof Debbie Mills [DM] (CoHS), Prof James McDonald (CoESE), Sian Owen (CoAHB)

Heads of DTPs/DTCs and other centres
Professor John Healey [JH] (Envision)
Professor Debbie Mills [DM] (ESRC Wales DTP)
Prof Jonathan Roberts [JR](AIMLAC UKRI)
Michael Rushton [MR](Nuclear CDT)

School PGR Leads/ Representatives
Dr Gwion Williams (BBS), Dr Erini Sanoudaki [ES] (L,L&L), Dr Wei Shi (Law), Prof. Gerwyn Williams (Welsh), Prof. Pwyl ap Sion (M&M), Dr Neal Hockley[NH] (Natural Sciences), Dr Nathalie Fenner (NS), Dr Martina Lahmann (Chemistry), Dr Line Cordes (OS), Dr William J Teahan (CS & EE), Mr Graham French(Ed &HD), Dr Richard Binney[RB] (Psy), Dr Ross Roberts [RR](SHES)

PGR Administrators
Gwenda Pritchard, Everil McQuarie, Julie Boulton

Students’ Union Representatives
PGR Student Reps
Adina Grigorie, David Ellis, Katie Medlin, Ashleigh Johnstone
Arpita Sailsesh Gargesh, (PGR Soc)

Apologies: Dr Robin Mann (H,P&SoS), Dr Sion Williams (HS), Christine Parry, Janet Thomas, Bethan Pentith, Caroline Randall, Anwen Williams, Harry Riley (SU), Marc Davies, Nebu George, Rebecca Ward, Gareth White, Andrew Van Der Schatte Olivier, Bethanie Francis, Helen Ford, Bethany Pettifor, Daniel Fishburn, Ian Green, Tara Garraty, Eluned Hudson, James Jackson, James Monks, Louisa Codd, Liam Colley, Angharad Wilkie, Hamidreza Bagheri, Beverly Pickard-Jones, Carla Marie Owen, Mandy Angharad

ACTION

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
The Chair welcomed all board members to the third meeting of the DSB for the academic year 2019/20. He reminded the members about the Teams online meeting protocols (as circulated) to be followed during the session. The Dean thanked Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira for her support to the Doctoral School as the College PGR Director of CoAHB. She will be stepping down from the role and Mrs Sian Owen, College manager will be replacing her until a new person is appointed.
2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS/ACTIONS
   i. Minute 2.ii- page 1(pre-viva Survey) will be taken up in Deans report (3.a).
   ii. With reference to minute 3.a.ii-page 4 (Leverhulme application), the Chair informed the group that internal competitions had taken place and the bid focusing on heritage and sustainability had been selected and is going forward with the colleagues leading the bid and will be refined for summer submission.
   iii. With reference to minute 3.c.ii-page 5 (CoHS report), DM requested a correction; the Tír na nÓg (TNN) survey initiative resulted in a 15% reduction in fees for PGRs and not 10%.
   iv. With reference to minute 3.c.iii-page 5 (CoAHB report), the Chair informed the Board that the Doctoral School have been promoting these workshops.
   v. With reference to minute 4.i.-page 6 (issues with PGR insurance policies), NH commented that Chris Benson clarified that University insurance covers work / research activities but not personal activities. He tabled the reply from Chris Benson (circulated).
      PD reported that a meeting will be initiated between the Doctoral School, HR and RIIO to discuss standardisation of maternity, paternity and adoption practices for PGRs.
   vi. With reference to minute 4.iii.-page 6 (issues with costcodes), the chair informed the Board that the finance department showed willingness to look at the coding issue if evidence of best practice at other Institutions can be provided.

