

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies held on Tuesday 6 November 2018

Present: Professor C Sparrow (Chair), Professor J Burns, Dr K Debattista, Mrs S Hattersley, Dr K Hooper (Deputy Chair), Professor K Kirwan, Dr D Marais, Professor E Oborn, Mr B O'Brian Jr, Dr J Pearson, Professor M Wills, Dr D Wright,

Apologies: Mr A Brewerton, Mr C Bisping , Dr O Davies, Professor D Hewitt, Professor N Gane, Dr M Gifford, Professor L Gracia, Dr P Kaapa, Miss E King, Dr C Lyonette, Professor E Oborn, Dr A Pinter, Professor M Turner, Ms M Underwood

In Attendance: Miss Marianne Davies, Miss R Martyn, Miss E Shields

18/18-19 Minutes of the Last Meeting

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 2 October 2018 as set out in paper BGS 08/18-19.

RESOLVED:

That Dr D Marais is the representative from Warwick Medical School;

19/18-19 Matters Arising on the Minutes

Thesis Completion Hardship Fund (minute 7/18-19 refers)

REPORTED:

That the Graduate School have received a number of hardship fund requests and has allocated funds already;

That circa £100,000 of funds will be allocated in response to the UCU strikes and the Graduate School has increased the maximum amount that can be awarded, and will be ensuring that the availability of funds is publicised;

That Chair's Action has been taken on severe cases of hardship to double the maximum duration of funding from 3 months to 6 months;

That £120,000 has been allocated from the University to encourage Postgraduate Research students to complete their thesis by the REF census;

That the criteria for awarding the money will need to be decided;

That the funding (currently promised for 2018/19) will also be needed for 2019/20;

RESOLVED:

That the Chair would consider previous rules regarding funding and make appropriate amendments for approval at the February Board of Graduate Studies meeting;

That the Head of the Graduate School would liaise with Research Impact Services over the period the funding is available for.

Science and Medicine Faculty Post-Merger Constitution (minute 11(c)/18-19

REPORTED:

That there is an existing member of BGS from Warwick Medical School, Dr Debbie Marais.

Maternity Pay for University of Warwick Postgraduate Scholarships (minute 13/18-19 refers)

REPORTED:

That the Provost has taken Chair's Action on behalf of ARC to approve the change in policy for University-funded studentships to align with UKRI rates;

That a paper on the logistics of allocating maternity pay to University-funded students will be brought to the February Board of Graduate Studies for consideration;

That any interim requests from current University-funded students taking maternity leave will be considered on a case by case basis;

That the Graduate School will be reviewing the policy for sick-leave pay and a future proposal will be brought to the Board in the Spring;

That the Provost wants all funded PGR students to be eligible for maternity leave pay regardless of their funder;

That the University or Department will need to fund the maternity leave pay if an external funder refuses to provide funding.

20/18-19 English Language Waivers

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Head of Immigration Services proposing amendments to the English Language Waiver Policy (paper 10/18-19).

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Board approved the policy on English Language waivers at the meeting of the 9 October 2017;
- (b) That the policy was developed by the Immigration Office and Postgraduate Admissions;
- (c) That English Language requirements are necessary to uphold academic standards and to comply with Home Office immigration rules;
- (d) That clarity is required on how waivers are approved and in what circumstance;

- (e) That a Visiting Student would need to provide evidence of their English Language level if staying at the University for more than six months, including in circumstances where a visiting student extends their stay beyond six months;

(by Miss M Davies)

- (f) That the Russell Group have submitted a proposal relating to EU students and immigration rules post-Brexit, but the future position is still unknown.

(by Dr K Debattista)

- (g) That there have been instances where students have had their English language requirement waived as they have previously studied in the UK, but nonetheless are struggling with their level of English;

(by the Chair)

- (h) That the changes to the policy outlined in the paper are to remove unnecessary obstacles to students studying at the University, and departments should report any egregious cases to the Chair;

(by Dr D Wright)

- (i) That there is no opportunity on the current waiver request form to indicate whether an interview has occurred;

RESOLVED:

- (j) That Postgraduate Admissions may consult with the Academic Director or Academic Registrar on cases of extenuating circumstances;
- (k) That a question will be added to the existing waiver request form to allow departments to indicate whether they have interviewed the student;
- (l) That the paper was approved.

21/18-19 Students' Union Update

The Postgraduate Officer was not in attendance.

22/18-19 Reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committees

RECEIVED:

Oral reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committees.

