

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Tuesday 12 April 2016 at 2pm
in the Board Room, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies,
Easter Bush Campus**

- Present:** Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal
Researcher Development
Professor Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of
Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS)
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
representative)
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student
Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,
Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Attending:** Ms Jenni Murray, Student Induction Coordinator, SRA (item 5)
Ms Imogen Wilson, Vice President Academic Affairs, EUSA
- Apologies:** Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College
of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
Engineering (CSE)
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Acting Head of Researcher
Development, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, EUSA Staff PGR Representative
Mr William Clayton, Postgraduate Convener, EUSA
Professor Konstantin Kamenev, School of Engineering
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CHSS)
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Regulations review

The meeting noted that the assessment and degree regulations papers will be submitted to the April Curriculum and Student Progression Committee meeting. It also noted that the policies on Gaelic in Assessed Work and Languages other than English and Gaelic in

Theses and Dissertation have been incorporated into the assessment regulations. There were no changes to the content of the policies.

The Committee also noted that the Leave of Absence regulation has been approved in principle at CSPC and implementation of this regulation will be discussed at the next REC meeting.

Action: Secretary for agenda

2.2 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS)

The Convener reported that Research Policy Group had discussed these surveys and decided that the University should continue to participate in them. The Group encourages REC to continue efforts to improve the response rates.

2.3 Space Enhancement Management Group Paper

The College of Science and Engineering representative tabled a paper representing the College's PRES results response. This contained information related to space and noted a lack of communal, social space in the College. This lack impacts on cross and inter-disciplinary discussion.

The meeting also noted the impact of increasing PGR student numbers and, therefore, also increasing numbers of staff, on available space. The impact of Centres for Doctoral Training was not yet known.

Comments specific to space in CSE will be sent to the REC Secretary. The Secretary will review the College PRES reports to gather information for the draft SEMG paper and report to a future REC meeting.

Action: JF, Secretary

2.4 PPLS Tutoring Policy

This item was discussed with item 4 on the agenda.

2.5 Flexible PhD Task Group Report

The report will be submitted to Learning and Teaching Policy Group for information. Recommendations have been communicated and REC will review progress on implementation in semester 1 of 2016/17. It was noted that the new Assistant Principal for Digital Education will have an interest in this activity.

2.6 PGR start dates

This item was deferred for discussion at the next REC meeting.

Action: Secretary for agenda

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 LERU Doctoral Summer School

The meeting noted that no candidates had been put forward for this year's summer school. It was thought that the lack of funding may be a barrier. The Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy will take this to the next Research Policy Group meeting in July 2016 and report back to a future REC meeting.

Action: PJ

3.2 Universitas 21 Joint PhD Agreement

Discussion are underway on reviewing the Universitas 21 agreement. The University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow have recently renewed their joint PhD agreement and this will be looked at by UK Universitas 21 members. If it is suitable for all then the Edinburgh/Glasgow model will be adopted for UK Universitas 21 members.

FOR DISCUSSION

4. Tutoring and demonstrating

The EUSA Vice President Academic Affairs (VPAA) reported on current discussion on conditions and support for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators. The VPAA is contacting Schools, beginning in CHSS, and anticipates that this work will be continued by the incoming VPAA in the next academic year.

The meeting discussed the 6 hours per week limit being set in some areas and the inconsistency in pay and contracts across the institution. Inconsistency in training and support for tutors and demonstrators was also recognised, and it was noted that this had also been identified in the paper on Internal Review Themes.

There was uncertainty on where the 6 hours per week limit was stated as policy. The meeting noted that Research Councils guidance refers to this, however REC identified the need for a clear institutional policy and mechanism for ensuring it is implemented. The meeting also noted that a task group is proposed, led by the Vice-Principal People and Culture, to look at all aspects of tutoring and demonstrating in 2016/17. The task group's scope is yet to be defined but it will be broader than the working hours issue. REC

noted that there was some urgency to the working hours issue and agreed to remit this to the People Committee for investigation. A report will be requested for a future REC meeting.

Action: Director of Human Resources

5. New Student Survey

The Student Induction Coordinator reported on the annual survey in relation to postgraduate research student results. The survey covers on-campus students who start in September. The response rate of 35% is similar to other student surveys.

REC suggested gathering equality and diversity information for PGR similar to that gathered for undergraduates, for example, secondary school attended and whether parents had attended university.

REC also suggested that the survey should cover the initial student/supervisor meeting and the induction aspects of that meeting.

