

Bangor University
Research Degrees Committee (RDC)
Minutes of the meeting held on 5th December 2019

Present: Doctoral School

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

Apologies:

Prof James McDonald (CoEScE), Prof Debbie Mills (CoHS), Prof John Healey (Envision), Mr John Jackson (Planning & Student Data), Dr Myfanwy Davies (QA &V), Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira (CoAHB), Prof Jonathan Roberts [JR] (CoESE), Dr Sue Niebrzydowski (CoAHB), Dr Sion Williams (HS), Harry Riley (SU)

ACTION:

1. INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair noted that most members were absent. He acknowledged the apologies that had been sent, but noted that some apologies had come in too late for the meeting to be cancelled. He felt it worth ensuring actions to date were minuted.

2. PREVIOUS MINUTES

The previous minutes for the 6th June 2019 Committee meeting were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

- a. **PGR Deans Report-** With reference to minute **4 a.(i)(Discussion on the practice of candidates giving an open presentation on the day of the viva should be normalised)** is still pending to be discussed at the DSB.

**To be
raised in
DSB**

- b. **QA &V -** With reference to minute **5 a (CDT forms)** JT informed all that QA & V has now accepted the deviations.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Change in regulations: mode of study for f/t staff: clarify viva outcomes

JT informed all that a change in Regulation 03 needed to be requested regarding research study for full time staff. If the research is fully aligned with their full-time job, then it could be considered as a full-time PhD. This change requires an additional mode of study to be added to the list

**Doctoral
School
followed
by
submissio**

Regarding clarification for viva outcomes: the change has already incorporated in the PGR Regulation 03; it could be better explained with a flow diagram if required.

b. Conducting long distance vivas

JT suggested that it would be a good initiative to relax the rules regarding external examiner presence for long distance vivas. The regulation could be updated to allow the external examiner to be part of the viva from long distance and not necessarily be present in Bangor.

**To be
raised in
DSB**

c. PRES action plans

JT thanked those who had submitted PRES Action Plans to the Doctoral School. These are now available on the website for reference. He noted that CoAHB is yet to submit their plans from all Schools other than Music & Media.

CoAHB

He commented that every time an Action Plan is implemented by a School, then a log (available from Student Engagement Unit) should be completed by the School PGR Lead and submitted to the Doctoral School.

PGR Leads

d. Leverhulme application

JT noted that the Leverhulme Doctoral Studentships application will open in January 2020. There will be 10 awards of £1.35 million each, for 15 students for

up to 3 yrs. Only one application can be submitted per institution. These should be based around a clear, coherent, overarching theme which does not cover areas such as diseases, illness, disabilities in humans/ animals. No themes which are clinical/medical, or which are a priority of individual research councils will be accepted. The application should cover an interdisciplinary theme which should be in alignment with the University's strategic research plan.

To be raised in DSB

e. PGR Event

A PGR Social Event to showcase BU postgraduate research is scheduled for 11th December 2019. The Vice Chancellor and the Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Impact will be opening the event. There will a 20 minute presentations from a PGR from each College, and 10-15 posters per College. College Directors to encourage PGRs to attend and to invite talks and poster

DS

5. DOCTORAL SCHOOL

a. PGR Dean's Report- latest recruitment data/examination results/Progress Review monitoring

JT thanked the committee for the support he received throughout his tenure as PGR Dean. He informed that he would be leaving his position as of January 1st, 2020 and conveyed his best wishes to the new PGR Dean.

i. Recruitment data overview - JT presented the latest recruitment figures as of 1st November 2019.

College figures:

Colleges	International Candidates	Total candidates
PGRs across BU	30	163
CoAHB	13	52
CoESE	8	56
CoHS	9	54

Schools:

Schools	International Candidates	Total candidates
BBS	2	2
History, Phi & SoSc	1	18

LLL	1	6
Law	3	7
MM	6	16
Welsh	0	4
CS & E	1	11
NS	5	36
OS	2	10
Ed	0	2
HS	3	11
MS	0	9
Psy	3	20
SHEXSc	3	11

JT commented that even though the number of applications has gone down (see below), offers have gone up and PGR numbers are gradually rising compared to the data from 2015.

