

**UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK
BOARD OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

OPEN MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10 FEBRUARY 2022, 09.30AM, ONLINE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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| Present | Professor Dan Branch | DB | Chair |
| | Ant Brewerton | AB | Representative from Library |
| | Professor Jennifer Burns | JB | Chair, Arts Faculty Education Committee |
| | Professor Jon Coaffee | JC | CDT representative, Social Science and Arts |
| | Dr Kurt Debattista | KD | Co-opted member of academic staff |
| | Dr Ross Forman | RF | Representative of Board of Faculty of Arts |
| | Dr Rebecca Freeman | RF | Dean of Students |
| | Dr Peter Gammon | PG | Co-opted member of academic staff |
| | Dr Lee Griffin | LG | Deputy Chair |
| | Dr Emily Henderson | EH1 | Co-opted member of academic staff |
| | Dr Xiaodong (Wes) Lin | WL | Representative of Board of Faculty of Arts |
| | Dr James Lloyd-Hughes | JLH | Representative of Board of Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine |
| | Professor Davide Nicolini | DN | Co-opted member of academic staff |
| | Professor Jose Rodrigo | JR | CDT representative, Science, Engineering and Medicine |
| | Professor Mark Steel | MS | Representative of Board of Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine |
| | Michele Underwood | MU | Research Development Manager |
| | Professor Martin Wills | MW | Chair, Science, Engineering and Medicine Faculty Education Committee |
| | Roberta Wooldridge Smith | RWS | Representative of Student Careers and Skills |
| Dr David Wright | DW | Member of academic staff appointed by Senate | |
| Attending | Nicola Attridge | NA | Finance Manager, PGR Funding |
| | Nicola Ellis-Thomas | NET | PG Scholarships Project Officer |
| | Andreana Glendinning | AG | Representative of PGR SSLC (IER) |
| | Elizabeth Hough | EH2 | Assistant Director (Head of Admissions Services) |
| | Zoi Ioannidou | ZI | Representative of PGR SSLC (School of Life Sciences) |
| | Laura Larard | LL | Assistant Secretary, Administrative Officer (Doctoral College) |
| | Rhiannon Martyn | RM | Secretary, Head of Doctoral College |
| | Becca McGowan | BM | Representative of PGR SSLC (School of Life Sciences) |
| | Camilla Pitton | CP | Representative of PGR SSLC (Philosophy) |
| | Louise Sutcliffe | LS | Postgraduate Student Development Officer |
| | Dannie Verity | DV | Representative of PGR SSLC (PAIS) |
| | Dr Rebecca Vipond | RV | CDT & PG Scholarships Coordination Manager |
| Ref | Item | | |
| 039 | Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Sara Hattersley, Professor Graeme MacDonald, Dr Debbi Marais, Nathan Parsons, Dr Jennifer Smith, Dr John Snape and Dr Naomi Waltham-Smith. | | |
| 040 | Declarations of conflict of interest No new declarations were made. | | |
| 041 | Minutes of last meeting held on 11 November 2021 | | |

