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Bangor University
Doctoral School Board (DSB) – PRES 2019 Analysis
Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2019

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Present:	**Doctoral School**
	Professor John Turner [JT] (PGR Dean, Chair), Aashu Jayadeep
	College Directors
	Dr James McDonald [JM] (CoESE), Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira [HM-C] (CoAHB), Prof Debbie Mills [DM](CoHS)
	Head of DTPs
	Prof John Healey [JH], Prof Debbie Mills [DM]
	School PGR Leads
	Dr Gwion Williams (BBS), Dr Eirini Sanoudaki[ES] (LLL), Dr Wei Shi (Law), Dr Pwyll Ap Sion (Music & Media), Dr Neal Hockley [NH] (Environmental Science), Dr Nathalie Fenner (Biology), Dr Martina Lahmann [ML] (Chemistry), Dr Line Cordes(Ocean Sciences), Dr William J Teahan [WT] (Computer Science & EE), Mr Graham French (Education), Dr Lorelei Jones (Health Sciences), Dr Ross Roberts [RR](SHES), Dr Jane Wakeman (Medical Sciences),
	SU
	Harry Riley (SU), Rob Samuel [RS](SU)
	Other Invitees
	Dr Beth Hall [MH] (Library & Archives Services), Mandy Angharad[MA] (SEU)
Apologies:	Penny Dowdney , Prof Gerwyn Wiliams, Dr Robin Mann, Dr Richard Binney, Dr Sion Williams, Mark Barrow

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Professor John Turner welcomed everyone to the special meeting of the Doctoral School Board which had been arranged to discuss the PRES 2019 results. He informed the group that the purpose of this PRES analysis meeting is to give an opportunity for College PGR Directors and School PGR leads to discuss the outcomes and to identify the strengths and weaknesses. This will also be a good opportunity to share good practices. He also emphasised the importance of data protection regarding the reports discussed at the meeting. Since PRES is for a smaller population compared to NSS and other student surveys, it is important to take into consideration all the aspects such as the difference in experience among the different levels of PGRs such as the first years and final year candidates; the Masters by Research and the PhDs etc.

2. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS/ACTIONS**
The Chair expressed his appreciation to all the Schools who had submitted a comprehensive PRES Action Plan to the Doctoral School as an outcome of the previous year's PRES DSB meeting (**Dated: 17/09/2018**).

3. **INTRODUCTION**

The University's PRES results achieved an 81% overall satisfaction (85% in 2018) equivalent to the sector average (80% in 2018) based on 483 responses. This was 1% lower than the score for Welsh Institutions but equivalent to the Russel Group Institutions and 3% higher than the MillionPlus Group Institutions. There is a 4% drop in the University's results in most of the categories this year. As a result, we scored in the highest quartile for Responsibilities, second quartile for Overall Satisfaction, Professional Development, Research Culture and Supervision, third quartile for Resources and Progression, and lowest quartile for Research Skills. However, respondents were

relatively positive that the Institution valued their feedback, but were negative over adequate library facilities (including online resources) and having access to a good seminar programme in their research area.   The University's overall response rate was 59% (54% in 2018).

The results varied considerably across Schools, with some Schools consistently having highly positive scores and others evidently dipping in certain categories. Schools with overall satisfaction scores below 80%, and any category score below 80% need to specifically address areas through specific actions, and monitor that these actions are implemented and effective.

Full PRES reports (including student comments, redacted where appropriate) were compiled by the Student Engagement Unit for: Business, Computer Sci & Electronic Engineering, History Philosophy & Social Sciences, Languages, Literature & Linguistics , Law, Medical Sciences, Ocean Sciences, Psychology, Health Sciences, Music & Media, Natural Sciences, Sport, Health and Exercise Sciences. Reports without students' comments were available for Education and Cymraeg as these failed to meet the publication thresholds. JT congratulated everyone for all their efforts in making the Survey a success, and emphasised that the results may reflect a challenging year due to restructuring and that we should remain positive because we are still performing on a par with Russell Group universities and above other insitutions. MA added that even though the comments show a confused attitude of the PGRs, the scores indicate that we are doing well in the sector. She offered to generate a more elaborate breakdown of reports should the School request them. RS also commented that each year the SU conducts an in house Student Experience Survey and for 2020 the report will be for PGRs. He requested the DSB members to send suggestions for questions to be included in the Survey.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS - PRES 2019

