

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Board of Graduate Studies

Minutes of the Board of Graduate Studies meeting held on Tuesday 19 January 2010.

Present: Professor L Bridges (Chair), Mr S Bangalore Nagaraj, Dr C Bilton, Professor S Bruzzi, Dr A Clark, Dr A Dowd, Professor L Green, Mr T Hayes, Ms S Khaku, Professor J Labbe, Dr D Leadley, Professor R Napier, Professor C Sparrow, Dr A Stokes, Professor P Stoneman.

Apologies: Mr T Beetseh, Mr J Chambers, Dr F Griffiths, Professor N Johnson, Professor A Neal, Dr J Vickery, Professor M Watson.

In attendance: Dr J Gardner, Mr R McIntyre, Ms R Wooldridge Smith.

42/09-10 Minutes of the last meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 17 November 2009 be approved.

43/09-10 Matters arising on the minutes

(a) Reports from External Examiners (minute 33/09-10 referred)

REPORTED:

That, at its last meeting on 17 November 2009, the Board considered a report compiled by the Assistant Secretary on issues arising from External Examiners' reports on Postgraduate Programmes for 2007-08 (paper BGS 19/09-10) and resolved (*inter alia*) that the Director of Graduate Studies in WMG produce a paper for the Board on the bespoke, in-session, English language tuition offered to students within the group;

CONSIDERED:

A paper from the Academic Director of Graduate Studies in Warwick Manufacturing Group outlining English language support mechanisms for students registered on full-time MSc programmes within WMG (paper BGS 28/09-10).

RESOLVED:

(i) That the Director of Graduate Studies in Warwick Manufacturing Group be thanked for providing such a detailed summary of the departmental offering of in-session English language support;

(ii) That the paper be circulated to departments for information.

(b) Nominations to the UK Council of Graduate Education (UKCGE) Executive Committee (minute 38/09-10 referred)

REPORTED:

- (i) That, at its last meeting on 17 November 2009, the Board received a paper setting out the procedure for nominations to be made to three vacancies on the Executive Committee of the UKCGE (paper BGS 23/09-10);
- (ii) That the University had put forward one nominee prior to the deadline of 21 December 2009.

(c) Council Tax (minutes 9/09-10, 97(d)/08-09 and 85/08-09 referred)

REPORTED:

That, at its meeting on 15 October 2009, it was reported to the Board that, following a decision by Coventry City Council not to proceed with the arrangements proposed by the University to comply with their requirements, the matter [of Council Tax exemption for students in a period of extension] had been referred to the Registrar to raise in the his next direct meeting with the heads of Coventry City and Warwick District Council.

RECEIVED:

An oral update and paper (paper BGS 35/09-10) from the Secretary on the matter of council tax exemption for students in a period of extension, noting that the paper was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That it was clear that no further progress on this matter would be made with Coventry City Council without some fundamental revisions to the current status of extension (or “writing up”), and that a paper be prepared by the Chair and Secretary on the possibility of moving to a standard 4 year period of PhD registration, noting that:

- (i) Students funded by a Warwick Postgraduate Research Scholarship currently only receive funding for 3 years of full-time registration;
- (ii) Students funded by the BBSRC are expected to complete and submit their theses within their initial period of registration, with no writing up period;
- (iii) Some consideration would need to be given to the duration of sponsorship offered to International students entering the UK under tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration System;
- (iv) Warwick District Council were accepting reassurances from appropriate administrative staff, following consultation with supervisors, where PhD students in the writing up phase were known still to be full-time.

Chair's Business(a) Postgraduate Review (minute 27(b)/09-10 referred)

REPORTED:

That, at its last meeting on 17 November 2009, the Board considered a Universities UK information note setting out the schedule for a Department of Business, Innovation and Skills review of Postgraduate provision (paper SC 70/09-10) and a consultation of members to inform the sector's response, and resolved that a working group be set up by the Chair to consider the University's response to the consultation;

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair, and Warwick's response to the consultation (paper BGS 29/09-10).

(b) PGR Funding Working Group (minute 36/09-10 referred)

REPORTED:

That, at its last meeting on 17 November 2009, the Board considered the convening of a working party to review the current funding model for PGR students, with a view to discussing potential membership and the remit of the Group, and resolved that a working group be set up with membership as laid out in the minutes;

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair on the first meeting of the PGR Funding Working Group.

(c) Directors of Graduate Studies' Lunch

REPORTED:

That the Spring term meeting for Directors of Graduate Studies would take place on 16 February 2010 at 12.30pm in the Wolfson Research Exchange.

(d) Update on ESRC DTC Application

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair on the University's ESRC DTC application, noting that:

- (i) A full-draft of the University's bid would be prepared for approval by Steering in mid-February in advance of the ESRC deadline;
- (ii) The University currently has ~ 16 studentships/year funded

by the ESRC, and would be unlikely, under the new DTC, to increase this to more than 25.

