

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies held on Tuesday 29 May 2018

Present: Professor C Sparrow (Chair), A Baker, C Bisping, A Brewerton, R Davis, E Dunford, Dr J Garde-Hansen, Dr M Gifford, Dr J Heron, Professor D Hewitt, Dr K Hooper, Dr J Madan, Dr D Marais, Professor E Oborn, Dr A Pinter, Dr J Pearson, Professor M Wills, Dr D Wright

Apologies: Dr J Burns, Dr O Davis, Professor N Gane, Professor L Gracia, S Hattersley, Professor K Kirwan, Dr C Lyonette, W Murage, Professor L Roberts, D Richards, A Salau, Professor A Stewart, Professor M Turner, C Ziegler

In Attendance: T Horton, L Larard, R Martyn, E Shields

61/17-18 Minutes of the last meeting

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 26 April 2018 as set out in paper BGS 39/17-18.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 26 April 2018 be approved.

62/17-18 Matters Arising on the Minutes

63/17-18 Students' Union Update

RECEIVED:

(a) An oral report from the Postgraduate Officer.

REPORTED (by E Dunford, Postgraduate Officer):

(b) That the Students' Union had submitted a response to the subject-level TEF consultation;

(c) That the Students' Union continued to receive concerns from PGR students undertaking marking, noting that there seemed to be a lack of clarity around the amount of time allocated for specific tasks. The Postgraduate Officer had discussed with the Provost who advised that a review of STP would be taking place.

64/17-18 Reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committees

RECEIVED:

Oral reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committees.

REPORTED:

(by Prof M Wills, on behalf of the Faculty Education Committee (Science)):

- (a) That, at its last meeting, the Faculty Education Committee (Science) had reported on the allocation of scholarships, revisions to the Requirements for Taught Postgraduate Awards and considered PGR Annual Course Reviews from across the Faculty;

(by C Bisping, Chair of the Faculty Education Committee (Social Sciences)):

- (b) That the Faculty Education Committee (Social Sciences) had considered scholarship allocations and noted that these were in line with the Faculty's PGR population;
- (c) That concerns had been noted that part-time PGR students are not provided with additional time to complete any corrections required following oral examination compared to full-time students;
- (d) That departments in the Faculty had been consulted for their views, resulting in some concern about potential inequity, but also an understanding that the majority of full-time students have other commitments following thesis submission;

(by the Chair):

- (e) That students requiring additional time to complete minor/major corrections or resubmission could request an extension to the deadline, although it was noted that the number of extension requests received was small;

(by Dr D Wright, on behalf of the Faculty Education Committee (Arts)):

- (f) That work was ongoing in relation to joining the Midlands4Cities AHRC DTP consortium with a decision expected in July;
- (g) That an extended CADRE Steering Group, with membership including all Directors of Graduate Studies within the Faculty, had been set up and was due to meet shortly;

(by Dr J Madan and Dr D Marais on behalf of the Faculty Education Committee (Medicine)):

- (h) That the Faculty Education Committee (Medicine) had also discussed scholarship allocations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Graduate School would ensure that information on requesting an extension to the deadline for completion of minor/major corrections or resubmission was available to students.

65/17-18

Thesis Completion Hardship Fund

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Chair in relation to revised criteria for making awards and the possible value of awards (paper BGS 40/17/18)

REPORTED: (by the Chair):

- (a) That the Board had previously approved the proposal to remove quarterly deadlines for the receipt of applications to the Fund;
- (b) That the proposed amendments to the Fund were intended to make better use of the funding available;

(by the Chair on behalf of Professor L Gracia, Senior Tutor):

- (c) That the proposals to broaden the scope and rename the fund were supported, and that it would be useful for the revised webpage to provide links to alternative sources of funding available to students;

(by A Brewerton, Library representative):

- (d) That the Library Community Engagement Team would be willing to help promote the availability of the funding, noting that this should be done in a sensitive way reflecting the potential vulnerability of students in need of support;

(by Dr K Hooper, Deputy Chair):

- (e) That the term 'hardship' may be off-putting for potential applicants;

RESOLVED:

- (f) That the fund be named the PGR Hardship Fund and not limited to applications from students in the last 12 months of registration;
- (g) That potential applicants or their departments be encouraged to contact the Graduate School informally to enquire about likely eligibility before making an application, and to seek advice about alternative help that may be available;
- (h) That, as at present, the normal grant will not exceed half of the current Research Council stipend (£606/month in 2017/18) and will be available for usually three months maximum, noting however that additional funding may exceptionally be available where circumstances warrant;
- (i) That allocation of grants will be made by the (Deputy) Academic Director of the Graduate School in consultation with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Graduate School);
- (j) That normally grants will be made to students facing unforeseen (and unforeseeable) exceptional circumstances;
- (k) That priority will be given to cases where an award will assist the student to complete their thesis during the period of their registration. Awards will not normally be made to students more than three months into an extension period;
- (l) That applications for awards would require both supervisor and Director of Graduate Studies endorsement;
- (m) That the Chair be empowered to consider renaming the Fund to remove reference to the term 'hardship' at a later date if deemed necessary.

