Bangor University
Doctoral School Board (DSB)
Minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2018

Present:

Doctoral School
Professor John Turner [JT] (PGR Dean, Chair), Dr Penny Dowdney [PD], Aashu Jayadeep

College Directors of PGR
Dr James McDonald [JM] (CoESE), Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira [HM-C] (CoAHB), Prof Debbie Mills [DM] (CoHS)

Heads of DTPs/DTCs and other centres
Professor John Healey (Envision) [JH],

School PGR Leads/ Representatives
Dr Eirini Sanoudaki (Languages, Literature & Linguistics), Dr Wei Shi [WS] (Law), Dr Steffan Thomas (Music & Media), Dr Robin Mann (History, Philosophy &Social Sciences)
Dr Neal Hockley [NH] (Natural Sciences), Dr Line Cordes (Ocean Sciences), Dr William J Teahan [WT] (Computer Science & Electronic Engineering)

PGR Administrators
Gwenda Pritchard, Everil McQuarie, Julie Boulton

Students' Union Representatives
Mark Barrow

PGR Student Reps
Tanya Herring (Law), Elizabeth Woodcock (History, Philosophy &Social Sciences), Rebecca Ward (Languages, Literature & Linguistics), Martina Codice(Languages, Literature & Linguistics), Luke Stephen Hillary [LH] (Natural Sciences), Eluned Hudson (Natural Sciences)

Guest
Beth Hall (Library & Archives Services)

Apologies:
Prof Robert Rogers (ESRC DTP), Dr Manon Jones (ESRC DTP)
Dr Gwion Williams (BBS), Dr Aled Llion Jones (Welsh), Pwyll Ap Sion (MM)
Dr Nathalie Fenner (Biology), Dr Martina Lahmann (Chemistry)
Dr Sion Williams (HS), Dr Richard Ramsey (Psychology), Dr Ross Roberts (SHES), Dr Jane Wakeman (MS)
Christine Parry, Janet Thomas, Anwen Williams

ACTION

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Board members introduced themselves and the Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the Doctoral School Board for the new Academic year. The Chair clarified the remit of the DSB for the benefit of new members. He reiterated that the DSB aims to meet four times annually, which includes the meeting to analyse the PRES results.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS/ACTIONS

1. With reference to minute **3 c)** (**PGRS & Review meetings**)**,** the chair informed the group that the review period is coming to its conclusion for the year. He encouraged all PGR Leads to monitor the process using the Progress Review tab in the PGRS and ensure completion by the end of September.

PGR Leads

2. With reference to the minute **4** (**PGR applications**), JT informed the Board that the discussion document on admissions procedures prepared by NH to streamline the PGR application process was well received by admissions and IEC. Action plans are now being drawn up. Some of the changes requested are already in place while others, such as those which need intervention by ITS, are on their action list. Some of the issues raised, such as taking out the personal statement, could not be considered due to Border Agency requirements. Admin staff will now be trained to upload documents from candidates, such as the research proposals to Turnitin for academics to verify and approve. JT thanked NH and JM for their continuous support in discussing the issue with the Admissions team. NH thanked admissions and IEC for considering the issues and arriving at comprehensive action plans. He suggested that a guidance could be prepared on how to write a research proposal which could be put up as an indicator to potential candidates who are applying. He invited Schools to send him samples of what is being followed currently so that a generic one could be developed.

PGR Leads

3. With reference to the minute **6 (KESS2 Survey),** LH pointed out that the candidates are still waiting for the FAQ document. PD informed that it will be released shortly.

4. The Chair also briefed about the PRES analysis meeting held on 17th September (**Agenda item 4**).
5. The minutes of the meeting held on 26th April and 17th September were confirmed as a correct record.

3. BRIEF REPORTS

a. Dean's Report

1. The Dean reported that we currently have 1035 Academic staff including FT & PT which is equivalent to 823.55 FTE.
   PGR applications received so far for the current academic year:
   840 (slightly higher than last yr.) of which 583 are International candidates (89 offers made).
   142 were admitted (28% higher than last yr.) of which 11 (21% lower than last yr.) are International candidates.