(e) Definition of a Thesis

REPORTED:

That, at its last meeting on 17 November 2009, the Board received a copy of the text of a memo from the Chair of the Board to Departments, setting out the new regulations pertaining to the definition of a thesis in the context of a submission for a research degree at the University (paper BGS 22/09-10) and resolved that the memo be circulated to departments as is.

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair, and a paper from the Assistant Registrar (Graduate School) summarising departmental responses (paper BGS 33/09-10), noting that this was tabled at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That, as all departmental responses had yet to be submitted, the finalised paper be considered at the next meeting of the Board;
- (ii) That clarification be provided to departments on the distinction between submission for a PhD with a portfolio of work, and the award of a PhD for work published.

45/09-10 Postgraduate Committee and the Students' Union

RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Education Officer on the following items:

- (a) Visas of longer and shorter duration arbitrarily being issued to international students as a result of the University term dates in 09/10 unintentionally indicating that one year PGT courses are less than one whole year in duration, and the inconsistencies within the UKBA in applying these new rules, noting that the Academic Registrar's Office was aware of the issue and was working towards remedying this problem for students entering in the next academic year;
- (b) Students on courses involving a placement being tied to 12 month Warwick Accommodation contracts despite not being in attendance at the University for several months in any given year, noting that the Chair had previously raised this issue with Warwick Accommodation and would do so again.

46/09-10 Graduate Awards and Nominations Sub-Committee (minutes 31/09-10 and 4/09-10 referred)

REPORTED:

That the Graduate Studies Committee of the Faculty of Medicine had nominated the following to serve as Faculty selectors on the Graduate Awards and Nominations Sub-Committee, noting that the nominees from the other three Faculties were reported at the last meeting of the Board:

Dr P Sidebotham
Dr D Grammatopoulos

47/09-10 Erasmus Mundus Call for Proposals

REPORTED:

That the 2010 Erasmus Mundus Call for Proposals (paper BGS 30/09-10) is now open under three actions:

- (a) Action 1: Joint Programmes, including Scholarships;
- (b) Action 2: Partnerships with Third Country HEIs, including Scholarships;
- (c) Action 3: Promotion of European Higher Education;

With a deadline of 30 April 2010.

CONSIDERED:

A proposal from the Chair that, in line with the University strategy objective to double PGR students numbers and as a result of new funding arrangements for Masters courses under the scheme, Warwick submit only applications for Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates in 2010, rather than both Doctoral and Masters courses as the previous years.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal from the Chair not be approved, but that guidance be issued by the Graduate School to departments as soon as possible notifying them of the revised, less favourable, funding arrangements for Erasmus Mundus Masters courses, noting that:

- (d) Many departments may have already begun putting together a bid, or have been approached by other institutions interested in forming a consortium;
- (e) Individual departments may have alternative reasons for constructing a bid for a Masters course that should be considered on individual merit by the relevant University committees

48/09-10 Masters Dissertation Supervision

CONSIDERED:

A paper setting out the provision of individual Masters dissertation

supervision in academic departments, prepared by the Administrative Officer (Graduate School) in the context of an academic complaint from a student in the Faculty of Social Sciences. (paper BGS 31/09-10).

RESOLVED:

- (a) That no specific guidance be issued to departments on the minimum expectation of dissertation supervision provided during the summer vacation, but that departments be asked to review their own guidance given to dissertation supervisors and students to ensure that a clear statement of entitlement to set expectations was made in all cases.

49/09-10 Winter 2009 Grad School Newsletter

RECEIVED:

The newsletter issued by the Graduate School in December 2009 (paper BGS 32/09-10).

50/09-10 New courses

Centre for Lifelong Learning

In principle approval of the “MA in Career Education, Information and Guidance in Higher Education” and the “MA in the Management of Student Work Experience”

CONSIDERED:

A proposal from the Centre for Lifelong Learning to approve, in principle, two new courses entitled “MA in Career Education, Information and Guidance in Higher Education” and “MA in the Management of Student Work Experience” (paper BGS 34/09-10).

RESOLVED:

That the proposal, in principle, to introduce two new courses entitled “MA in Career Education, Information and Guidance in Higher Education” and “MA in the Management of Student Work Experience”, as set out in paper BGS 34/09-10, be approved.

51/09-10 Any Other Business

Warwick Postgraduate Research Scholarship Scoring

REPORTED:

That, whilst the new scoring system was generally working very well, the online WPRS calculator for scorers appeared to be introducing a rounding error into some of the calculations.

RESOLVED:

That the issue be investigated by the Graduate School as a matter of

urgency.

52/09-10

Next meeting

REPORTED:

That the next meeting of the Board would be held on Tuesday, 23 February 2010 at 2.00pm in the Council Chamber.

HRWS/RM 19.01.2010