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| | The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2021 were received and approved. |
| 042 | <p>Matters arising from last meeting on 11 November 2021</p> <p>The matters arising were as follows:</p> <p>(a) Nomination of student member on the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee (minute 022(a)-BGS111121)</p> <p>Simon Gansinger had been nominated as student member on the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee. The Chair noted that the wider issue of student representation would be discussed with the Postgraduate Officer (Students' Union).</p> <p>(b) 'Fellowship' status for graduated PGRs (minute 023(a)-BGS111121)</p> <p>The Chair had met with HR and the Information and Digital Group (IDG) and noted comments from WBS on a preferred solution; discussions are continuing.</p> <p>(c) Warwick Postgraduate Teaching Community (minute 033-BGS111121)</p> <p>SH had sent apologies so this item was deferred to the next meeting.</p> <p>(d) End of stipend on thesis submission (minute 037-BGS111121)</p> <p>The Chair reported that this would be further considered as part of a wider review of university funded scholarships at the next meeting of the Board.</p> |
| Chair and Secretary's Update | |
| 043 | <p>Chair's Business</p> <p>(a) Update to membership</p> <p>The Chair reported amendments to the membership of the Board since the last meeting (043(a)-BGS100222), welcoming Dr Emily Henderson. The Board noted its thanks to AB for his valuable input during his membership, noting that he would be shortly leaving the University. A replacement representative from the Library would be identified in due course.</p> <p>(b) Amendments to MRes/PhD Finance and Economics (N3P5) and MRes/PhD Business and Management (N1QY)</p> <p>See item 055 below.</p> <p>(c) Enhancing Research culture bid outcomes</p> <p>The Chair reported on a number of University/Research England funding bids, noting that further updates would be provided in due course.</p> <p>(d) Training and support for supervision</p> <p>This was an area that had arisen from the Doctoral College's meetings with academic departments; that it is imperative (for EDI related and other reasons) that supervisors are properly equipped to support PGRs. Any Board members interested in the design of options for future consideration by the Board were advised to contact the Chair/Secretary directly.</p> |
| 044 | <p>Deputy Chair's Business</p> <p>(a) Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)</p> <p>The Deputy Chair reported that proposals to make the HEAR available for PGTs had been approved by Education Executive and asked the Board whether there was an appetite to open up to PGRs to record extra-/co-curricular activities. The Board noted that there did not seem to be the demand for HEAR at PGR level across the sector so this would be considered low priority in relation to other potential system developments.</p> <p>(b) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) update</p> |

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| | <p>PTES would be running from 14 March for 10 weeks. The Deputy Chair reported that the suggestion of a Russell Group-only postgraduate survey had been floated. Noting the importance of learning opportunities from institutions across the sector and survey fatigue, the Board did not support the suggestion.</p> |
| 045 | <p>Secretary's Business</p> <p>(a) Scholarships update</p> <p>RM reported that the Doctoral College (DC) were forced to extend the scholarships deadline due to the delayed upgrade to SITS. BV noted the DC's thanks to departments for considering applications, noting that assessor panels would be held in early March for Monash and Chancellor's International Scholarships. The DC was aware of a technical issue with the importing of references affecting some applicants and was liaising with IT Services to ensure that no affected applicant is adversely affected.</p> <p>The deadline for the China Scholarships Council (CSC) would be 2 March. Departments were encouraged to put forward applications in order to maximise the chances of successful awards. The DC was working with Professor Sai Gu, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (China) to help better understand the context of the CSC awarding process. The DC was also liaising with Admissions and Immigration to look into ATAS refusal rates.</p> <p>It was noted that the timing of allocation of departmental nominations had been later than usual this year. NET advised that the DC would look to announce departmental nomination quotas at an earlier stage next year.</p> <p>(b) 'Personal tutoring' survey update</p> <p>RM reported that feedback received by the DC was that PGRs aren't necessarily aware what support is available to them. Information highlighting the various areas of support had been shared with academic departments to pass on to PGRs as appropriate; this would feed into a larger piece of work around supervision.</p> <p>(c) Covid extensions</p> <p>RV reported that the single final deadline for covid extension requests was on 30 January; over 350 requests had been received. RV expressed thanks to academic departments for their support in ensuring applications were received by the deadline. Assessment panels would be held shortly, with all decisions being communicated by mid-April.</p> <p>(d) Doctoral College update</p> <p>RM reported that the DC was working with colleagues at the Universities of Nottingham (project lead), Leeds and Edinburgh on an Advance HE funded project focused on measuring success for PGRs. The DC was also working with Coventry (project lead), Glasgow and others to be confirmed to identify good practice for partnerships at PGR level e.g. co-tutelles, joint awards. Updates would be provided to the Board in due course.</p> <p>The DC is supporting the MIBTP to utilise funding for supporting EDI related activities, due to be spent by 31 March 2022.</p> <p>Departments may notice changes to the navigation of the DC website over the coming weeks; this is being done to improve PGR experience.</p> <p>MU reported that the Researcher Development Online programme will continue online and is still extremely busy. From May onwards the focus will be on careers/next steps; MU will be in contact with departments to ask for speakers and input.</p> |
| Students' Union Update | |
| 046 | <p>Students' Union Update</p> <p>The Postgraduate Student Officer had sent apologies, so no update was provided.</p> |