Colleges	2015/16	2019/20
CoAHB	730	359
CoESE	465	290
CoHS	285	292
Overall change	1480	941

He requested PGR Lead to ensure that detailed information on application processes are available on School webpages to attract strong candidates. It was important that staff complete PURE profiles regarding their willingness to supervise on themes and topics. School web pages should indicate staff subject area against their names and roles to enable applicants to identify potential supervisors.

PGR Leads

- ii. **PGR EE Report** - JT presented the PGR Results report dated Sept. 2019 (**circulated**). He informed the committee that results were received for 50 PhD, 2 Professional doctorate, 2 MPhil and 2 Research Masters by Research candidates. Three of them had no corrections, 36 had minor corrections and 17 major corrections. There were no resubmissions.

The number of vivas held within 3 months was 46, 4 of them were within 4 months, 2 within 5 months, 4 within 6 months and just 1 more than 11 months.

Regarding the last comment on the report- *low interaction between the candidate and examiners* – he reiterated that there should not be any communication between the candidate and the external examiner as per our PGR Regulation 03. All the communication should be via the internal examiner.

- iii. **PGR Monitoring** – JT indicated that from 442 PGRs who were reviewed, 436 were allowed to progress, 108 are still without a decision, 11 reviews are unsatisfactory, with an ongoing second review. 116 additional reviews were cancelled.

Review status from each School. PGR Leads should continue to chase incomplete reviews.

Schools	Incomplete Reviews
BBS	4
History, Phi & SoSc	7
LLL	7
Law	6
MM	4
Welsh	1
CS & E	1
NS	36 (many with same supervisor)
OS	2
Ed	18
HS	8
MS	0
Psy	2
SHEXSc	2

b. Doctoral School Board

The Committee received the minutes of the Doctoral School Board of 26th September 2019.

c. Doctoral School

- i. PD informed the Committee that the Doctoral School had been awarded another Internship for Summer and will be recruiting interns to work on areas related to PGR recruitment.
- ii. Training and development workshops for next semester will be open for booking before the Christmas break.
- iii. A PGR Social Event to showcase BU postgraduate research is scheduled for 11th December 2019.
- iv. The new PGR Dean will commence office in January 2020.

6. REPORTS

a. QA & V

QA & V has now accepted the deviations for the CDT forms.

b. College Reports- No reports

c. SU Report- No report

d. KESS2/KESS2 East

PD noted that the most recent KESS 2 / KESS 2 East call has now closed. 7 PhD and 8 Research Masters applications were submitted. The approval panel will convene on December 12th. Currently there are 581 live KESS 2 / KESS 2 East projects across Wales.

e. ESRC Wales DTP – No Report

f. NERC DTP

On behalf of JH, JT reported that Envision candidate Beth Francis – CoESE has secured an Internship with the Cabinet office.

The annual conference this year will be hosted at Lancaster in early July.

JH also reported that the Management Board has agreed to review the candidate selection process (to try to further increase its fairness) and the student-led inter-DTP “treescapes” conference preparation continues to develop.

g. EPSRC CDT – No Report

h. Nuclear CDT – No Report

7. Discussion on maternity/paternity policy for PGRs

JT commented that PGRs who are funded by UKRI are eligible for maternity/paternity pay. Maternity leave eligibility will be for 52 weeks. Candidates will receive a stipend for the first 6 months, statutory maternity pay for the next 13 weeks, and the last 13 weeks will be unpaid. Partners will be eligible for 50 weeks leave. There are currently no limits to the number of periods of leave.

JT mentioned that these policies from UKRI need to be incorporated into an update of Regulation 03.

8. SPECIAL CASES/ Appeals awareness

JT informed the Committee that there is likely to be an appeal raised against a 40-minute viva in the School of Music & Media.

He also requested PGR Leads to ensure that PhD Supervisory Committees and Review Committees are reconstituted promptly where staff have left due to restructuring.

9. AOB

PD thanked Prof John Turner on behalf of the committee members and the Doctoral School for guiding us as PGR Dean and Chair of RDC and DSB for more than 3 years. We wish him all the very best in his new post.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be at 10.00am, Thursday 5th March 2020 in the Main University Building, Cledwyn Conference Room 3 (TCR3).