

Bangor University
Research Degrees Committee (RDC)
Minutes of the meeting held on 7th June 2018

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

College Directors
 Dr Martina Lahmann [ML] (COPAS),

Heads of DTPs/DTCs and other centres
 Professor John Healey [JH]

Students' Union Representatives
 Ruth Plant [RP]

Apologies: Dr James McDonald, Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira, Dr Gwion Williams, Dr Sion Williams, Professor Robert Rogers, Dr Sarah Jackson, Dr Osian Rees

ACTION

1. PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st March 2018 were accepted as a correct record.

2. BRIEF REPORTS

a. Dean's Report (inc PRES, Institutional Review)

1. JT updated the Committee that PRES 2018 closed on May 18th and the initial figures (not the final figures from HEA) show an overall Bangor response rate of 54%.

The schools with a 'Yes' under the column report (see table below) have met publication threshold and a school level report will be generated, those who have just fallen short will get a report but no students comments will be available, in order to protect students anonymity. The nine schools who scored under 50% will not be receiving comments from students. Medical Sciences and Cymraeg are the only schools that will not receive any reports.

| School | Population | Responses | % | Report | Comments |
|--------------------------|------------|-----------|----|--------|--------------------------------|
| Bangor Business School | 56 | 27 | 48 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| Biological Sciences | 61 | 38 | 62 | Yes | |
| Chemistry | 42 | 24 | 57 | Yes | |
| Computer Science | 23 | 16 | 70 | Yes | |
| Creative Studies & Media | 29 | 12 | 41 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| Cymraeg | 16 | 4 | 25 | No | |
| Education | 31 | 13 | 42 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| Electronic Engineering | 30 | 14 | 47 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| English Literature | 24 | 18 | 75 | Yes | |
| SYNERGY | 76 | 57 | 75 | Yes | |
| Health Studies | 38 | 13 | 34 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |

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|-----------------------------------|-----|-----|----|-----|--------------------------------|
| History & Archaeology | 42 | 16 | 38 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| Law | 26 | 16 | 62 | Yes | |
| Linguistics & English Language | 26 | 15 | 58 | Yes | |
| Medical Sciences | 6 | 3 | 50 | No | |
| Modern Languages & Culture | 16 | 12 | 75 | Yes | |
| Music | 22 | 16 | 73 | Yes | |
| Ocean Sciences | 45 | 30 | 67 | Yes | |
| Philosophy & Religion | 34 | 19 | 56 | Yes | |
| Psychology | 103 | 32 | 31 | Yes | No comments as 50% not reached |
| Social Sciences | 36 | 19 | 53 | Yes | |
| Sport, Health & Exercise Sciences | 39 | 28 | 72 | Yes | |
| Bangor University | 823 | 443 | 54 | Yes | Include all comments |

JT remarked that the efforts put in by DoGs in motivating the students to participate in the Survey is commendable. The full reports are expected by end of July.

- JT informed the Committee that the Institutional Review took place 21st to 24th May 2018. BU has met all the QAA requirements. RP has been involved in the IR meetings, representing the SU.

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 and the successful outcome. Monitoring of developments will take place under the Quality Enhancement Review which will meet once or twice per year.

3. NERC DTP application and three applications for EPSRC CDTs have been submitted. Dr Sue Niebrzydowski served on the AHRC DTP panel, and Prof John Turner will be on the NERC DTP panel.
4. College level Induction for PGRs took place in CNS for the second and third year PhD researchers focussing on thesis/viva preparation.
5. An introductory session organised for PGCert in HE received good feedback from PGRs. It was noted that candidates would need to have at least 100 hrs teaching opportunity to complete the PGCert HE and that this is not always available to PGR, and that this requirement would need to be made clear during inductions.
6. A review of PGR supervision work allocation across universities gives a range of 3-11% which equates to 50 – 180 hrs, averaging at ~5% =82.5 hrs. KESS 2 draws down 104 hrs for supervision. The Bangor Work allocation model intends to use 83 hrs. JH commented that we need to ensure that Schools and Supervisors are aware of this commitment.