Action for all

3. BRIEF REPORTS
   a. PGR Dean’s Report
      i. PGR regulations - taken up later in the agenda (5)
      ii. Pre-Viva Presentation- the Dean presented the results from the ‘Practice of a pre-PhD viva public presentation survey’ conducted by the DS (report circulated). He informed the group that more PGRs (37) than staff (1) responded and the responses seemed to be divided on both sides. He proposed to the Board that the pre-viva presentation could be made an optional rather than a mandatory requirement. He invited everyone's views with this regard.
      JH commented that he would support the proposal and hoped that witnessing more presentations would encourage the PGRs to support these presentations in the future. He also commented that it would have been good to see more staff responses. The members of the group supported the proposal.
      The Chair added that the DS could also help to advertise these presentations if requested.

PGR Directors/ Leads to communicate to College
iii. PGR forward planning- the Chair invited PD to report to the Board the measures undertaken by the DS regarding the PGR forward planning exercise ongoing during this unprecedented situation with Covid-19. PD reported that the Doctoral School developed PGR forward planning documents and a process to enable us to assess the impacts of Covid-19 on every PGR project across the University. PGRs and their supervisors need to generate a clear and detailed forward plan including a risk assessment if necessary. She thanked everyone for their cooperation and effort to put this in place at such short notice. The reports submitted will be analysed by the end of May to be submitted to Prof. David Thomas, PVC Research & Impact.

iv. Review of Doctoral School committees- The Dean informed the Board that the DS has reviewed the DSB and RDC membership as had been requested and have noticed an overlap between them. The DSB membership has been maintained as it is and the RDC membership has been slimmed down. The CDT/DTP members in RDC will now only be attending the DSB meetings. The DS will be setting up individual steering group meetings with them twice yearly. They will be required to send reports to the DS which will be reported to the RDC. The RDC will now include representatives from student administration as per the ToC. The proposed reporting structure has been submitted to QA & VU for approval and will be circulated when approved.

v. Recruitment data - the Dean reported the recruitment stats. as per BI reporting (as of 04.05.20) (document circulated). He requested PGR Directors/ Leads to go through the data and inform the Doctoral School if they notice any discrepancies.

b. Doctoral School Report

PD informed the Board about the latest DS initiatives:

i. Covid –19 - As mentioned earlier (Agenda 3.a.ii) the DS has been working to adapt to the Covid-19 situation. We have been keeping the PGR community updated about the evolving situation along with Prof. David Thomas. Groups and discussions have been set up and we are also working with the SU to try and offer a forum for our PGRs to raise concerns and deal with issues. PGR forward planning documents have been prepared, the PGR regulations are being reviewed and appropriate measures are being taken to accommodate all kinds of unforeseen situations.

ii. The Doctoral School has arranged its third Induction for PGRs on 14th May 2020. The Induction will be our first online induction event and will be offered through the Teams platform. 13 PGRs have registered for the event to date.

iii. The DS has now started offering most of the workshops which make up the training & development programme online. Monthly reminders are being sent out as usual via the PGR mailing list. It’s been a very positive learning experience. The uptake has been good, and we have got some good feedback from the PGRs as the sessions are interactive webinars using breakout groups and virtual whiteboards. Panopto recorded sessions from the Library are also available in the Doctoral School Blackboard site.
ES commented that she is receiving good feedback about the online workshops organised by the DS.

iv. The undergraduate Internship project unfortunately will not be going ahead this summer as we could not recruit an undergraduate under the current uncertain circumstances.

c. **College Director Reports** – No issues to report

d. **DTP Reports**

  **Envision**: JH reported the following:
  - Major conference has had to be postponed for 12 months.
  - UKRI Covid-19 provision has taken up a big part of the management board’s time. JH has signed off all students’ forms to allow them to apply for 6 months additional UKRI funding. Some already had extensions outside of the provision. These costs will have to be covered from within the Envision budget by diverting monies from the training budget.
  - Issues arising with UKRI prioritising students who are about to finish rather than those who are in the middle of their research programme; these are more profoundly affected and there is no provision for them.
  - This situation may change what the DTP can offer going forward.

