

Report of the Research Degrees Committee

Present: Professor John Turner (Dean & Chair), Dr I ap Dewi, Mrs D Barnard, Dr Penny Dowdney, Professor J Healey, Professor A Jaafar, Professor R Rogers, Mrs A Jayadeep, Dr M Lahmann, Dr D Markland, Dr O Rees, Mrs K Chidley (Secretary)

Apologies: Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira, Dr S Jackson

Date: 8th June 2017 with continuation of business on 26th June 2017

13 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

1 There had been some confusion over the distribution of the corrected Minutes and it was agreed to circulate the correct version to the Committee members again. **Action: KC to resend Minutes.**

2 **2[B]** Discussions had yet to take place over including the CNS training modules in the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme. It was noted that since the last meeting, requests for inclusion had also been received by Bangor Business School and Chemistry, and it was agreed that School and College training programmes should be included in the Doctoral School programme. The Doctoral School would assist with the administration, advertising and registration of these courses, but the Schools & Colleges would run the courses. **Action: DoGS to inform Doctoral School of training courses.**

2[E] AHRC – Unfortunately the North West Consortium DTP had informed Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira that they would not be admitting new partners into the DTP. They intend to *‘develop a strategy related to the distinctive regional characteristics of the north-west of England, and felt that the inclusion of Bangor would detract from the strategic focus on the region.’*

2[I] Students’ Union – It was reported that once the new team of Sabbatical Officers had settled into their posts, then discussions would take place over organising a University PGR event. Professor Healey recommended that the Students’ Union discuss the possibility of using Treborth as a potential location. **Action: JRT & PJD to meet with SU reps regarding PG event.**

7 Institutional Review - Correction - the PGR Dean was not a member of the Institutional Review Group, but rather will be invited to attend meetings when PGR matters are to be discussed.

14 REPORTS

1. Dean’s Report

A PRES Update – PRES closed on 18th May with a response rate of 54% (328 respondents) with considerable variance across Schools. Student Engagement Unit advised that the types of School reports would depend upon response rates: Schools will either receive a full report including student comments (similar to those that are produced for the NSS and PTES); a

tabulated summary with per cent scores for each question, or no report if less than a 20% return. Schools with overall satisfaction below the sector average will be asked to present Action Plans.

At the continuation meeting, the initial results of the PRES were presented and it was noted that the overall satisfaction was 87% which was higher than the sector. Five areas were identified as below the sector average – induction, monitoring, standard of assessment, assessment procedures and student responsibilities. A Doctoral School Board workshop will be arranged in late September to analyse PRES results. Concerns were expressed that some Postgraduates were unable to access the survey due to not being recognised in Banner.

Action: JRT & PJD to organise PRES workshop for Doctoral School Board.

Action: PJD to follow up Banner issues with Academic Office.

- B Institutional Review Group** – On 12th May, the IRG addressed the PGR Mapping document against HEA Chapter B11 indicators, focussing on amber areas. Revised PGR Regulations and PGR Handbook will be required (indicators 1 & 2); KPI were identified and will be compiled into an annual report to address indicator 3; PRES and the PGRS online monitoring will address indicator 4; the PGR offer letter is to be revised to address Indicator 7, and a discussion on plans for Personal Tutors is to be addressed in consultation with the SU for indicator 18. **Action: Doctoral School to update B11 Map following above sub-actions by Academic Registry, Admissions, Doctoral School and SU.**
- C PG Cert HE Programme** – The PG Cert HE has been revised into a 2 stage programme commencing in September 2017, with stage 1 providing 30 credits on practical aspects of teaching through 15 fortnightly workshops (10 of which must be attended) and stage 2 providing a further 30 credits on pedagogical research. Stage 1 was appropriate for PGR to attend. **Action: Aashu Jaydeep -Doctoral School to advertise amongst PGR.**
- D PG Cert in Research Methodology** –Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee (SRSCC) had referred consideration of a request from Bangor Business School to provide a PG Cert in Research Methodology. Specifically, the impact of the proposal if approved on parity of student experience; double counting of credit; and whether an award was necessary rather than a transcript were considered, following a brief introduction by Prof A. Jafaar. The Committee had no objections to the proposal and recommended approval by SRSCC. **Action: Dr Ioan ap Dewi to report to SRSCC the RDC recommendation.**
- E Recruitment and Admissions** – It was reported that PGR Home applications were down by 38% but offers up at 54% with an increase in accepts and admissions on previous year. International applications were down 41% and offers down 25%. Turnaround times for PGR applications had improved with Home/EU down from 30 to 19 days and Overseas from 32 to 27 days on average.
- 2 Doctoral School Board** – the Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of 27th April, and the Dean highlighted presentations on visa compliance by Ann Parry of Academic Registry, and electronic only submission of final theses by Dr Beth Hall of Library and Archives; PhD representatives request to manage their own research training grant accounts; and the aim to get at least a 50% response in PRES.
- 3 Doctoral School** – Dr Penny Dowdney gave the Committee an update on the work undertaken by the Doctoral School since the last meeting. The Training and Development

Programme was coming to the end of its second semester, a review will take place and a report will be produced and circulated. *Panopto* is being used to record some of the internally provided sessions that will subsequently be available on the Doctoral School *Blackboard* site. Work is also commencing on the Central PGR Induction and it has been agreed to hold it during the first week in October as opposed to during Welcome Week, to ensure greater attendance. A further Supervisor Training workshop has been arranged for early July and both new and experienced staff are encouraged to attend.