REC agreed that the committee would continue to receive a report on this survey, but noted that the value of survey results is gained through School level analysis. It was agreed that the Induction Team will send survey reports to the relevant College committees.

Action: Student Induction Team

The meeting discussed how feedback on action arising from survey data is communicated to students. It was agreed that the Induction Team will communicate to Schools the importance of telling their students what they have done as a result of the survey data.

Action: Student Induction Team

The meeting also discussed the role of staff attending induction and open day events. It was agreed that some further guidance for academic and support staff attending this type of event would be useful. Guidance should be explicit on what is expected of staff, and the Induction Team and SRA will develop this.

Action: Induction Team, Student Recruitment and Admissions

6. ELIR report – plan response to PGR issues raised

Tutoring and demonstrating had been discussed above. Other issues raised in the ELIR report were covered in the Postgraduate Research Experience Project bid. The outcome of the planning round will be known by the next REC meeting and further discussion will be held then.

Action: Secretary for agenda

7. Maximising survey value: Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

This item was deferred to the May REC meeting.

Action: Secretary for agenda

8. Strategic Plan 2016-21: measuring success

The committee noted the paper, which had also been submitted to Research Policy Group. REC was asked to discuss; what measures should be looked at, what Court should review and what should be management information, what it is practical to monitor and what should be particular institutional aims.

During discussion, the meeting considered what should be measured in relation to student within or beyond their prescribed period of study and whether completions were a better metric. The meeting also discussed quality and quantity of students. It was noted that the Research Excellence Framework (REF) is likely to be heavily metrics based.

REC suggested the following metrics:

- Total percentage growth (of PhD student) – comparison with other institutions is possible via HESA data
- Completion – on time within the prescribed period – this may also have an impact in increased research grant application success

Measuring quality of graduates was more problematic. Destination of leavers was considered, however it was acknowledged that this did not give a reliable quality measure. It was useful context for recruitment. This would need further discussion at REC.

Metrics will be submitted to Principal's Strategy Group and Research Policy Group will be asked to consider early career researcher support metrics.

9. Associated Institutions Policy

REC noted the paper containing the updated policy, which amalgamates the existing policy and procedure documents. The simplified policy also clarifies the definition of an Associated Institution as a non-commercial, non-degree awarding organisation collaborating with the University.

REC approved the policy, subject to minor typographical errors, which will be amended by Academic Services.

Action: Director Academic Services

10. Internal Review Themes 2014/15

REC noted the paper, which remitted items in relation to postgraduate research study.

- Training and support for postgraduate tutors and demonstrators was discussed at item 4 above and will be considered under Committee priorities for 2016/17
- Postgraduate research student progression milestones forms part of the proposal for PREP and REC will discuss this further at its May meeting.

11. Committee priorities for 2016/17

REC noted the paper setting out the framework for Senate Committee planning for 2016/17 onwards. REC agreed the proposed approach to future planning cycles. The meeting considered what would be achievable in the next year within existing resources.

Following discussion REC identified the following priorities, ranked in order:

1. Postgraduate Research Experience Project
2. Tutoring and demonstrating
3. Flexible PhD – implementation of task group recommendations
4. MSc by Research and Postgraduate Research periods of study
5. Early Career Researcher support – activity to be defined

12. Postgraduate Research Experience Project: PREP

This item was deferred for discussion at the next meeting.

FOR INFORMATION

13. HR Excellence Award 6 year review

The Convener reported on behalf of the Vice-Convener, that the review deadline is 19 September 2016. The process involves updating the current action and providing a new two-year action plan and IAD and UHRS are working on this. The link to the current plan and additional information will be circulated to REC members.

Action: Secretary

14. Enhancement Themes update

The Director of Academic Services reported that Higher Education Academy webinar on postgraduate transitions is available on 4 May 2016.

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/events-conferences/event/hea-research-webinar-nine-postgraduate-transitions---exploring-disciplinary>

The institutional team are looking at student resilience and REC members are invited to provide postgraduate research context information to Nichola Kett: Nichola.Kett@ed.ac.uk.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Conferences and events

College representatives and the REC Secretary are planning to attend the UKCGE seminar on meeting the needs of distance doctoral students to be held on 19 April. A report will be available for the next REC meeting.

16. Date of next meeting

17 May 2016, Hodgson Room, Weir Building, King's Buildings

Susan Hunter
13 April 2016