

Report of the Research Degrees Committee

- Present:** Professor John Turner (Dean & Chair), Dr Penny Dowdney, Professor J Healey, Dr S Jackson, Mrs A Jayadeep, Dr M Lahmann, Dr J MacDonald, Professor R Rogers, Dr S Williams, Mrs K Chidley (Secretary)
- Apologies:** Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira, Dr O Rees, Dr I ap Dewi, Dr G Williams, Mrs D Barnard
- Date:** 8th November 2017

19 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

- 1 The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a correct record.
2. With reference to:
 - 13.2[E] It was reported that the Students' Union had set up a weekly "PhTea " event which is open to all Postgraduate Researchers and which has been well attended.
 - 14.1[A] Dr Penny Dowdney had been in discussion with Academic Office to discuss Banner issues and a number of areas were identified and work is progressing on these.

20 REPORTS

1. Dean's Report

A Postgraduate Progress Review System (PGRS) – It was noted that a Progress Report had been made to the system which allows authorised users to have an overall view of the monitoring forms submitted. These can be accessed by the Doctoral School, College and School Directors and PGR Administrators. This new facility was very much welcomed and it was noted that it should be used immediately to follow up incomplete reviews. A new deadline has been set for Schools to ensure that all reviews have taken place and recorded on the system by 24th November.

CoHABS had raised concerns about reviews in relation to the independence of the student and supervisor report. It was emphasised that this was one of the main principles of the process and the Chair will discuss this matter further with the Colleges's Director of PGR, once appointed.

It was noted that a number of revisions will be made to the system following review and feedback received, the most important being: only be one Chair's report; removal of notification e-mails; override by DoGS rather than Chair, and more clear rubric.

The flexibility of the question sets within the student and supervisor reports was emphasised. Overall it was felt that the PGRS was working well and it was hoped that the changes will improve it for next year.

B Regulations for Postgraduate Research Programmes – The Committee was reminded that the the PGR regulations review was continuing and that the recommendations made at the last meeting had been included in the regulations. The regulations will then be presented to the Regulations and Special Cases Committee for approval.

The Chair lead the Committee through the document and noted major changes made. A number of areas still required clarification and the Chair agreed to discuss these with the Regulations Officer (eg. Language of submission, PhD by Published Works). **Action: JT to send draft Regulations to lapD to redraft and send to Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee in January.**

C Doctoral School Board- The Committee received the minutes of the Doctoral School Board which met on 21st September and 17th October. It was noted that the 21st September was a special meeting to discuss PRES results. Following that meeting Schools/Colleges were asked to write Action Plans and to arrange meetings with their Postgraduate Researchers to discuss the individual schools' PRES results before the end of term.

2. Doctoral School Report

Dr Penny Dowdney gave the Committee an update on the work of the Doctoral School. The Training and Development Programme is progressing well with most workshops and training courses fully subscribed with reserve lists in operation.

A social event has been arranged for 16th November at Pontio with Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone as a guest speaker followed by refreshments, and a wine tasting event is also planned. The Research Visions photo competition has been launched and the SU are organising a 3 minute thesis competition.

3. College Reports

[A] CoHABS – Dr Sion Williams reported that CoHABS is rotating College representation until a Director is appointed. He reported on discussions held within the Colleges' Postgraduate Committee in which they would prefer Student and Supervisor review forms to be visible to one another, but it was felt that this left no safe space for student's and supervisors to report issues to the chair and Internal to explore.

The School of Healthcare Sciences are currently formalising as part of BIHMR four Clinical Academic Pathways as pilot programmes and include research (PGR: Masters by Research, PhD or professional Doctorate), teaching (Pg Cert HE or equivalent) and clinical components. The four current pathways are: Developing a framework for the future: A pilot programme to support a Welsh medium Clinical-Academic Early Career Pathway (Graduate BN), Clinical Academic Pathway for Senior Medical Fellow/medical consultants with BCUHB, Clinical Academic Pathway for research fellow/junior Medical Staff (FY2) with BCUHB and Clinical Academic Pathway for Nurse consultants.