  **ESRC Wales**: DM reported the following:
  - Reviewed collaborative studentships, Bangor has been awarded three in Bilingualism Support, Exercise Science and Management in Business. In the general studentships three out of four were funded in Management & Business, Sport and Exercise Science and Psychology.
  - Reviewed several postdoctoral fellowships and Bangor won one in Bilingualism that will go through for the interview stage.
  - DM reported that with the Covid-19 situation they are also facing a similar situation as Envision with UKRI ESRC now deciding to give six-month extensions to students in year three when it is the year two students who needed this the most.
  - There will be a blanket extension of six months for students who are supposed to have completed by 31st of March 2021. Other students will be handled on a case by case basis. The process has not been determined yet but the way they will be funded is by a reduction in future studentships from the ESRC DTP.

  Some changes happening:
  - Instead of going for the collaborative studentships which would open up bidding over the summer and then finish in October, both the collaborative and the general studentships will happen in the spring of next year.
  - Instead of each pathway putting forward three potential studentships, there will be four. The implications of that could be that some of the bigger pathways and larger institutions will take all the studentships. This will be trialled for a year to see if that favours some pathways over others. So, BU really needs to get some high-quality applications.
  - A very extensive response from the ESRC DTP is available on their website as well as a 19-page FAQ for students.

  **KESS 2**: PD reported the following:
• Bangor leads this project on behalf of the eight universities in Wales. All PhD places have been filled. A call will be opening soon for the remaining Research Masters opportunities.

• There are now 57 live PhDs and nine live Research Masters at Bangor. The numbers do not reflect the overall numbers of PhDs through the project as there are completers coming through now.

• Negotiations are ongoing with WEFO to support our PhDs in the current situation, particularly those who are to complete experimental lab work. We are hoping to be able to offer three months additional stipend support to those who need it.

• The KESS2 Grad Schools, which are cohort building activities run as residential events across all eight universities are now being conducted online. There has been very positive feedback with small communities building very quickly amongst the cohorts.

AI CDT: JR presented the report on the AIMLAC CDT (document circulated).

• The AIMLAC UKRI Centre for Doctoral Training in Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Advanced Computing is continuing well. The CDT is led by Swansea University and brings together academics from Aberystwyth, Bangor, Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea focusing around AI, Machine learning and Advanced Computing.

• 2020 start - Successfully completed recruitment for the October 2020 start. November 2019 invited proposal submissions; shortlisted five topics and supervisors; went to national adverts (incl. findaphd). Had ten applicants who submitted by the deadline. Shortlisted four for interview. Interviews took place on 9th March and two PhD studentships were offered to start in October 2020.

• COVID-19 risks.
  o Completed the risk mitigation details, like other projects.
  o Risks are low in most instances, because our research can be achieved remotely and by computer.
  o Purchasing items needed for the research, such as laptops, or specialist books were identified by the students as being an issue.
  o Different working conditions, and awareness of wellbeing of students and staff involved and health and safety of computing use, was also identified.
  o Also planning for a potential remote start, for the new intake in October.

Nuclear CDT: MR reported the following:

• Nuclear energy CDT is with Cambridge, Bristol and the Open University in association with Imperial College, who lead the CDT.

• It’s a follow-on CDT from an earlier one with Bristol and Bangor.

• Some residential training was conducted in the autumn. Due to the association with the Open University, there are already a significant number of online training components offered to the students.

• For Bangor the scheduled residential course in July will be moved to online this year due to the Covid-19 situation.

• Currently things are going well with the students in their first year and they are collaborating across universities with social interactions online.

• The trip to Belgium will be postponed to next year.