The Questions in each section were presented, along with the BU scores, compared to the sector. School results by section were screened, and PGR Directors and PGR Leads were invited to comment/explain as appropriate, highlighting good practice or reasons for issues. JT also presented a colour coded document containing all of the narrative comments reported in the PRES for each School. Those in red are highly critical and require investigation – they may be isolated view points; those in green are positive and may require building upon; those in amber require consideration and action, while those in yellow require no action. He reiterated the importance of maintaining the anonymity of these comments. MA added that many PGRS have come forward this time concerned about how their comments will be considered and had to be reassured.

The Academics raised concern about the accuracy of student data in Banner which reduced the number of PGRs being invited to complete the survey. ES and ML pointed out that the Schools struggled to reach above the 50 % response rate as some of the students included in the list had already completed or withdrawn. The Chair informed them that this issue has already been taken up with Student Administration and Planning and Governance and hopefully once it is resolved will provide accurate data for the PGRS online monitoring system, PURE and PRES.

SECTION 1 – SUPERVISION Average score 86 (-3)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q2.1 My supervisor/s have the skills and knowledge to support my research	91(-2)	92
Q2.2 I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs	89(-3)	89
Q2.3 My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities	88(-1)	88

Q2.4 My supervisor/s help me identify my training and development needs as a researcher	78(-3)	76

Bangor had a variation from 94 to 77 across the Schools with most Schools, especially Education, performing very well and with Ocean Sciences & Medical Sciences below 80%. Comments from the Colleges/ Schools included:	
CoAHB	ES pointed out that LLL has relatively good results which would have resulted from supervisors encouraging the candidates in their Training Needa Analysis and the PDPs. The School would continue to look into supervision expertise and admission process.
CoESE	NH pointed out that the Natural Sciences has dropped scores compared to last year. He requested for a breakdown of scores as per old structure to compare if restructuring could be the reason for this variation. MA assured him she would provide the data.
CoHS	JM informed the group that Medical Sciences has scored low probably because of the higher numbers in Masters by Research. All PhDs are individually supervised but the MRes might be working in groups. Most of the questions in PRES seemed to be tailored for PhD candidates who have had the experience of all three years. However, a talk with the module coordinator is planned to discuss this. DM commented that even though we do not have representation from Psychology present today, it was noted that the School did have some supervisors who were not that engaged.
SU	RS commented that discussions with PGRs at various SU events indicated that they expect more skills development activities.
Chair and overall comments	Members also pointed out that it would be interesting to analyse the difference in opinions from MScRes and PhD cohorts. This could also be the reason for the variation in the results. MA remarked that the breakdown would be difficult since the number of cohorts is much less, and it would affect the anonymity of the Survey. The Chair encouraged all Schools to ensure postgraduate researchers are given clear direction during inductions and supervisory meetings and develop focused aims and questions to be addressed by their projects. Colleges/Schools should also be encouraging researchers to analyse training needs, complete PDPs and attend the Training & Development workshops for each stage of their programme organised by the Doctoral School. In case any supervisory issues are identified, PGR leads are encouraged to notify the Head of School who in turn may recommend training sessions for supervisors via their PDRs. The Supervisory and Review committees need to be supported with adequate staff. The changes in regulations need to be conveyed to the researchers at induction and hopefully this will bring more clarity (eg. requirement for two supervisors). The Doctoral School is planning short lunch time sessions on Supervision as well.

	JT commented that it is important that the PGRs are made aware of the Schools' expectations and should be given opportunities to give feedback and to be told what has been done in response.	