[B] CNS – Dr James McDonald reported that he had commenced his role as College Director of Postgraduate Studies on 1st September. He had successfully arranged a college Induction; a PRES feedback meeting; PhD fieldwork advice sessions; and established a Blackboard site.

4. SU Report

Nothing additional to points already raised (SU representative had to leave meeting).

5. KESS 2

Dr Dowdney reported that there were currently 223 live projects across Wales with 181 PhD and 42 Masters by Research, of which Bangor had 60 PhDs and 17 Masters by Research.

She was pleased to report that the project had received an extension to its funding up to 2022, potentially allowing for an increase in PhD grants and conversions of MSC by Research to PhD projects.

6. ESRC DTP

Projects submitted for the Collaborative Competition were under review (panel meeting). There had been some concerns raised by the Schools of Education and Social Sciences as to why they received late notice of the competition, and Professor Rogers confirmed that this was because of membership of the DTP Pathways. **Action: RR to discuss ESRC DTP issues with Education and Social Sciences.**

Dr Jackson requested information on the ESRC DTP for inclusion in the University's Collaborative Partnership database. **Action: RR to send missing information regarding ESRC DTP to SJ.**

7. NERC DTP

It was reported that this was the final year of the current Envision NERC DTP. An induction event was recently held for all newly appointed postgraduate researchers which was a success. The current partners, Bangor, Lancaster and Nottingham have agreed to collaborate again in the next round which will require a renewed competitive bid, and may involve new partners (discussions had been initiated with the British Antarctic Survey). Bangor have been asked to hold the annual summer conference again in MCW Menai Bridge in July 2018.

21 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Committee received the following reports: Status of Postgraduate Research Key Performance Indicators; Summary of Results for Research Degrees (May 2016 – April 2017); Summary of Research Degree Result and Report Forms (May 2017- August 2017); Extensions Granted in 2016/17 and PGR Recruitment 2012-2017 (all are attached as Appendix 1 to the official copy of the minutes).

It noted that 90% of students in the period May 2016-April 2017 have been awarded their degree. Concerns were raised regarding the length of time between submission of theses and vivas as 25% were not undertaken within the University's guidelines of 3 months. **Action: Colleges were asked to expedite vivas and to ensure that External Examiner appointment forms were completed correctly and in good time to prevent delays.**

22 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

It was noted that the University will be undertaking a Quality Assurance Agency Institutional Review in May 2018.

There is a possibility that Postgraduate Research may be an area that will be identified as a focus area for the University. The Doctoral School is contributing to the Self Evaluation document. **Action: JT, PD & AJ to prepare Self Evaluation text and figures to IRTG.**

23 PGR FEES

The Chair reported that discussions have begun with the Planning Department to look at PGR fees, the discussions will include exploring ways of ensuring that the Schools receive a portion of the fees towards research support. Current practice does not have parity across Schools and between International and Home/EU students with regards to bench fees.

24 PGR DEGREE LENGTHS, SUBMISSION AND COMPLETION TIMES

The Chair reported that this was another area that he would like to be explore. Currently some research council funded PGRs have 3.5 years registration and submission within 4 years, whilst the majority of the postgraduate researchers *submit* within 4 years. However the University should be aiming at *completion* within 4 years.

A number of suggestions were made to look at improving the University's completion rate which included PGR Administration staff issuing timely reminder e-mails to supervisors and students about impending submission; establishing a University wide 3rd year Induction meeting; and tightening up of progress decisions in particular at the end of the 1st year. These suggestions will be further considered.

25 RESTRUCTURING

The Chair referred to the current FSB process and the issues that will affect PGR following restructuring. The Doctoral School has worked with the FSB on its new structures and its relationships with the Colleges and Schools, specifically in relation to: the Doctoral School in Corporate Services and line management within the Doctoral School, including the externally funded KESS team; College Directors of PGR and School PGR Leads, T&S staff contracts and specification of PhD supervision and examination roles, and the need for dedicated PGR administration.

The importance of appointing new supervisors in the event of a supervisor leaving during a postgraduate researcher's PhD was emphasised.

26 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 10.00am, Thursday 1st March at the Cledwyn Conference Room 3.