   Breakdown of **new applicants** across Colleges as follows:

Arts, Humanities and Business:	34 (15% lower than last yr.)
Environmental Sciences and Engineering:	60 (58% higher than last yr.)
Human Sciences:	48(45% higher than last yr.)

   The total number of **PGR is 388** (619 in 2017/18) as of now including 62 (73 in 2017/18) international and 58 (141 in 2017/18) PT candidates.

   Breakdown across **Colleges** as follows:

Arts, Humanities and Business:	109 (32 International)
Environmental Sciences and Engineering:	157 (25 International)
Human Sciences:	122 (5 International)

Male/Female proportion: 57.99% Female but significant variability across Colleges

	F	M
Arts, Humanities and Business:	64	45
Environmental Sciences and Engineering:	69	87
Human Sciences:	92	30

PGR breakdown:

PhDs: 304 (78%)
Prof Doc: 26 (7%)
MPhil: 6 (2%)
MSc Research: 52 (13%)

PGR Results May-Aug 2018
48 PhD, 2 Prof Doc, 1 MPhil and 3 Masters by Research
Awards:
4 with no corrections
28-with minor corrections
19 with major corrections
3 referrals – resubmissions
1 resubmit for lower award

2. The Chair highlighted concerns raised by QAA of having a viva date later than 3 months after submission (39 within 3 months, 11 within 4 months and 3 within 5 months). JT urged the PGR leads to ensure nominations for External Examiners are made well in advance so that no delays occur (and at minimum of 1 month). GP remarked that nomination forms are being submitted six months prior to viva. JH commented that this may not be realistic. HM-C enquired if the geographical location of the EE needs to be considered to reduce cost. The chair mentioned that a budget is allocated for this purpose and any additional funding is usually taken up by the respective School. Our aim should be to find the best EE keeping in mind the cost and time limitations.

PGR Leads

b. Doctoral School Report

PD gave the Board an update on the work and developments within the Doctoral School:

1. **Internship** –The DS had two UG interns working over the summer. The Interns were interviewing and filming BU doctoral researchers along with their supervisors / research teams so as to put together short films and research feature pieces which will be available for use for a variety of promotional purposes. The Internship has been very successful and the DS will be releasing these videos through social media channels. HM-C commented that having equal representation across all Colleges/Schools and some in Welsh language will promote a more accurate PGR community.
2. **Office shifting**- The DS will be shifting offices to the first floor of Main Arts shortly.
3. **Meetings**- The Doctoral School will be scheduling school visits to discuss strategies on improving recruitment and will be meeting with College Directors, PGR reps and PGR admins regularly.

4. **DS Induction event-** is organised for the 4th of October and PGR leads are urged to ensure new PGRs attend this as well as their College/School inductions.

c. Review Committees

As actioned before (**2.1**), the Chair encouraged all PGR Leads to ensure completion of the review process by the end of September.

Suggestions have been received to include a check box for completion of the literature review, updating profile in PURE etc. Any other feedback on the PGRS system should be e mailed to the Chair.

d. CDT/DTP applications

1. The Chair Informed DSB that 1 DTP (NERC Envision) and 3 EPSRC CDT outline bid submissions were made, and by the time of the meeting, the Future Timber one has reached the second stage. *(We have since heard that all 3 CDTs have made it through to the second stage, and that the NERC Envision bid was successful).*
2. JT reminded the group that it is important that schools look at possible programmes and institutional collaborations for future DTPs and CTDs ahead of calls, so as to support PGR recruitment. JH emphasised that it is also valuable to gain intelligence from such partner collaborations. He enquired about the possibility of building a collective repository to share knowledge. The Chair assured the group that this will be undertaken in RDC (where several members have experience of bid selections on panels) and will be reported back to DSB.

The Chair

e. Institutional Review

1. JT informed the Committee that the Institutional Review took place 21st to 24th May 2018. BU has met all the QAA requirements.

