

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

DOCTORAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Doctoral School Committee held on 4 December 2012 at 9.00 – 11 am in the Sussex House Committee Room

1 PRESENT

Professor R Black (Chair), Dr J Pryor, Professor V Lebeau, Professor G Kemenes, Dr J Ward, Dr K Deligiorgi, Professor P Cheng, Dr K Lacey, Professor S Sagar, Dr R Stanley.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Clare Mackie, Ms G Johnston, Mrs S Jones, Mrs C Reynolds, Mrs Alice Robertson (Secretary) and Mr P Roberts were in attendance.

Welcome: the Chair welcomed student representatives: Ms S Johnson, Mr T Moore, Ms K Spiegelhalter

Apologies for absence: Ms L Buckham, Dr B Daring, Ms J Harvell, Dr J Mitchell, Dr S Newbury, Dr R Nurick, Ms S Riordan, Professor L Smith, and Dr R Woodfield.

2 PERIODIC REVIEW OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS

The Committee considered the outcomes and actions from the Periodic Review (DSC/17/1) by cogent subject area, i.e. Arts & Humanities; Social Sciences; Sciences with reference to:

- Submission rate data (DSC/17/2).
- Research Degree Examination Board report (DSC/17/3).
- [Chapter B11: Research degrees, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) – Indicator 3 (DSC/17/4).

2.1 In discussing the items the following points were raised overall:

2.1.1 It was noted that Schools were required to send Research Degree Examination Board reports to the Committee for approval, and this should happen from now on **[ACTION: PR]**.

2.1.2 The Chair reported that levels of supervisor training across Schools were low overall. The School with the highest training levels had trained 15 of its staff (50%), and the lowest had trained 3 of its staff (5%). It was AGREED that a strategy to increase supervisor training was required **[ACTION: PR]**.

2.1.3 It was AGREED that a working group should be convened to develop a University-wide strategy for addressing poor PGR progression and completion rates in both full-time and part-time students, and the annual monitoring of PGR students. The group would look at solutions such as transfers to MPhil courses, and whether additional review meetings were required for example at 6 or 9 months, with clear exit routes if students fail within a year **[ACTION: PR]**.

- 2.1.5 It was AGREED that more could be done to improve awareness of the training and development opportunities offered by the Doctoral School, TLDU, Schools and Careers and Employability Centre, such as improving information supplied at induction **[ACTION: PR]**.
- 2.1.6 It was AGREED that the Doctoral School should introduce induction sessions for new and continuing PGR students in January and April to ensure consistency of information for all students **[ACTION: PR]**.
- 2.1.7 It was AGREED that a working group should be convened to look at IT infrastructure and facilities available for PGR students, in order to make recommendations to the Teaching Quality and Enhancement Board. **[ACTION: PR]**.
- 2.2 Summaries of responses and recommended actions arising from the Periodic Review were tabled (see Appendix 1) and Committee members were asked to consider the recommendations, agree them or recommend further action from Schools. Decisions and comments were noted as follows:

Arts & Humanities

Recommended actions were broadly AGREED for each School, subject to the University-wide actions under 2.1.

Social Sciences

Recommended actions were broadly AGREED for each School, subject to the University-wide actions under 2.1 and the following **comments**:

- 2.2.1 ESW: professional doctorates needed particular focus in terms of addressing failure rates and increasing opportunities for professional development **[ACTION: JP]**.
- 2.2.2 Global Studies &IDS: issues regarding improvements sought in management information would be referred to the Business Intelligence Steering Group **[ACTION: RB/CAM]**
- 2.2.3 LPS:
- although the recommendation was agreed, more detailed actions were needed to address improving the cross-School PGR culture **[ACTION: SS]**
 - following the Periodic Review the Academic Office was reviewing the capabilities of Sussex Direct to enable monitoring of student training and other areas **[ACTION: SJ]**

Sciences

Recommended actions were broadly AGREED for each School, subject to the University-wide actions under 2.1, with the following **exceptions**:

- 2.2.5 MPS:
- clearer information was required at School and Institutional level to provide routes for addressing problems with 2nd supervisor; a revised recommendation was required from the School **[ACTION: BD]**
 - reviewing the workload of ATs was a University-wide issue being addressed by a working group chaired by CAM. A more detailed recommendation would be required from the School following recommendations from the working group **[ACTION: PR/BD]**.