• Students in Bangor are introduced to a much larger amount of modelling into what they are doing.
4. **ISSUES FROM PGR LEADS/ PGR REPS / ADMIN**
   i. **Issues from PGR Leads**
      a. **PGR admissions (and recruitment)**- A paper was presented by NH (as circulated).
         The DSB reviewed the PGR admissions system in 2018. Some useful changes were made by both admissions and the apps team. The proposal now is to identify ways to make the admissions process work more efficiently for all concerned, reducing the effort required from PGR leads and improving the experience for applicants. NH requested feedback from other PGR leads. JH commented that it would be a good idea to have a deadline to get the feedback in so as to implement the proposed processes sooner. The Chair requested members to send their contributions to Neal within two weeks so that the matter can be taken up with admissions and IEC.

   b. **Issue with a PGR Viva**- RR raised a query about conducting a viva for a PGR who is now employed as a staff member (from May 1st.). As per regulations, staff members are required to have two external examiners but his viva had been organised prior to becoming a staff member with one internal and one external examiner. He enquired if the School need to rearrange the viva accordingly. The Chair commented that the School can carry on with standard procedure considering him as a PGR candidate and not a staff PGR since he has only become a staff member quite recently.

   ii. **Issues from PGR Reps** – None to report

   iii. **Issues from PGR admin support** – None to report

5. **UPDATES TO PGR REGULATIONS**
   The Chair updated the Board about the work on regulations:
   The Force Majeure Academic Regulation (Regulation 22) has been published, taking into consideration the current situation with Covid-19 and for future emergencies. A final meeting is scheduled for June for the publication of the amended conventional PGR regulation. He outlined the initiatives that the Doctoral School are proposing, having considered feedback and request from the PGR community. These are in the final stages of review.
   1. PGR candidates may be able to move more than once between full time and part time study mode, particularly in response to their own changing circumstances during their programme with the agreement of their supervisory committee the SSCC where necessary.
   2. PGR continuation fee amendment- candidates continue to have access to Library and facilities and supervision continues with a proposed nominal fee.
   3. Not all Schools are operating a probationary year for MPhil/PhD and it is proposed that this be optional.
   4. In Force Majeure circumstances, if all the examiners agree, the thesis could be submitted electronically alone.
5. MSC x Research – changes proposed by James McDonald [JM]: a write up period of three months; no viva requirement for cases where corrections concerned presentation of work.

JM welcomed the change and thanked everyone who contributed to the fifth amendment in the regulation.

RR enquired about the nominal fee for the writing up period. JM commented that this would apply to new PGRs joining from 20/21 after their year four. PD offered to circulate documents from planning to clarify this.

PD

6. PURE PhD PROFILES/EMBARGO

i. PURE
The Chair reminded members to encourage staff and PGRs to complete their PURE profiles. It is important to showcase our supervisory expertise for the purpose of recruitment.

JM enquired about the plans to get the PURE profiles onto the College websites. The Chair commented that the DS will look into this and report back to the Board.

Doctoral School

ii. PGRS
The Chair noted that PGRS – the annual review monitoring will be taken up at the next meeting.

iii. PRES
PD informed the Board that PRES will be closing on May 17th. Currently the response rate is 43%.

The Doctoral School will send another mail merge to encourage more PGRs to respond. Mandy will join us for our PRES meeting in September.

iv. PGR data
The Dean informed the group that discussions are ongoing to ensure accuracy of PGR data. Funding information is often held in different places and can be inaccurate. Discussions are being held to consider a way forward.

7. PGR Event: ARC Conference
The Chair invited ASG, president of the PGR Society (PGR Soc) to talk about the proposed ARC Conference.

ASG updated as follows:

- The PGR Soc. had been planning a multidisciplinary (free) conference for all our PGRs at Bangor before the lockdown.
- Its’ now proposed to be a virtual event celebrating Diversity of Research across all disciplines in Bangor University. The proposed date is 4th of August.
- Anyone interested in research is welcome to be part of the conference.
- The platform is yet to be decided.
The chair welcomed the initiative and extended Doctoral School/ College support in making the event a success.

8. **AOB**
   Eirini enquired about whether there had been any communication from the College Cymreg regarding their funded PGRs during the Covid-19 situation.

9. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
   The next meeting of the Doctoral School Board will be scheduled for next academic year.