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

7. JT presented the responses from Academic Registry and IEC regarding the DSB comments on the PGR application process to (a) reduce speculative applications, and (b) to streamline the application process. While some areas of concern can be improved, many aspects of the process are necessary to comply with government sponsors and statutory checks for UKVI requirements. Admissions staff had undergone training in Turnitin for research proposal plagiarism checks. He informed the group that Admissions would implement the changes that are possible, although discussions are also required with IT to change some features of the Direct Applications form such as adding check boxes and allowing uploading of files. Admissions have drawn up an Action Plan.

DOCTORAL SCHOOL & ADMISSIONS

8. PD commented that HR has recommended that academic staff taking on the role of supervisors attend the DS supervisor training. Currently John Wakeford from Missenden Centre conducts these training workshops. JH and JT remarked that with more challenging and ambitious projects coming up in the DTP area the Doctoral School should be looking at strategies to provide more extensive supervision training and to ensure ECR and senior staff attend.

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

9. JT remarked that the student presentations on the day of the viva organised by SENRGy is commendable. JH commented that students give a 25 minute presentation sometimes

in the presence of external examiners and this is a great opportunity for PhDs to present their research in public. JT enquired about PGR opinion to extend the practice to other schools. RP affirmed that PGRs would appreciate being consulted and would only benefit from such an event as long as it is advertised to them well in advance. The Committee agreed that consultation across schools is required in this matter.

**DOCTORAL
SCHOOL &
SU**

b. Doctoral School Board

The Committee received the minutes of the Doctoral School Board which met on 26th April 2018.

c. Doctoral School Report

1. JT reported that the Doctoral School met with the SU to discuss early results from the PGR Winter Student Survey. Feedback was given, which will now be collated into a report from the SU for enhancement.
2. PD reported that the Doctoral School is currently working on the Training & Development Programme for the next Academic Year. Discussions are ongoing with internal staff to include new workshops on topics such as Research Impact and Python. Suggestions are welcome from Schools and Colleges regarding any additional generic training to the PGR candidates to be offered through the Doctoral School.
3. The Doctoral School will be looking forward to working closely with the new College level appointed staff to bring about PGR level Impact events in the future.
4. The Doctoral School has appointed two interns for the 'Doctoral Research @ Bangor' internship project for summer. They will be interviewing and filming BU doctoral researchers along with their supervisors / research teams to put together profiles, short films and research feature pieces.
5. The Doctoral School is also working along with Lancaster University in organising the Envision Conference this July 11-13th in Marine Centre Wales.
6. The Doctoral School is still waiting to hear regarding allocated physical space.

d. College Reports

No reports

e. SU Report

RP reported that SU members met with the Doctoral School to discuss the student survey. The report will be finalised and sent for discussion/development of an action plan for enhancement as per c(1) above.

f. EPSRC CDT applications

PD & JH reported that all three applications to go in for the EPSRC CDT submission are now in stage two of the process. Work is in progress regarding the bids, to be submitted by July. JH commented that it would be tactical meanwhile, to progress project suggestions and potential supervisors

**COLLEGE
DIRECTORS**

g. KESS 2

1. PD reported that a KESS 2 call to recruit new Research Masters projects for October starts will be open mid-June. Further PhD opportunities are limited until partner

allocation numbers are finalised. If any funding is unspent, there could be possibilities of upgrades.

2. The business plan for KESS 2 East is currently under development. KESS 2 East is expected to start in Sept. /Oct. with a 2023 end date. Hence last dates for PhD intakes could be Jan. 2019/ April 2019 / Oct.2019.
3. JH commented that some of the academics had pointed out a lack of communication regarding KESS 2 projects. PD responded that this could have been due to the uncertainties that was going on because of re-profiling.

h. ESRC Wales DTP

The IAA Business Boost will fund £100,000 towards projects linked to the ESRC pathways. More information will follow.

i. NERC DTP

JH reported that the bid is submitted for the ENVISION NERC DTP 2. Results are due late September/early October. The DTP will progress with PhD studentship proposals for 2018/19 even if these have to be cancelled if the bid is unsuccessful. JH commented that the other university partners in the bid had as much difficulty as we did in dealing with complex institutional queries and interpreting available data.

