

YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY

**Minutes of the meeting of the
RESEARCH DEGREES SUB COMMITTEE
Tuesday, 16 February 2010
2pm in QN/006**

Present: Prof P Doherty (Chair)
Mr B Paddison
Dr P Kollontai (for Prof S Kim)
Ms K Knowles
Dr A Merrison
Dr J Rule

In attendance: Dr M Calvert (for item 09/21)
Ms J Graham (Secretary)

Apologies: Prof S Kim
Prof D Maughan Brown

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies.

There were no declarations of interest.

09/19 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2009**

The Minutes of 10 November 2009 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

09/20 **MATTERS ARISING:**

(i) Terms of Reference and Membership of the Research Degrees Sub Committee (Min. 09/10)

The Terms of Reference were agreed previously but the mode of operation requires amendment in order to clarify operational links and methods of working. Recent discussions in relation to an application for Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) have shown that this committee will have an increasing role to play in the future.

**Action: PD
/ JR / JG**

(ii) CMS/Research Leaflet (Min. 09/15(ii))

The new leaflet promoting research at York St John was circulated to members. Faculties may still produce faculty focussed leaflets but plans for these should be shared with the Research Office to ensure standardisation of the information provided.

(iii) Instruction, advice and guidance for research degree recruitment interview panel members (Min. 09/15(iii))

The document received from Prof Howard Hall is now available on Blackboard, but no further examples have been received. It was accepted that although there will be variations between interviews, this

would still be useful for supervisors by providing general advice.

AGREED A reminder be sent to supervisors to ask for examples. **Action: JG**

(iv) Supervision Hours (Min. 09/18)

The Chair had been tasked with getting a consensus across the faculties on the amount of supervision hours which should be allocated for research students. It has been recognised that all research students should have a fair and equitable experience and that supervision hours should also take account of changes in the workload pattern which occur over the duration of the degree. The Chair aims to explore practices at other institutions, in addition to canvassing the views of faculties and will also consider the students' view.

ACTION Faculty Reps to summarise the position with regard to supervision hours allocated for both full-time and part-time research students in their faculty. The Research Student Rep to collate the views of research students and suggest best practice from a research student point of view. **Action: Faculty & Student Reps**

ACTION The Chair will review the information and present the findings to the next meeting. A recommendation will then be submitted to Research Committee. **Action: PD**

PK asked for clarification of the faculty portion of income raised from research student fees which should support the supervision hours provided. Clarification of this issue will be raised once the work referred to above has been carried out.

09/21 **TRAINING NEEDS OF RESEARCH STUDENTS PRIOR TO TEACHING: PCAP PLANS**

Teaching opportunities for research students are considered to be a major part of the PhD experience, but there is a risk of potentially overloading the students and also quality assurance requires that they be adequately prepared for teaching. The Chair invited Dr Mike Calvert to attend the meeting and present his proposal for a PCAP Associateship course which he intends will be available for research students.

TABLED Doc RDSC/16-02-10/10 – PCAP paper

Dr Mike Calvert tabled the above paper which provided an overview of the current PCAP course and the proposed new Associateship route. PCAP involves two modules – 'Reflective Practice' and 'Approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment in Higher Education' – and the sessions are led by colleagues across the University. The course is for academic staff with less than three years experience and would normally be done in the first year of a lecturer taking up a post at YSJ. On completion of the course the successful person is granted Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

Over the years it has become apparent that there are a number of people involved in supported learning or those, such as PhD students, who do not undertake enough teaching hours for the PCAP course to be appropriate. This has led to the proposal for an Associateship route which is designed for academic related posts. The standard descriptor in the paper has been taken from the HEA.

The proposal is still at the discussion stage but is intended to be one 30

credit module consisting of a portfolio and attendance at a number of core sessions, with some optional sessions also on offer. Progression routes will be built in for people to access the full PCAP course. The intention is to seek approval for the course to run from September 2010. The PCAP team are hopeful that this route will meet the requirements of PhD students and that the time commitment will not be a burden.

The following issues were raised by members:

- Clarification is required on the cost of the course and members were of the view that it should not be a cost to the student. It may be possible to fund this from student expenses, but the committee will require costings before this can be considered further.
- It is not always easy to facilitate the supported learning in faculties.
- It may be difficult to integrate students into a module depending on the specialism. However, they may be able to contribute to generic skills such as research methods.
- It is recommended that the course is only done after the upgrade review. This could create difficulties for some students who are away from the institution carrying out data collection in their second year, so an option to do the course over 2 years would be useful.
- Although some students already have prior teaching experience, it should be established whether students will be unable to teach on a programme unless they do this course.

**Action:
MC**

ACTION MC to provide the committee with costings.

The Chair thanked MC for attending the meeting to summarise the proposals and considered that the principle of this course would be seen as attractive to students owing to the mix of theory and practical elements. This was a view shared by the Research Student Rep.

09/22 **FEEDBACK FROM UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS GRADUATE BOARD**

Two meetings of the Graduate Board have been held since the last meeting of this committee (21 December 2009 and 15 February 2010). Both of these meetings were attended by Prof S Kim and he had provided PK with an update to give to the committee.

- (i) There has been much emphasis on the recruitment and marketing of PhD students, with a focus on international student numbers. A lot of work has been carried out in producing different marketing materials for the variety of markets. Recruitment activities undertaken include market research to inform the marketing plan and dealing with issues regarding the website.