- 4 **Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarships application** – The Dean reported that a small team were developing the Leverhulme submission on the broad theme of Animal Movement, due by 17th July.
- 5 **KESS II** – Dr Penny Dowdney reported that across Wales there were 210 projects across Wales with Bangor having 70, 54 PhD and 16 Master by Research.
- 6 **ESRC DTP** – Professor Rogers referred to the proposed restructuring of the University and noted that any knock on effects to the available pathways and training would need to be reported to the ESRC.
- 7 **NERC Envision** – Professor John Healey reported that additional Industrial Infrastructure studentships were announced and Bangor had been successful in gaining 2 in Envision and 4 in STARS. He would in future also report on the NERC STARS CDT.
- 8 **College Reports – CNS** – It was reported that the College of Natural Sciences has advertised the role of the College Director of Postgraduate Studies for an initial period of 6 months pending College mergers. This post is important in continuing the development of strategy, training, DTP management and College level induction.

15 PGR Personal Tutors

The Committee had been asked to consider the issue of Personal Tutors for Postgraduate Researchers by the Students' Union and the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning. The Dean identified that there were three options for undertaking this role: (1) any member of the academic staff outside the supervisory team; (2) the School Director of Postgraduate Studies (Senior Tutor) except where the DoGS is the supervisor; and (3) the Chair of the Review Committee. There were arguments for and against each of the options with the Committee tending to favour that of the Chair of the Review Committee as the Personal Tutor (a practice already implemented in CNS and at least 2 other Schools), because this person is a senior member of staff independent of the supervisory team who can provide support throughout the PGR programme and through the online monitoring system. The Students' Union however continued to have reservations regarding the Chair undertaking that role and it was therefore agreed that the Students' Union along with the Doctoral School would undertake further consultation with the student body. **Action – JT, PD, DB to organise a consultation meeting with PGR student representatives.**

16 ONLINE MONITORING 201617

It was reported that all Schools had engaged in using the PGRS on-line system to undertake annual and additional monitoring of postgraduate researchers. The system is now supported by the IS Apps team who are rectifying issues identified. It was suggested that further clarification was required on the role of the Chair and Internal and this will need to be re-emphasised by the Doctoral School. The number of e-mails generated by the system was a matter for concern and it was agreed

to remove these for the next period of review. It was also agreed that feedback on the system will be used to review the system. **Action – JT, PD to clarify roles of Review Committee members and to invite feedback for review of the PGRS.**

17 REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAMMES

The Dean reported that the review of the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Programmes was continuing, and draft regulations have been circulated for consultation and a number of revisions and suggestions have been made. It was the intention to submit the revised regulations to the Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee at its meeting in October. Issues discussed in detail were:

Role of College Director of Graduate Studies– It was noted that currently each College did not have a College Director of Graduate Studies. It was reported that with the recommended restructuring of the Colleges this would be an excellent opportunity for the University to establish College Graduate Schools and a Director of Graduate Studies in each College. It was suggested however that the role of the College Director of Graduate Studies would need to be clearly defined, and that the role would be strategic rather than operational.

Staff candidature – It was agreed to remove the constraints on the mode of study.

Admissions Interview- It was recommended shortlisted PhD student should undertake an interview as part of the admissions process, and this could include interviews by Skype/video conferencing

Supervisor qualifications – further information was required regarding lead supervisor expertise (specifically degree level and experience).

Abstract length – It was agreed to change the minimum to 600 words.

Consistency in word count – The regulations do specify that a PhD thesis must not exceed 100,000 words, an MPhil 60,000 and a MSc by Research 50,000 words.

Language of thesis – It was agreed to relax the current regulations and to note that a thesis could be produced in any language provided that it was appropriate to the subject area and could be satisfactorily examined.

Dual Awards – a cross reference to the Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision was required in the regulations.

PhD by Published Works – It was noted that this term and its separate regulations were removed. The revised regulations permit Schools to waive two years of study for postgraduate researchers who have already undertaken or published relevant research.

Time between submission and viva – It was agreed to specify within 3 months but acknowledge in some cases three months may not be sufficient.

Video conference and Skype – it was agreed that the regulations should state that the viva could be undertaken via video conference or Skype if appropriate, but that conditions need to be specified. Furthermore it was noted that the regulations should state that the use of any recording device requires the permission of all parties.

Action: JT, PD and lapD to redraft PGR Regulations.

18 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Dean reported that the Committee would in future receive and analyse key performance indicators, including admissions & recruitment, profiles, monitoring, submission rates, withdrawal rates and others. **Action: JT, PD, Academic Registry, International Office.**