| Faculty Updates | |
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| 047 | <p>Faculty of Arts</p> <p>JB reported that:</p> <p>The Faculty Education Committee received updates on the anti-racist pedagogy project, decolonisation initiatives, and employability.</p> <p>PGR use of the new Arts building has been positive so far, with dedicated departmental space and shared faculty space for all PGRs and postdocs.</p> <p>The Internationalisation of Education strategy was presented by Prof Angouri, noting that there was no specific mention of PGs (taught or research). Action: invite Prof Angouri to present the strategy to a future meeting of BGS.</p> |
| 048 | <p>Faculty of Social Sciences</p> <p>The Chair provided the following update on NWS' behalf:</p> <p>The Faculty would be keen to work with Lee Griffin on the PGT Strategy as it evolves and noted in particular the interconnectedness with plans for an FSS grand challenge in terms of interdisciplinary aspirations, as well as for a clear, distinctive curriculum offer and fostering a sense of PGT student community and belonging.</p> <p>The ESRC review of the PhD in Social Sciences, on which Jon Coaffee reported to EFSS, brings interesting considerations for placements and employability-centred learning; members were interested in what this meant for the future direction of DTCs. In particular to think about the overlap with enhancing the principle of employability-informed opportunities within our PGT offer.</p> <p>Alternatives models for the Shape of the Academic Year project would require careful consideration through the lens of the PGT experience. NWS reported constructive conversations with Chris Luck about the distinctiveness of PGT delivery viz. UG and the need in particular to make room for both student research and opportunities for placements/internships, as well as the variety of types and rhythms assessment in PGT programme and the issues of inclusivity that arise among these cohorts.</p> |
| 049 | <p>Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine</p> <p>MW reported that he had encouraged academic departments to fully engage with meetings with the Doctoral College and provide as much feedback as possible. MW also reminded colleagues about the upcoming Warwick Industrial Fellowship scheme.</p> |
| PGR SSLC business | |
| 050 | <p>PGR SSLC Business</p> <p>(a) School of Life Sciences</p> <p>BM and ZI reported that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SSLC had discussed the importance of supervisors being trained to identify when PGRs need to be signposted for mental health support, and training more mental health first aiders • Anonymous reports had been received about concerns around unconscious bias; the SSLC was looking to identify ways to encourage PGRs and supervisors to complete the Moodle training. AB suggested that the SSLC may wish to contact the ED&I network for support. BV also invited the SSLC to contact her for assistance • The SSLC noted that PGRs based at Gibbet Hill would be negatively affected by the University's new parking charges and questioned whether PGRs could be eligible for the discounted rate currently restricted to staff on lower grades. The Chair advised that he had already raised this concern with those responsible for parking, but would be happy to pursue this further if provided with additional information. <p>(b) Politics and International Studies</p> |