2.2.7 Life Sci:

- The recommended approach to transferable skills training is not consistent with the University framework; a revised recommendation is required from the School [**ACTION: GK**]

3 DRAFT QAA Self-Evaluation Document (SED)

The Committee received guidance on the QAA institutional review and an outline of the University's draft SED (DSC/17/5 TABLED). The full SED would be circulated to Committee members in December. During discussion of the item the following were amongst the points raised:

- 3.1 The Institutional Review would take place from 18-22 March 2013. Representative DDSs and Research students would be called to the panel, so it was imperative that staff and students made themselves available during this time. QAA would give a clear indication of which staff and students were required by February 2013.
- 3.2 Staff and students were asked to familiarise themselves with the expectations of the QAA, and the requirement to demonstrate evidence of best practice and a consistent approach across the University. In particular staff and students should consider the key questions posed by the QAA and what responses should be.
- 3.3 The Students' Union was also required to feed in to the review, and its response to the QAA was published on the SU website. Feedback from colleagues was welcome [**ACTION: ALL**].

It was AGREED that members would consider the document in detail and send any feedback to SJ [**ACTION: ALL**]. It was further AGREED that a full discussion would take place outside the meeting due to time constraints.

4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the 16th meeting of the Doctoral School Committee were approved subject to the following amendments:

- Arising from minute 8, SJ commented that the proposal was in keeping with the University's requirements

5 CHAIR'S ACTION

- 5.1 The Committee noted the appointments of Dr Richard Crook and Dr Kefei You as external supervisors.
- 5.2 The University submitted a proposal for the Athena Swan Bronze Award last Friday. The Chair thanked those members of the Committee and the doctoral students that contributed to the project. An Athena Swan Bronze University award concerns women's representation and career progression in STEMM subjects and recognises that the University has a solid foundation for eliminating gender bias and developing an inclusive culture that values all staff.
- 5.3 Santander have agreed a mobility grant scheme providing pump priming to support research students and their supervisors to undertake exchanges with institutions within the Santander Network of Universities. The Doctoral School will be circulating full details of the scheme in the new year with first deadline due in April 2013.

- 5.4 Currently subject to a press embargo, but for the Committees' information – AHRC have awarded a £40k grant to Professor Matthew Cragoe, to encourage researchers who have recently submitted their PhD to engage with cultural organisations. Four projects will be launched prior to the next committee. The grant will be managed by the Doctoral School.
- 5.5 The ESRC DTC has received another call for a pilot scheme to encourage multidisciplinary studentships with a deadline of 15 January 2013. There is an opportunity to apply for a small cohort (2-5 students) that are multidisciplinary, with substantive engagement with a postgraduate training investment of another research Council.
- 5.6 AHRC Block Grant Partnership 2 preparations are going well. Highlights for this period include two successful AHRC student-led projects (both in MFM – supervisors Ed Hughes and Kirk Woolford); three successful AHRC research training skills bids on behalf of the consortium and letters of support are starting to be finalised (Intel and the British Library have arrived, with a number more to follow).
- 5.7 Doctoral Studentship campaign: we have more detail than in any other previous year and will be promoting 95 full or partial doctoral scholarships this week to start in September 2013 and worth £5m. Five additional scholarships may be added to this (to round scholarships up to 100 for marketing reasons) subject to approval by VCEG.

6 BENCH FEES

The Committee considered the inclusion of a reference to bench fees in the postgraduate prospectus, however members commented on the relevance of these fees to self-funded degrees. It was AGREED that this matter should be referred to Strategic Recruitment and Admissions Committee for a decision [ACTION: RB].

7 NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be on Wednesday 6 March 2013 at 12.00 in the Sussex House Committee Room.

PER/AR