Based on the information presented, the review team judged that:

- Bangor University meets the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- Bangor University meets the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Commendations:

- the collection and use of data to inform and enhance student support and academic progress.
- The deeply embedded, extensive, and culturally valued partnership with students, which permeates all facets of university life.
- the embedding of bilingualism in all aspects of university life which positively impacts on student experience.

Affirmations:

- implementation of the Assessment Framework to ensure the consistency of assessment across the University

- the steps being taken to address the deficiencies in the provision in MDIS Tashkent
- affirm that the development of the doctoral school to support a distinct and consistent PGR experience across all Schools.

Recommendations

- No recommendations.

JT thanked everyone involved in the IR process.

2. The Chair informed the Board that the Quality Enhancement Review Group (which took over from the Institutional Review Task Group) had requested and received an action plan for the next 6 years of PGR activity. Discussions with the School and Colleges will be ongoing to develop strategies on improving the PGR experience at Bangor and inform the action plans as we progress.

f. PRES outcomes

JT gave an overview of this year's PRES results which was discussed in detail in a separate DSB meeting on 17th September.

1. Overall the University's PRES results were very good with 85% overall satisfaction (87% in 2017) against a sector average of 80% (82% in 2017). This placed us in the top ten (10th) out of the 65 institutions participating in PRES this year.
2. The University's overall response rate was 54%, which was the same as in 2017. The University would like to see this response rate increase to at least 60% in the future to give more reliable data.
3. Some Schools consistently had highly positive scores and others evidently dipped in certain sections.

4. PRES REPORTING PREVIOUS MEETING LAST WEEK

1. The Chair noted that the aim of the PRES meeting last week was primarily for College PGR Directors and School PGR leads to explain outstanding, good and poor scores in order to highlight examples of good practice, and to identify lessons learned.
2. He noted that representatives from some of the low performing Schools had not attended the PRES meeting and he highlighted that these need to catch up by implementing their action plans.
3. 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.

College Directors/ PGR Leads

4. He reiterated that it is expected that Schools with overall satisfaction scores below 80%, and any sector score below 80% need to address these areas through specific actions, and monitor that these actions are implemented.
5. The comprehensive PRES Action Plan is expected to be submitted to the Doctoral School before the end of the autumn term.
6. There is some urgency to implement actions because PRES is now annual, and the 2019 PRES will open in April.

College Directors/ PGR Leads

7. MB commented that the Students Union was happy to be part of the PRES Action plan meeting scheduled by CoESE. LH and other PGR representatives remarked that the student community needs to be informed about this excellent PRES outcome. Academics also pointed out that with the successful PRES results this year it is important that the result is given some publicity, similar to NSS.

5. HIGHLIGHTED KEY CHANGES TO PGR REGULATIONS (these won't be approved until October 4th)

1. The Chair informed the group that the new PGR Regulation 03 reflects the expected current practice across the PGR community. The Regulations will be presented to the Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee on Oct 4th for final approval. They will then be made available on the Academic Registry Regulations web site.
2. The new Regulations will come into immediate effect for all PGR except those PhD by Published Works who have begun their 12 month critical review.
3. The Chair went through the major areas of change, specifically wrt:
    - Methods of study and Admissions
    - Postgraduate management, Supervision and Training
    - Monitoring and Review of Progress
    - Submission of Thesis and Examination.
4. JT highlighted to PGR leads the need to ensure that PGR supervisors have the relevant expertise to supervise proposed projects and to be careful over the use of extensions and suspensions. A suspension may often be more appropriate during the period of study rather than multiple extensions at the end. He encouraged them to consult College Directors / Doctoral School if there are any issues.
5. He said that it is important to convey our expectations to PGRs through inductions/ supervisory meetings etc. especially in areas of supervision and progression.