SECTION 2 – RESOURCES Average score 80 (-1)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q4.1 I have a suitable working space	82(-1)	78
Q4.2 There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities	79(-3)	79
Q4.3 There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and on-line resources)	82(0)	86
Q4.4 I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research	76(-2)	79

Bangor had a variation from 88 to 70 across the Schools. Education scored highly and Music & Media scored very low. Comments from the Colleges/ Schools included:	
CoAHB	WS commented that each PGR at the Law school has a dedicated desk and any issues arising are getting sorted in a timely manner. ES pointed out that LLL scored low mostly because of non-availability of space for PGRs at that time. The situation has improved now that there is a dedicated space allocated with a mix of hot desk and individual workstations. Hopefully this will improve the score next year. HM-C pointed out that it was also noticed that some PGR dedicated places were later on allocated to undergraduates as well. Reduction of library resources and cutting of journal subscriptions and lack of communication regarding this have also contributed.
CoESE	NH pointed out that there is an overall issue about Journal subscriptions and communication about inter library loans etc. BH mentioned that the communication issue regarding the services provided by the Library needs to be addressed. The excellent inter library services we have needs to be advertised more during Inductions. JM commented that a lot of resource issues would be solved if there was dedicated space provided for PGRs through the Doctoral School. NF also mentioned that some of the available equipment is getting old and might need upgrading. There are also issues regarding the interior design and environment of rooms.
CoHS	-
Chair and overall comments	Schools performing below 80% need to look into measures of good practice to bring up the scores. The Chair emphasised that the Schools should aim to provide good quality space and equipment to every PGR and PGR Leads should ensure that everything is in place before the student arrives. They need to be more proactive in identifying lack of resources and informing appropriate personnel of the shortcomings. If

necessary, the Doctoral School could intervene. They should also make sure the message is conveyed to the PGRs about issues being addressed. It is equally important to educate the researchers on what is already available and how to access that. He also mentioned that from this year Supercomputing facilities will be offered across the Schools to assist PGRs. Many workshops are also arranged through the Doctoral School. Moreover every PGR will now remain registered and will be in Banner until completion and hence will be able to access the resources available for them.

The Library workshops organised by the Doctoral School are beneficial for the PGRs and help to spread awareness.

SECTION 3 – RESEARCH CULTURE Average Score 63 (-5)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q6.1 My dept. provides a good seminar programme	61 (-11)	66
Q6.2 I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students.	68 (0)	66
Q6.3 The research ambience in my dept. or faculty stimulates my work	61(-6)	60
Q6.4 I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my dept.	62(-2)	61

Bangor had a variation from 75 to 52 across the Schools, with a number of Schools scoring very low, including Health Sciences, LLL, Law, History, Philosophy & Soc sciences and Natural Sciences. Comments from the Schools included:	
CoAHB	ES pointed out that the PGRS were not happy when the Schools merged, and they have one seminar now instead of three. HM-C pointed out that some PGRs were not happy with the amount of emails (too many) they were receiving about the activities. The School should definitely be looking at a better means of communicating events.
CoESE	JM commented that It is always noted that there is a low attendance for PGR events. WT commented that there is a positive research culture in the School and staff are required to give seminars every two weeks.
CoHS	DM had organised an inclusive poster conference for PGRs across disciplines. It was well received by the members. DM suggested that the DS should have a space in the website were all seminar information could be consolidated and showcased. JT commented that this could be arranged if the DS is informed about them to be advertised.
SU	RS suggested that we should also be looking at bringing in a different attitude amongst PGRs. Clearly the PhTea sessions organised are helping in some way and more events should be organised like this.
Chair and overall comments	JH commented that there are quite a number of buoyant research groups which are very active in promoting research culture in some of the Schools. All members agreed that it would be good practice to consolidate and put all the

information together in one place. JT praised the Schools for their continuous efforts in organising various events for PGRs. He also emphasised that we need to also look at why the PGRs are not attending these events as is evident from the scores and comments. It could be because we need to improve our communication regarding events which are happening. Staff should organise and also encourage PGRs to attend seminars arranged in a wider context, across various disciplines. Events also need to be more distant learner friendly so that isolated students are not put at a disadvantage and would have access to Panopto sessions and Blackboard. Schools/Colleges should inform PGRs about their School Research Seminar series during their inductions. Schools are also encouraged to consider their PGRs more like staff than students, and to encourage them to be aware of the wider research environment even if it's not relevant to their particular research field. PGRs should be encouraged to attend, and where possible contribute to, seminars, lectures and talks across the Colleges.