CONSIDERED:

A report from the PGR Professional Development Working Group (paper BGS 41/17-18).

REPORTED: (by T Horton, PGR Professional Development Officer):

- (a) That the key issues identified by the working group were: communication of the framework; supervisory engagement; and feedback on the provision and its relevance;
- (b) That the ongoing developments to the system, although welcomed in terms of increased functionality, could have the effect of deterring users who may be put off by frequent changes to the user interface;
- (c) That feedback from students indicated a desire for a formal professional development award in recognition of skills and training undertaken. This was already available to students completing the Postgraduate Certificate in Transferrable Skills in Science;

(by Dr M Gifford):

- (d) That concerns had been raised as to lack of clarity around the mandatory nature of the framework, noting that the policy underpinning the framework declared it mandatory but there was no appetite to force students to engage where they had good reason for not wishing to do so;

(by the Chair):

- (e) That other institutions had various approaches to the requirement to undertake formal professional development activities, noting that this may be encouraged or required for completion of an upgrade, but only seemed to be compulsory in the case of Research Councils;
- (f) That the level of support for and engagement with SkillsForge varied across departments, noting that some were using the platform to host departmental events such as research seminars, a facility which may be attractive to other departments not aware of the capabilities of the system in this regard;

(by R Martyn, Secretary):

- (g) That departments should be empowered to interpret the policy in a way that best suits their students, noting the differences between the needs of students in relation to subject/discipline;

(by Professor M Wills):

- (h) That the Postgraduate Certificate in Transferrable Skills in Science was generally regarded positively by students;

RESOLVED:

- (i) That a brief evaluation of booked events be included within SkillsForge, noting that this can be built into the system;

- (j) That the Graduate School would issue example wording for use in departmental handbooks, noting that SkillsForge is a useful resource that can be used flexibly to support the professional development needs of students;
- (k) That a hold on system developments be put in place for the 2018/19 academic year;
- (l) That the PGR Professional Development Working Group would conduct further research into the potential creation of a formal award to recognise skills and training, including consultation with doctoral training centres, and report back to a future meeting of the Board.

67/17-18

Postgraduate Admissions Update: Pre-Sessional Programme

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Senior Assistant Registrar (Graduate School) and Assistant Director (Head of Admissions Services) in relation to pre-sessional courses (paper BGS 42/17-18).

REPORTED: (by R Martyn, Secretary)

- (a) That although Professor Palmowski, then Chair of the Board, had granted approval for completion of the pre-sessional programme to be used as a way for students to meet English language requirements where their IELTS score was not high enough, not all departments offered this as an option, and the Postgraduate Admissions team had requested information on departmental perspectives;

(by E Dunford, Postgraduate Student Officer):

- (b) That the combined cost of the course and accommodation could be prohibitive for some students;

(by Dr A Pinter):

- (c) That the current situation, with only some departments promoting the course as a way to meet English language requirements, and no central University marketing of the course, was resulting in conflicting messages to students as to the value of the course;

(by Professor D Hewitt):

- (d) That a theme of the recent Education Conference had been underperformance of BME students and the importance of making reasonable adjustments. The pre-sessional course could be seen as an example of a reasonable adjustment to aid international students' integration into study in the UK in terms of language and culture;

(by R Davis):

- (e) That a related issue was the lack of English language support to existing students, demonstrated by poor PRES and PTES scores in this area, indicating the need for improved provision;

(by Dr J Heron):

- (f) That, since the issues of English language provision and welfare (including concerns re access to accommodation) for international students had been discussed at the Board on several occasions, it may be timely to refer the wider issues to the Education Committee for consideration and action;

RESOLVED:

That the Secretary would report back to the Postgraduate Admissions team.

68/17-18

Scholarships Update: Central PGR Scholarship Competition Review

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Project Officer (Postgraduate Scholarships) in relation to a review of the central PGR scholarships competition (paper BGS 43-44/17-18).