6. TRAINING PROGRAMME : key training and stages and what is new:

1. PD updated the Board that the Doctoral School Training & Development programme for the new academic year is now ready and is available as both hard and soft copies. She thanked everyone who had sent in suggestions.
2. Apart from usual milestone workshops and workshops form Library & Archives, some of the new workshops introduced this year include – Introduction to Impact, Royal Society Publishing Workshop, Reporting outcomes from your research: PURE & Researchfish, GDPR for Researchers and Sustainability for PGRs. A workshop on Mental Health is currently under discussion.

7. PURE PhD profiles

1. JT reiterated that it is important that PGR candidates create their own profile in PURE highlighting their research. It is necessary for PGRs to give their permission for these details to be displayed on School websites.
2. Guidance notes are now available to record the profiles in PURE (papers distributed).
3. He encouraged PGR Leads to advise PGRs during Inductions and other School events to update their PURE profile at the earliest opportunity and new PGR to create a profile prior to their first Review Committee.

8. ELECTRONIC THESIS SUBMISSION

BH gave a report on this topic (papers distributed).

The main changes happening are as below:

- After the viva has taken place and any corrections made, a final version of the thesis should be submitted to the Library in e-version only.
- The library will no longer be accepting printed theses.
- This new process will start on 27th September 2018 but we will continue to accept theses via the current procedures (print copy + CD) until January 2019.

9. College Reports (College Directors PGR)

1. HM-C (CoAHB) No Report
2. JM(CoESE) reported the following:

   A **College postgraduate research (PGR) away day** was held on August 3rd to establish our strategy for PGR provision and administration within the College.
   At the away day, we agreed on a College-wide system forPGR induction, training, progression and administration to be implemented in all three schools in the college. These arrangements are currently being implemented (e.g. admissions, induction, staff/PGR resources, and recruitment).
   2018 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results – all Schools now belonging to CoESE performed well in the 2018 PRES. Overall satisfaction was 100% for Chemistry, 91% for SENRGY, 90% for Ocean Sciences, 89% for Biological Sciences, 88% Computer Science and 79% for Electronic Engineering (Sector average, 80%; University average, 85%).
   A PRES Action Plan event is being held on Friday 28thSeptember. Staff and PGRs from the College in addition to colleagues from the Doctoral School, Undeb Bangor and the student engagement unit will meet to discuss our latest results and form an action plan for the coming year.
   New PGRs. 65 PGRs (MScRes and PhD) are currently registered or eligible to register for next week's college induction which will take place during the whole of next week.
   There is currently some confusion regarding MRes and MScRes degrees within the University, which has led to issues with applications, registration and bench fees. A meeting involving the relevant staff will soon be held to discuss this matter.

3. DM(CoHS) reported the following:
   The College is planning for a PRES Action Plan meeting to discuss outcomes.
   Other College level PGR Events are being discussed.

10. SU Report

MB updated the Board on the work and developments within SU.

1. The Students' Union is pleased to report that the weekly PhTea sessions, held on Thursdays between 12:00 and 14:00, are increasingly popular. They are a way for Postgraduate researchers to meet each other, and help to facilitate an interactive community.
2. The Course Representative elections happen this week. The SU will be working with the newly elected members to ensure Postgraduates remain represented. This will also be achieved by setting up a PGR Rep Council, which can help feedback to the Doctoral School. The PGR representatives commented that the call for nominations did not reach all of them. MB responded that this information will be conveyed to Student Engagement Unit so that a better form of communication can be achieved in the future.
3. SU are also hoping to organise a PGR conference with DocSoc in the second half of the academic year.

4. SU also scheduled PGR Enhancement Action Plans, with the Student Engagement Unit. These are integral to helping improve the experience of Postgraduates, and involve PGR Reps themselves.

11. AOB

1. PD mentioned that the Researcher Development and Concordant Group had agreed that there should be a PGR representative – PD will circulate details to decide on who that would be. We also invite nominations of a PGR representative for the Athena Swan Task Group.
2. Two Scholarships opportunities forwarded from the VC's office would be circulated by PD.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Doctoral School Board will be held on January 17th at 10.00 a.m., in the Council Chamber.