

**Bangor University**  
**Research Degrees Committee (RDC)**  
**Minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Present:**

**Doctoral School**

Professor Andrew Hiscock [AH] (PGR Dean, Chair), Penny Dowdney [PD]

**College Directors of PGR**

Prof. James McDonald [JM] (CoESE); Prof. Debbie Mills [DM] (CoHS)

**College Academic Representatives**

Dr Sue Niebrzydowski [SN] (CoAHB)

**Heads of DTPs / CDTs and other centres**

Prof. John Healey [JH] (Envision); Prof. Debbie Mills [DM] (ESRC Wales DTP)

**SU Representative**

Harry Riley [HR] (SU)

**Other Representatives**

Dr Myfanwy Davies [MD] (QAVU)

**Apologies:**

Mr John Jackson (Planning & Student Data), Dr Helena Miguelez-Carballeira (CoAHB), Prof Jonathan Roberts (CoESE), Dr Sion Williams (HS), Aashu Jayadeep (Doctoral School); Dr Michael Rushton (CoESE); Mark Barrow (SU)

**ACTION:**

**1. INTRODUCTIONS**

The Chair welcomed members. He acknowledged the apologies that had been sent. Thanks, were conveyed to Prof. John Turner for his time as PGR Dean.

**2. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The previous minutes for the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 Committee meeting were approved.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- a. 3(a) Discussion on the practice of candidates giving an open presentation on the day of the viva should be normalised : it was agreed at DSB that **the Doctoral School would run a survey to consult opinions on this matter from PGRs and PGR Directors & Leads** : survey currently open.
- b. 4(a) **Changes in Regulation 03 requested by SR**
- c. 4(b) Relaxation of rules re long distance vivas : **update of regulations**

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Open presentation on day of viva  
The Doctoral School has launched a BOS survey to gather opinions on whether an open presentation on the day of the viva would be supported by PGRs and PGR related staff. The survey results will be discussed at the next meeting of the Doctoral School Board.

- b. Change in regulations: mode of study for f/t staff; clarify viva outcomes; long distance vivas

The requested changes in regulations have been taken forward to the SR group. The emerging Covid-19 situation has escalated the importance of some of these changes, such as the need for vivas to be conducted from multiple sites.

An additional issue had been reported to the Doctoral School recently concerning delays in external examiners signing off viva outcomes, in some cases continued communications were not acknowledged. It was suggested by the group that an agreed timeframe to respond (typically four weeks) should be agreed at the viva, and could be stated in the external examiner's appointment letter.

- c. PRES

It was agreed that any PRES reminders sent should be sympathetic to the current context.

- d. Leverhulme application

The date for EOIs had been extended. There was a discussion about the panel make up. It was suggested that PGR Directors could be empowered so as to play a role on panels such as this. An external panel member was suggested, along with an appropriate MoS from CoAHB should there not be a submission from that College. It was noted that any conflicts of interest should be avoided. All details of the discussion would be passed on to Saskia.

- e. PGR Event

The Doctoral School event hosted at Pontio was deemed to have been a success and it was agreed that a similar event should be planned each semester going forward

- f. PURE profiles

Academic's PURE profiles had been raised as important for BU PGR recruitment. Work was ongoing to link PGR PURE profiles to school websites.

## 5. DOCTORAL SCHOOL

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

AH presented the most recent PGR data (10/03/202) from Planning.School updates re Progress Review monitoring were requested to report to the autumn RDC. MD suggested that this data should also be presented at T&L committee.

**Report  
progress  
review  
monitorin  
g to T & L  
Committee**

AH reported that the issue of R coding for DTPs / CDTs had been escalated to RIISTG and was being discussed there.

A meeting to discuss PGR admin. support had been requested.

The PRES survey had been launched and all very asked to support PGRs the 2020 survey within their schools.

Issues which had arisen around visas and vivas were put on hold and would be addressed at a later date.

The group discussed the paper put forward by JM concerning the write up period allowed for the MSc x Res. candidates. Some candidates were taking a whole year for write up which was considered disproportionate for a one year research programme. The consensus reached was that a write up period of three months would be more appropriate. Another aspect of this discussion was around the necessity of a viva for these MSc x Res. candidates; it was agreed that no viva would be required in cases where corrections were concerning issues of presentation of the work. It was felt that these revisions of a relatively new PGR degree were timely. AH agreed to take the consensus opinion on these issues forward to RIISTG.

AH updated the group regarding the intention for the Doctoral School to work more closely with the BU DTPs / CDTs. Each semester there will be a steering group meeting and a short report would be submitted to this group. This will allow closer reporting to the PVC Research & Impact.

AH informed the group of the proposed revised terms of reference for the RDC.

## **6. REPORTS**

### **a. QA & V**

MD emphasised the process for any proposals for new BU DTPs / CDTs.

### **b. College Reports**

#### **CoESE :**

JM outlined the process for reviewing of proposals to the Leverhulme call. Concerns were raised about the level of PGR admin. support within CoESE. An online video would soon be available to support PGR recruitment.

#### **CoHS :**

DM reported on a successful PGR conference; and online survey will follow. DM also outlined bids for the Leverhulme call. PRES had been promoted within the College. Many queries were coming in re the current Covid-19 situation.

### **c. SU Report :**

HR explained that analysis was under way on the SU annual survey. The SU would be closing down this week due to the current Covid-19 situation.

### **d. KESS2/KESS2 East :**

PD explained that there were no further PhD opportunities under KESS 2 & KESS 2 East; Research Masters opportunities were still available and a call will be opened at an appropriate time.

### **e. ESRC Wales DTP :**

DM reported that the competitive studentships had a deadline of March 23<sup>rd</sup>. There would be an ESRC meeting later this week to report decisions. Everything had now moved online.

### **f. NERC DTP:**

JH reported a successful year. In terms of recruitment, from 16 funded studentships BU was able to offer 7 and 5 had been accepted. There are current issues around inability to complete fieldwork overseas. NERC had not yet reached a policy decision re the current Covid-19 situation. Assurance had been given that PGRs would be able to complete their studies.

**g. and h. AI CDT & Nuclear CDT – no reports**

**7. Discussion on maternity/paternity policy for PGRs**

A meeting would take place between the Doctoral School, HR and RIIO to discuss standardisation of maternity, paternity and adoption practices for PGRs.

**Initiate a meeting with HR/RIIO**

The request re parking for PGRs had been raised with Estates.

**8. SPECIAL CASES/ Appeals awareness**

AH reported that the Doctoral School was currently involved in two cases which were ongoing.

**9. AOB**

JH raised whether the time may be right to review the roles of the Doctoral School committees, specifically RIISTG and RDC. AH agreed to take this forward and would table a discussion at the next RDC.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at 10.30am on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May via Teams.