SECTION 4 PROGRESS AND ASSESSMENT Average score 79 (0)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q8.1 I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme	74(0)	76
Q8.2 I understood the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	85(0)	86
Q8.3 I understand the required standard for my thesis	81(0)	79
Q8.4 The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me	75(-3)	75

Bangor had a variation from 89 to 69 across the Schools. **The average score was the same as last year, Bangor scored in the third quartile for this theme and this is an area which we must make every endeavour to improve.** BBS, Law, LL & MM scored highly but Medical Sciences, Ocean Sciences etc scored very low. Comments from the Schools included:	
CoAHB	ES commented that the Review Committee system is working well for the School.
CoESE	NH commented that the lunch time PGR sessions and the Viva preparation sessions have worked for the School. There were also sessions organised by completers to give viva tips to the next round of PGR candidates. ML commented that since the PGRs start at different times the School is finding it difficult to arrange fixed dates for progress reviews as per their expectations. It was also noted that students did not like the ownership of organising their meetings.
CoHS	RR commented that the School had organised an annual PGR away day.
Chair and overall comments	Members commented that the score is confusing since we already have a good progress monitoring system and review committees in place now. The Chair pointed out that the low score would probably be because the first and second year PGRs were not able to answer appropriately due to the framing of

some of the questions in this section, and therefore were none comital or negative. He emphasised that it is important to inform PGRs early on about the support available throughout their research. They should be made aware of the standards & expectations, the process and procedures to be followed, and should be directed to attend the various Induction programmes happening across Colleges/ Schools. Supervisors and PGR Leads need to continuously explain what progression involves (ie. how to prepare for review meetings) and should ensure PGRs see similar theses and provide pre-viva briefings. The training workshops organised by the Doctoral School are an important platform for the PGRs to improve and develop their skills throughout their tenure. It is important to provide them with a supportive environment. The review Committee meetings should at least be organised for a minimum of an hour where the candidates are given the opportunity to discuss and present their research. This should also be an opportunity to identify things that are not working by independent discussion with Supervisor and PGR.

SECTION 5 RESPONSIBILITIES Average Score 81(-4)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q10.1 My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	68(-16)	59
Q10.2 I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	88(-2)	89
Q10.3 I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	86(-2)	87
Q10.4 Other than my supervisor/s I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme	80(-6)	77
Bangor had a variation from 90 to 71 across the Schools. BBS scored highly and Medical Sciences scored low. Comments from the Schools included:		
SU	RS commented that the message about the actions we have undertaken may not have reached all candidates through the PGR reps. We will need to look at how we can disseminate this information to all PGRs cf Together We.	
Chair and overall comments	The Chair mentioned that even though we have scored low we did relatively OK when compared to the sector scores. He reminded the PGR leads to ensure that every candidate is allocated a Personal Tutor who can be the Chair of the Review Committee. MA also commented that it is important that we communicate to the students about the actions we have taken arebased on their feedback. Changes implemented need to be showcased.	

SECTION 6 RESEARCH SKILLS average Score 84 (-5)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019

Q12.1 My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	87(-5)	90
Q 12.2 My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	86(-6)	89
Q 12.3 My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	80(-4)	79
Q 12.4 My understanding of "research integrity" (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing to the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	83(-5)	86

Bangor has a variation from 95 to 73 across the Schools. Law & Education scored particularly high and Medical Sciences low. Comments from the Schools included:	
CoHS	NH commented that the lunch time informal/ formal gatherings organised in the School for PGRs seemed to have increased the scores. It is important that we include the PGRs as part of the community.
Chair and Overall comments	JT commented that the score is very confusing and could be because of first years answering negatively because they have not yet received specific training. DM enquired if a histogram can be generated to understand the scoring rather than the mean. MA agreed to generate one if required. BH commented that they could also be confused with the terminology used in the questions. The Chair reminded the PGR College Directors and School PGR Leads to encourage their PGRs to attend the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme workshops, in particular those in research skills such as *Literature Searching, Statistical Modelling and Research Data Management.*

SECTION 7 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT Average score 81 (-4)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q 14.1 My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	83(-4)	82
Q 14.2 My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	82(-3)	80
Q 14.3 I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	74(-1)	71
Q 14.4 I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	84(-4)	82