PK considered that many of the issues raised at Leeds are also pertinent at YSJ and that it would be useful to undertake a review of postgraduate marketing, and to improve the opportunities for marketing to international students in particular. Although the International Office attend recruitment fairs held overseas the Deputy Registrar: Research (DRR) reported that there have been a number of inappropriate applications and enquiries about research degrees where supervision is not feasible.

ACTION The RDSC would like to recommend to Research Committee that a working group be established with a remit to review postgraduate marketing and to improve opportunities for marketing to international students in particular.

**Action:
PD / JR**

- (ii) The White Rose group is developing a postgraduate training consortium

in the region and there may be possibilities for YSJ to be involved. The DRR reported that this links with the ESRC Doctoral Training Centres initiative.

- (iii) Discussion has taken place on the development of practice-led research degrees. A group was established and given a remit to work through issues raised from the original paper, but the group has not yet reported back. The Faculty of Arts were hoping to be able to start offering practice-led research degrees this year.

09/23 RESEARCH OFFICE REPORT

RECEIVED Doc RDSC/16-02-10/7 – Research Office Report

The DRR presented the Research Office report. Key points noted were:

- Storage space in the Graduate Centre is becoming an issue.
- Four staff have attended research supervision training courses at Leeds and another member of staff has received sole supervisor status.
- Katherine Bond has completed her PhD.
- Planning will begin soon for the 2010 Postgraduate Research Methodologies Conference to be held in November.

With regard to item 5 in the report “Research Student Records” it is apparent that there is some confusion amongst supervisors regarding the records which are kept. The DRR reminded members that the QAA Institutional Audit in 2011 will look at student records so it is important that all the required documentation is up to date. These records will also be relevant to the RDAP application. The training plan is a compulsory document and if it has not been done then that could affect the outcome of either of these processes. To clarify the requirements for research student records:

- **Either** the Supervision Log or a series of Supervision Report Summaries may be kept but these must cover all supervision meetings (10 per year for a full time student).
- A Training Plan must be done for all research students. This document will be updated as necessary.

The Research Student Rep confirmed that many students do have full documentation for supervision meetings consisting of an agenda, minutes and actions. Furthermore, students tend to have better access to their supervisors on a ‘drop-in’ basis than at many other institutions. The advantages of this are also backed up by the last Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

09/24 ISSUES RAISED BY RESEARCH STUDENTS’ REPRESENTATIVE:

(i) Training for EndNote and related software

The Research Student Rep enquired about the possibility of training for EndNote. The previous training session offered was at an introductory level and the research students are keen to undergo further training in order to be able to use the software more effectively. The use of EndNote for referencing purposes is recommended by many supervisors. However, it is recognised that the EndNote Web version lacks the rigour of the full version and may lead to difficulties as a result of missing data from references.

The Chair reported that the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences have been developing training opportunities for PhD students in the faculty and would be willing to open these sessions up to the rest of the

**Action:
PD**

research student community.

Other useful software packages for research students are NVivo and Amos. PD will look into providing introductory training on these packages for all research students from within the pool of staff in the Faculty of HLS.

Action:
PD

(ii) **Space and Capacity for Growth**

RECEIVED *Doc RDSC/16-02-10/8 – Report on the Graduate Centre Space and Capacity*

BP presented the above paper which had been prepared in consultation with other research students in the Graduate Centre. The current arrangement has a hot-desking system of 14 PCs and 2 spaces for laptop use. Concern has been expressed about how this will work when student numbers are increased in the future.

The main issues relate to the use of desk space and the amount of storage space. At present the number of students using the centre on a daily basis has enabled these students to be able to use the same desk and leave books and other materials on the desk from one day to another. This has become the practice partly due to the limited amount of locker space but also to avoid having to clear materials from the desk each time it is vacated. Working patterns do vary but on a normal day the room is quite busy and there is a danger of students who travel to YSJ from a distance not being able to find an available desk. The research students are concerned that this will lead to a fragmentation of the community in the Graduate Centre as students may tend to work from home instead.

The Chair considered that the issue should be raised with the Facilities Directorate in terms of reviewing storage and the space requirements for research students, particularly with a view to future studentships.

ACTION The Chair to contact the Director of Facilities regarding this issue. A copy of the above paper will be sent to Facilities with an invitation for a representative to attend the next meeting of this committee to respond and discuss with members.

Action:
PD

09/25 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, 18 May 2010 2pm De Grey Boardroom

09/26 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

The Student Representatives left the meeting.

Reserved Business:

09/27 Update on individual research students' progress

RECEIVED *Doc RDSC/16-02-10/9 – Current Research Students*

RESERVED BUSINESS

The committee noted that a lot of good progress has been made but there still remains a lack of training plans completed for a number of students. PK

reminded members of the potential damage to the QAA Institutional Audit and RDAP application if the tracking of documentation is not done.

AGREED The committee recommends that a summary report is written up and agreed by the supervisor and student each time a meeting is held. These reports will provide a safety net in the event of a supervisor leaving and also provide support in case of litigation.

ACTION A reminder will be sent to all supervisors to establish best practice in YSJ by recommending that all progress reports are completed in the form of a supervision log or report summary. Copies of the reports should be sent to the Research Office.

**Action:
RO /
Faculty
Reps**

Signed

(Chair of the Research Degrees Sub Committee)

Dated