REPORTED: (by E Shields, Project Officer (Postgraduate Scholarships):

- (a) That feedback had been sought from Faculty Assessors following the changes to the allocation process in 2017/18 which demonstrated:
 - (i) That the replacement of scoring with ranking with associated criteria had been welcomed by departments as it allowed for a more holistic approach, although did not seem to save time;
 - (ii) That students required more guidance on how to answer the 'person and preparedness' and 'project and place' indicators;
 - (iii) That the character limits should be increased;
 - (iv) That the quality of nomination statements varied and further guidance should be provided to departments;

(by the Chair):

- (b) That the changes to the allocation process for 2017/18 had been implemented successfully;

RESOLVED:

- (c) That the Graduate School would improve the guidance for applicants, emphasising the importance of engaging with the ranking criteria in their applications, and explaining the consideration process to increase transparency;
- (d) That the maximum character length would be increased to 1000 for the 'person and preparedness' and 'project and place' indicators;
- (e) That the Graduate School would ensure that there is no more than one Faculty Assessor from the same department;
- (f) That guidance on departmental nomination statements would be issued to departments and introducing a minimum word limit considered;

- (g) That the period of time applicants are given to provide supporting documents would be reduced from two weeks to one to allow departments additional time to consider;
- (h) That the allocation of Faculty awards would remain the same for the 2018/19 academic year.

69/17-18 PGR Annual Course Reviews

RECEIVED:

The summary PGR Annual Course Review Reports prepared by:

- (a) The Board of the Faculty of Science (paper BGS 45/17-18);
- (b) The Board of the Faculty of Medicine (paper WMS EC.15/17-18);

REPORTED:

- (c) That the summary Annual Course Review Report for the Faculty of Social Sciences would be considered at a future meeting of the Board;
- (d) That the report from the Faculty of Medicine noted issues about access to teaching opportunities due to the lack of undergraduate teaching in the Faculty. Alternative opportunities were being investigated, such as with external partners and within Science departments given the upcoming merger of Faculties;
- (e) That concerns relating to dedicated space for PGR students arose in both reports. It was reported that the Students' Union had been working closely with the University on space requirements for postgraduate students with positive developments such as the Library space finder and increases in social spaces. However, there was still a perceived need for additional private study/office space for PGR students;

(by A Baker):

- (f) That it would be useful for departments to report specifically on pastoral support provision in addition to general student support and guidance.

RESOLVED:

- (g) That the Graduate School would contact Teaching Quality to investigate whether the template form could be amended to refer to pastoral support.

70/17-18 Any Other Business

PGT Development Pilots

REPORTED: (by R Davis);

- (a) That E Hawkes, Skills Development Manager, Student Careers and Skills, had been working with the departments of History of Art, Law, Warwick Medical School and Cultural and Media Policy Studies to pilot bespoke development activities for PGT students, with positive results;

- (b) That the pilot would be extending into other academic departments, and there was currently capacity for one additional department to become involved. Any interested departments should contact E Hawkes or R Davis for further information.

71/17-18 Next meeting

REPORTED:

That the next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday 2 October 2018 at 9.00am in CMR 1.0, University House.

72/17-18 Schedule of Meetings for 2018/19

REPORTED:

That the Committee Timetable for 2018/19 has been published, noting that meetings of the Board are scheduled as follows:

Tuesday, 02 October 2018 at 9:00am in CMR 1.0, University House
Tuesday, 06 November 2018 at 9:00am in CMR 1.0, University House
Tuesday, 15 January 2019 at 9:00am in CMR 1.0, University House
Tuesday, 05 February 2019 at 9:00am in CMR 1.0, University House
Tuesday, 30 April 2019 at 9:00am in Senate House Council Chamber
Tuesday, 21 May 2019 at 9:00am in CMR 1.0, University House

73/17-18 Chair's Action

REPORTED:

- (a) University Policy on the Timing of the Provision of Feedback to Students on Assessed Work

That the Chair of the Board, acting on its behalf, had approved an extension to feedback turnaround time in relation to the module IB9640 - Marketing Analytics, Individual Assignment following a request from Warwick Business School as set out in paper BGS 46/17-18;

- (b) Faculty of Medicine

Postgraduate Award in Essentials in Primary Care

That the Chair of the Board, acting on its behalf, had taken action to approve the proposal to discontinue the Postgraduate Award in Essentials in Primary Care as set out in paper WMS EC.30/17-18.