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Board acknowledged a report to Senate on the review of Academic Governance by the Deputy Academic Registrar which indicated concern over communication between the Board and Chairs of Faculty Education Committees, and encouraged Chairs to inform the Board of areas for improvements;
(by Professor M Wills, on behalf of the SEM Faculty Education Committee)
- (b) That the SEM Faculty were unaware of issues with communication;
(by Dr J Burns, on behalf of the Arts Faculty Education Committee)
- (c) That there are no issues with communication but there is a conflict between the timing of the first Board of Graduate Studies meeting of the academic year and the first meeting of the Faculty Education Committees;
(by Professor M Wills, on behalf of the SEM Faculty Education Committee)
- (d) That SEM have set internal deadlines for WCPRS scholarship applications;
- (e) That a call for Faculty Scorers for the 2019/20 Postgraduate Research Scholarship Competition had been issued;
(by Dr J Burns, on behalf of the Arts Faculty Education Committee)
- (f) That the Arts Faculty Education Committee are responding to the recruitment implications of the Midlands4Cities AHRC DTP;
- (g) That a call for Faculty Scorers for the 2019/20 Postgraduate Research Scholarship Competition had been issued;
- (h) That Mr C Bisping was absent from the meeting but an update from the Faculty Education Committee of the Board of the Faculty of Social Science was reported to the Chair as follows;
 - (i) That it was imperative that the Graduate School had mechanisms and resources in place to facilitate prompt processing of thesis submissions ahead of the REF deadline, noting that an ongoing careful recording of submissions was critical for the reliability of submission rates data;
 - (ii) That the Board of Graduate Studies consider the potential inequalities of the current system and lobby for University funds to cover maternity/paternity pay for University of Warwick postgraduate scholarships.

23/18-19 Chair's Business

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair.

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Chair and Deputy Chair were adjusting their split of responsibilities with the Chair focussing more on Postgraduate Research matters and the Deputy Chair focussing more on Postgraduate Taught matters;

(b) That any conflict of interests would be handled appropriately.

24/18-19 BGS Priorities 18/19

RECEIVED:

(a) A paper from the Chair outlining the strategic priorities for the Board and the Graduate School during the current academic year (paper BGS 9/18-19);

REPORTED:

(b) That the role of the Graduate School in relation to CDT management continues to be unclear although the University has made a commitment in the latest CDT bids to introduce some form of CDT governance;

(c) That a 3% increase in PGR recruitment, as anticipated by the University's Size and Shape Strategy, should not be at the expense of quality;

(d) That scholarship funding should increase to match the rise in the recruitment target, but that the University should demonstrate that funding is allocated appropriately;

(e) That there is an ongoing review on scholarships, maternity and sick pay;

(f) That there is a new project looking at options, including SkillsForge, to extend the recording of skills development for Postgraduate Taught and Undergraduate Students;

(g) That postgraduate students in several departments report a lack of opportunities to teach and associated ongoing professional development;

(h) That the Graduate School welcomes expression of interests for a Supervisor Training Working Group;

(i) That the OfS Catalyst funded project on PGR student wellbeing has been named 'Potential Advantage', and that a bid has been made to IATL to fund a related project looking into the student-supervisor relationship and its bearing on wellbeing.

(j) That the Graduate School will continue their departmental visits throughout the academic year, and will also be conducting a light touch review of departments' PGR student record keeping and process of scholarship allocation;

(k) That the Chair encourages feedback on suggested amendments to policies and regulations;

(l) That the Board may need to consider the approval process for PhD 'courses' in the coming year;

(m) That following the change of responsibility for student record keeping there is a continuing lack of awareness of the extent of the changes, and that greater clarity on responsibilities is required;

RESOLVED:

- (n) That postgraduate teaching opportunities and training will be added to the priorities;
- (o) That Mrs S Hattersley will examine the postgraduate teaching situation in more detail, factoring in the 2019 PRES results, with a view to bringing a report and recommendations to a future meeting of BGS;
- (p) That the Board of Graduate Studies priorities will be circulated to the Faculty Education Committees for consideration.

25/18-19 Postgraduate Enrolment Update

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Chair outlining the latest information on current postgraduate enrolment numbers and recent trends (paper 11/18-19).

REPORTED:

- (a) That there has been some increase in Postgraduate Research student numbers and some decrease in Postgraduate Taught student numbers;
- (b) That whilst the changes in numbers were in the direction intended by the University's recruitment targets, the changes were smaller than anticipated;
- (c) That the number of EU students has hardly changed at all.

26/18-19 Any Other Business

REPORTED:

- (a) That Faculties are required to nominate their Faculty Scorers by 14 December 2018 and nominations should be communicated to Nicola Ellis-Thomas, Graduate School;
- (b) That there should be five scorers from different departments per Faculty;
- (c) That Warwick Medical School will have five independent scorers from the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine.

As at 7 November 2018