

## UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

### Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies held on Tuesday 2 October 2018

Present: Professor C Sparrow (Chair), Mr C Bisping, Professor J Burns, Dr K Debattista, Professor D Hewitt, Dr M Gifford, Dr K Hooper (Deputy Chair), Professor K Kirwan, Dr C Lyonette, Mr B O'Brian Jr, Dr J Pearson, Ms M Underwood, Professor M Wills, Dr D Wright,

Apologies: Mr A Brewerton, Mrs S Hattersley, Professor N Gane, Professor L Gracia, Dr P Kaapa, Miss E King, Dr D Marais, Professor E Oborn, Dr A Pinter, Prof M Turner,

In Attendance: Miss L Kennedy, Miss R Martyn, Mrs S Neophytou, Miss E Shields

#### 1/18-19 Terms of Reference

##### REPORTED:

That the terms of reference of the Board were set out in paper BGS 1/18-19.

#### 2/18-19 Membership of the Board 2018/2019

##### REPORTED:

- (a) That the membership of the Board for 2018/19 was currently as set out in paper BGS 2/18-19.
- (b) That the membership of the Board for 2018/19 will change in line with the Science and Medicine Faculty merger;
- (c) That the membership of the Board for 2018/19 will be finalised by the Board of Graduate Studies meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, and that Committee members are welcome to make suggestions on memberships;

#### 3/18-19 Conflicts of Interest

##### REPORTED:

- (a) That, should any members or attendees of the Board have any conflicts of interest relating to agenda items for the meeting, they should be declared in accordance with the Committee of University Chairs Higher Education Code of Governance;
- (b) That no conflicts of interest relating to agenda items for the meeting were reported.

#### 4/18-19 Freedom of Information Act: Publication Scheme

##### REPORTED:

- (a) That the University commits to publishing the minutes, agendas and non-reserved business of University bodies and committees on the University website, as part of its Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2000;

- (b) That members of the Board are reminded that minutes of Board meetings will be published in this way.

5/18-19 Nomination of student member on the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee

CONSIDERED:

The nomination of a postgraduate student to serve on the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee.

RESOLVED:

That Alex Baker would be nominated to serve on the University Research Governance and Ethics Committee.

6/18-19 Minutes of the last meeting

CONSIDERED:

The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 29 May 2018 as set out in paper BGS 3/18-19.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 29 May 2018 be approved.

7/18-19 Matters Arising on the Minutes

Reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committee (minute 64/17-18 refers)

That the Midlands4Cities AHRC DTP consortium bid was successful and that the results of the EPSRC CDT bids should be known by the end of the Autumn term.

Thesis Completion Hardship Fund (minute 65/17-18 refers)

That the Thesis Completion Hardship Fund was renamed PGR Hardship Fund, and while the scope and rules of the fund have changed, there have been no further applications from students.

That funding will be allocated to Postgraduate Students from salary saved from the February and March UCU strikes, however no further information on how this will be managed has been released.

That the REF Steering Group has allocated funds for PhD students to encourage thesis submission in February and March 2020, and departments are encouraged to promote this to their students.

PGR Annual Course Reviews (minute 69/17-18 refers)

That paper BGS 45 17-18 – the consolidated PGR annual report from the Science Faculty, makes no reference to the SLS report which was submitted to the FEC. Pertinent comments that could have been included are:

“The 2016/17 PRES survey exposed some dissatisfaction with both library resources and space. The continuing fragmentation and proliferation of high profile journals in the life sciences creates continued pressure for new subscriptions. Plant research is a significant area of PhD research and a major new journal is not currently available”.

“It is recognised that there is insufficient desk space to provide every research student with an allocated desk. Whilst some improvement may be possible by addressing suboptimal usage, the provision of desk space for each individual student on these programs will remain a problem at least until the major developments currently being planned for the Gibbet Hill site have been completed. There is also a need to provide a dedicated social/academic interaction space for research students on the GH site”.