Bangor rated higher than the sector for each question in this section with a variation between 94 and 62 across the Schools. Education scored very high, but Medical Sciences scored extremely poorly in this section. Comments from the Schools included:	
CoAHB	HM-C commented that the score and the comments were disappointing since the College had introduced a travel bursary scheme to help PGRs attend conferences etc.
Chair and overall comments	The Chair reminded the PGR College Directors and School PGR Leads to encourage their PGRs to attend the Doctoral School Training and Development Programme workshops, in particular on *Project Management – Managing the PhD; How to be an*

	Effective Researcher; Making Progress in the 2nd Year of Your PhD;, Preparing for the Viva; Finish Up and Move on. These courses provide important development training over and above the specific skills training such as literature searches, statistics etc. PGRS should be given more opportunities to get involved and give presentations and demonstrations in School events such as Open days etc. Opportunities to engage in project management, including managing a research budget, and presenting talks and posters at College level PGR conferences are all elements of good practice that might be considered where these practices are not currently provided.

SECTION 8 TEACHING **Please indicate which of the following opportunities you have experienced during your research degree programme (select all that apply):**	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q 17 Please indicate whether you have undertaken paid (or equivalent) teaching work at your institution during your research degree programme (e.g. as a Graduate Teaching Assistant or Graduate Demonstrator)	47(+2)	48
Q 17a. To what extent do you agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?	63(-11)	61
Q 17b. Did you receive formal training for your teaching? (e.g. teacher/lecturer training schemes or staff development classes run by your institutions; a PGCert course	46(-6)	70

Chair and overall comments	We recognise that teaching opportunities vary across the University, and that training/briefing is required as per CoP 17 (Q17). We recommend such training in year 2 if supervisors agree (Q.17b). The Chair commented that this year due to the financial situation at the University, opportunities were fewer for PGRs to undertake teaching. Discussions are ongoing to build a new PGCert specifically for PGRs.

SECTION 9 OVERALL EXPERIENCE Average score 831(-2)	BU PRES 2019	Sector PRES 2019
Q 18.1 Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme.	81(-4)	81
Q 18.2 I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	80(0)	82

The University report at https://www.bangor.ac.uk/studentengagement/info-staff/documents/2019-PRES/UniverstyPRES2019.pdf combines all of the PGR comments from all sections of the School reports. We especially draw your attention to the comments (colour coded document circulated) on priority areas for improvement.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND ACTIONS

The Chair congratulated everyone involved for the PRES results and mentioned that even though some of the comments are disheartening, we have scored well in many aspects and are on a parr with the sector. He indicated that PRES may better be run every two years, allowing us sufficient time to implement and assess change and avoid survey fatigue that was evident. We might also be better targeting students more advanced in their programmes.   MA offered to provide a further breakdown of scores according to requirements. This exercise of identifying examples of good practice and undertaking actions to improve areas is vital to improve the experience of our PGRs in Bangor University. We must make sure that Action plans are followed through, and 'strategy' meetings between the Doctoral School and Schools are being arranged for this purpose this academic year. We have already begun to put in place new processes on a broader level, but we must focus on those areas where concerns have been highlighted. MA pointed out that it is important that we close the loop by informing the PGRs that their feedback is acted upon.

The Chair reminded staff that the reports are confidential and must only be used for internal purposes and must not be distributed. Hard copies used at Action plan meetings should be returned to staff running the meetings.

Colleges/ Schools are requested **to hold School or College meetings with PGRs or the PGR representatives to drill down further into the issues underpinning the scores and comments**. The Student Engagement Unit and the Doctoral School are available to help facilitate these meetings if required.

Secondly, **Schools with overall satisfaction scores below the sector average (80)** should draw up a comprehensive PRES Action Plan and submit this to the Doctoral School before the end of the autumn term.

Thirdly, **Schools scoring less than 80 in any section** should specify actions to address these specific areas, especially in relation to particularly low scoring questions, and similarly submit these to the Doctoral School.

Finally, Professor Turner thanked everyone for their participation and continued support to improve the PGR experience.