3. PGRS UPDATES AND PURE PROFILES

1. The Chair informed the group that guidelines for using the PGRS monitoring system will be circulated. The new PGRS is significantly simplified and more intuitive, and provides a School, College and University level Review function.
2. He reiterated that it is important that **academic staff update their profiles in PURE to highlight their relevant research interests and areas of research degree supervision, and PGR Leads are encouraged to inform staff and research candidates in their department to do the same. These will feed School websites and the IEC brochure/web pages on PGR opportunities.** PGR candidates will soon also be able to create PURE profiles although they will have to give specific permission to make their profile visible through the website.
3. JH raised some concerns/suggestions as follows:
 - PGR profiles are not yet visible in all School pages.
 - PGR profiles must be prominently visible under separate headings and could be linked to their supervisors to make a research group.
 - Guidelines to using PURE should also be made available.

4. PGR REGULATIONS (final modifications)

The Committee was informed that the new PGR Regulations are undergoing final minor modifications prior to resubmission to Senate Regulations and Special Cases Committee in the Autumn. Changes include Supervisory arrangements and responsibilities, PhD by published works as a method of study/registration, and some details of viva arrangements (including the no requirement for viva for every Master by Research). Criteria for awards have been updated as has the section on monitoring and review of progress and submission of the final thesis (to take account of electronic submission). The chair informed everyone to adhere to the current regulations until the Academic Registry finally approves and publishes the new version for the start of the next academic year.

5. PGR RECRUITMENT STRATEGY INC. DTPs / CDTs

The Chair reported that PGR international applications unconditional firm counts by 4th June 2018 were very low (1 for 2018/19 cf 2 for 2017/18) al when compared to the applications received per year (344 for 2018/19 and 369 for 2017/18), with 56 offers in 2018/19 and 60 in 2017/18. Various reasons were explored including fall in Middle East and Asian applications.

The members discussed strategies to improve PGR numbers in general. Some of the suggestions included:

- Explore more Masters by Research opportunities in light of the new student loan scheme for Home/EU.
- Improve staff attitude towards supervision; staff to take on more PhDs.
- Collate data on how many PhD applications are received and how many rejected per School.
- Develop strategies for more DTPs & CDTs now that the new College Directors are in place.

**DOCTORAL
SCHOOL &
PGR
DIRECTORS
/LEADS**

6. PGR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (LESSONS FROM DTP APPLICATIONS) + EXAMINATION REPORTS

1. The Committee received the following reports: Summary of Results for Research Degrees (May 2017 – April 2018); Summary of Research Degree Result and Report Forms (Feb 2018- Apr 2018).
2. It was noted that 90% of students in the period May 2017-April 2018 were awarded their degree. Awards without correction were <10%. The number of viva's held within 3 months of the date of thesis submission, in accordance with the University's regulations, was 85%, an increase from 75% in the previous 12 months. Three External Examiners commended the presence of the Chair, indicating that this was a helpful feature.
3. JH remarked that it is also important to gather good quality data on completion rates and PGR destinations for DTP applications. A discussion followed on problems surrounding accurate data on submissions and completions, resulting in the need for a review of data held in Banner

**DOCTORAL
SCHOOL**

7. COLLEGE PGR DIRECTORS / PGR ADMINISTRATORS (NEW STRUCTURES)

The chair reported that the selection process is ongoing for 3 Directors of PGRs across Colleges. The new structure with new dedicated PGR Administrators is expected to be in place by August. This will result in slight changes in the composition of RDC and DSB.

8. AOB

Nothing to report.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held at 2.00pm, Thursday 29th November at Council Chamber.