8/18-19 Students’ Union Update

REPORTED (by Miss L Kennedy, Education Officer):

- (a) That the SU PG Sabbatical Officer’s priorities are: engaging PG students with SU services; holding events which bridge the gap between UG and PG study and students, particularly for UGs thinking of continuing on to a Warwick masters course; and supporting the academic transformation programme (anyone wishing to join the working group should contact Ellie King).
- (b) That the SU PG Sabbatical Officer extends her thanks to all who supported the PG events held during Welcome Week.

9/18-19 Reports from the Chairs of the Faculty Education Committees

REPORTED:

- (a) That meetings of the Faculty Education Committees had not yet taken place;
- (b) That, in response to a query from the representative of the Faculty Education Committee (Science), it was confirmed that the Warwick Collaborative Postgraduate Research Scholarship had not yet been defined for 2018/19.
- (c) That the Chair confirmed that in response to the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Medicine merger, Medicine would not have their Chancellor’s International Scholarship allocation reduced for the 2018/19 competition.

10/18-19 Chair’s Business

REPORTED:

- (a) DBA Thesis word count
  - (i) That due to an oversight in the course regulations, the word count for the Doctor of Business Administration was not specified, and has now been agreed by Chair’s action as 80,000 words.

11/18-19 Science and Medicine Faculty Post-Merger Constitution

CONSIDERED:

An oral report from the Chair discussing the Science and Medicine Faculty Post-Merger Constitution.

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Chair is not aware of any potential difficulties arising from the merger, and that the Board of Graduate Studies would deal with any issues that may arise;
- (by Professor M Wills)
- (b) That membership of the Science, Engineering, and Medicine (SEM) Faculty would become clearer after the first Faculty Education Committee;
- (c) That there is no representative from Warwick Medicine School on the Board of Graduate Studies Committee;

RESOLVED:

That the Chair and the Graduate School will approach Warwick Medicine School to nominate a member to be co-opted on to the Board of Graduate Studies.

12/18-19 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2018

CONSIDERED:

- (a) A report on the results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2018 (paper BGS 4/18-19);

REPORTED:

- (b) That PTES had a 39% response rate, meaning that over 3,000 PGT students had responded to the survey, the highest response rate the University has achieved;
- (c) That over 84% of students are satisfied with the quality of their course, placing the University in the top quartile within the Russell Group;
- (d) That while over 60% of the total responses originated from Warwick Business School and Warwick Manufacturing Group, excluding their responses did not change the overall result significantly;
- (e) That over 30% of Warwick Manufacturing Group's responses did not consider themselves fluent in English at the beginning of their course, and nearly 40% of students felt they did not have appropriate support for their language needs;
- (f) That academic departments had received results and been asked to complete holistic action plans;

(by Professor K Kirwan):

- (g) That there was a potential disconnect between the level of English required for admission and the level required to be considered fluent, and that the intensity of a Postgraduate Taught course would pose a challenge if introducing English language teaching components;

(by Ms M Underwood, Researcher Development Manager, Careers & Skills):

- (h) That other institutions have provided accredited English language support for academic writing which was deemed popular;

(by the Chair):

- (i) That Warwick Manufacturing Group have reported a number of their students do not have an adequate level of English;

RESOLVED:

- (j) That the Board recognised the increasing issue involving the level of English language of international students but that it is not clear where responsibility lies for finding a solution to an institutional issue;
- (k) That the Chair and Graduate School will discuss the challenge of English language levels with Warwick Manufacturing Group;

That the Chair and Graduate School will revisit the subject of language competency requirements in an ongoing dialogue with SROAS.

#### 13/18-19 Maternity pay for University of Warwick Postgraduate Scholarships

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Head of the Graduate School in relation to maternity pay for University of Warwick Postgraduate Scholarships (paper BGS 5/18-19).