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| | <p>DV reported that the SSLC had received concerns about the treatment of non-funded students within the department, noting that unfunded students may feel embarrassed to raise issues in relation to the need for financial support due to a perception that they are less deserving than funded PGRs. There is a risk that non-funded students are excluded from certain opportunities such as those provided by CDTs.</p> <p>(c) Philosophy</p> <p>CP noted concerns about access to PGR study for potential applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds, noting the lack of scholarship opportunities for MA study. The Chair noted that this concern had also arisen from conversations with academic departments, particularly around the progression from undergraduate to postgraduate study.</p> <p>(d) Institute for Employment Research</p> <p>AG reported that there were no issues to raise from the IER SSLC but welcomed being given the opportunity to attend the meeting.</p> |
| Items for Approval/Discussion | |
| 051 | <p>Admissions update</p> <p>(a) PGR 2021/22 recruitment and admissions data</p> <p>EH reported that the data set out in paper 051(a)-BGS100222 suggested that the admissions position seemed to be returning to more usual trends. The situation was particularly positive for Science, Engineering and Medicine but it should be noted that this was still early in the admissions cycle with increases in home and arts applications expected later in the year.</p> <p>(b) English Language Institutional Assessment Policy</p> <p>EH reported that the policy had been revised as set out in paper 051(b)-BGS100222 and included additional grounds for exemption. EH advised that the requirements were driven by conditions of the UKVI sponsor licence and that the University was aware that there had been greater scrutiny around PG entrants to the UK in recent years.</p> <p>EH also reported that there was the potential for the Admissions Service to allocate specific resource to focus on PGR admissions. The Board supported this proposal, noting that it would be useful for academic departments to have a single point of contact for queries relating to PGR.</p> <p>The Board recorded its thanks to colleagues in Admissions for their ongoing support and efforts to navigate UKVI requirements.</p> |
| 052 | <p>PGR submissions and outcomes</p> <p>(a) Submission rates</p> <p>LL reported that data on submission rates was presented to the Board on an annual basis (052(a)-BGS100222). Unsurprisingly on time submission rates are much lower than previously due to the pandemic. 20% of the latest cohort had not completed standard registration period at the time data was extracted so the rates are likely to change. DN noted that the data raised questions about the appropriate maximum length of registration for PhD study, noting the continued flexibility due to the effects of the pandemic, and suggested that this be considered at a future meeting of BGS.</p> <p>(b) PGR examination outcomes</p> <p>LL reported that some categories of data included in the data (052(b)-BGS100222) e.g. disability, contain a small number of PGRs so it may be difficult to draw conclusions. The paper represents a fairly basic presentation of the data i.e. non-white PGRs appear to be less likely to receive a pass outcome than their white counterparts, but what it doesn't show for example is the ethnicity split across faculties where PGRs in Social Sciences and Arts are more likely to receive a pass than those in SEM.</p> |
| 053 | Doctoral College annual meetings with departments |

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| | <p>RM reported that the Doctoral College had met with almost all academic departments over the past few weeks. Departments had completed annual programme review forms in advance of the meetings (a summary report will be provided to the next meeting of the Board). Attendees included Directors of Graduate Studies, Heads of Departments, and in some cases PGRs. Issues discussed included PRES results, supervisor 'training', central scholarship funding, and any continuing covid-related issues. The DC will be taking forward action points arising from the meetings, including around the issue of cross-departmental/Faculty training opportunities in response to feedback from PGRs wanting to access training opportunities/build research culture outside of individual departments.</p> |
| 054 | <p>EDI Working Group update</p> <p>The most recent meeting of the Working Group focused on disability, including discussions on supporting PGRs with neuro-diversity. It was acknowledged that PGRs don't necessarily feel that they can engage with Disability Services due to a false perception that it was for UGs.</p> <p>RM reported that the Doctoral College was continuing to work with Coventry University on BAME PGR access and participation; an online event attended by PGRs from both institutions had been held and Coventry would be hosting a 2 day event in April to move forward on issues raised. The Doctoral College would shortly be advertising 2 fully funded (home) studentships for BAME applicants, hosted in CIM and operating on a co-tutelle basis with Coventry.</p> |
| 055 | <p>PGR course approvals</p> <p>(a) Amendment to MRes/PhD Finance and Economics (N3P5) (currently PhD Finance & Econometrics) and MRes/PhD Business and Management (N1QY) Recommended (to Course Approval Scrutiny Panel) for approval</p> <p>(b) Amendment to PhD in Interdisciplinary Studies (RIMA-L99B) Recommended (to Course Approval Scrutiny Panel) for approval</p> |
| <i>Items below this line were for receipt and/or approval, without discussion</i> | |
| 056 | <p>Annual PGR programme reviews</p> <p>It was reported that the completed review forms were available to BGS members on SharePoint and would be shared with Faculty Secretaries.</p> |
| 057 | <p>Visiting Research Student Policy</p> <p>It was reported that the policy had been updated and members were reminded that there are no departmental quotas on the number of visiting students and no fees for visits of less than 12 months.</p> |
| Other | |
| 058 | <p>Any other business</p> <p>There was no other business.</p> |
| Next meeting: Thursday 28 April 2022, 9.30am, venue tbc | |