REPORTED:

- (a) That the University does not currently provide maternity, adoption, paternity, and shared parental leave pay for University of Warwick postgraduate scholarship holders;
- (b) That students receiving a UKRI funded scholarship are entitled to maternity, adoption, paternity, and shared parental leave pay;
- (c) That as a test case, a Social Sciences student receiving departmental funding was exceptionally granted maternity pay by the Academic Registrar ;
- (d) That while the University is unable to estimate how many potential students may claim maternity pay, during the past three years there have been twenty students receiving a University-funded scholarship who have taken maternity leave;

(by the Chair)

- (e) That if the University were to offer maternity pay for University-funded students, it is likely that the costs for this would come from the existing scholarship funds (central and departmental) resulting in a potential decrease in available scholarships, unless the University were willing to increase the pot available;

(by Professor K Kirwan):

- (f) That Warwick Manufacturing Group have enforced maternity pay in their contracts with industrial partners;

(by Ms M Underwood, Researcher Development Manager, Careers & Skills):

- (g) That departments affiliated with Athena Swan who aren't offering maternity pay may be in breach of the Athena Swan principles;

RESOLVED:

- (h) That the Committee strongly supported aligning University funded scholarships with UKRI scholarships with regards to maternity etc. pay;
- (i) That the Graduate School would investigate completion rates of students who have taken maternity leave.

#### 14/18-19 Fees for Visiting Students

CONSIDERED:

An oral report from the Chair in relation to fees for Visiting Students.

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Chair has discussed with the Provost a proposal to give departments a quota to take a number of Visiting Students fee-free (for visits of up to 12 months);
- (b) That there should be a central fund for Warwick Postgraduate Research students to visit other overseas institutions if no other source of funding is available to them;
- (c) That departments are able to discount fees for Visiting Students;

(by Professor J Burns):

- (d) That a central allocation of funds for Warwick students would be advantageous and would create further partnerships with institutions;

(by Professor K Kirwan):

- (e) That this would encourage student mobility, prevent isolation, and create the right message in response to Brexit;

RESOLVED:

That the Chair would continue to explore the issue of funding for PGR student mobility.

#### 15/18-19 Confidentiality Agreement for Research Examination Reports

RECEIVED:

A paper from the Administrative Officer, Graduate School, in relation to introducing a confidentiality agreement to examination reports for Postgraduate Research Examinations (paper BGS 6/18-19).

REPORTED:

- (a) That there is no current guidance for examiners on confidentiality of theses;
- (b) That the Board of Graduate Studies Members who have acted as an external examiner have not had to sign a confidentiality agreement;
- (c) That there would be no way to enforce the agreement with examiners;

RESOLVED:

- (d) That Dr M Gifford would send the Graduate School suggested wording for guidance to examiners from Professor K Leppard, Director of Postgraduate Research, School of Life Sciences;
- (e) That the Graduate School would consider wording used for Undergraduate Examiners and update the guidance to examiners on confidentiality expectations.

16/18-19 Graduate School Update

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Head of the Graduate School.

REPORTED:

- (a) That the Graduate School has moved to University House on the ground floor next to Careers & Skills;
- (b) That following the move to University House the thesis submission drop-off has moved to the Main Helpdesk at the Library during weekdays and weekends;
- (c) That the Graduate School website has been updated for easier navigation for staff and students;
- (d) That the Graduate School are continuing their visits to departments and will be conducting a light-touch audit of scholarship administration and supervisory records;
- (e) That the Graduate School will no longer be facilitating annual reports for Postgraduate Research students and are confident this will not be detrimental to the student experience due to the enhanced support and wellbeing services available at the University;
- (f) That the Graduate School Priorities for 2018/19 will be reported at the next meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies in November;

17/18-19 Any Other Business

REPORTED:

(by the Chair):

- (a) That for 2019/20 the first meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies will take place in November, forgoing a meeting in October.
- (b) That the Tuesday 15 January 2019 meeting of the Board of Graduate Studies is cancelled.

As at 8 October 2018