Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
to be held on 12 January 2016 at 2.00 pm
in the Board Room, Evolution House, Edinburgh College of Art, West Port

A G E N D A

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**   Enclosed

2. **Matters Arising**
    2.1 Online annual progression monitoring
    2.2 eBusiness: Statutory Reporting of Collaborative Supervision
    Arrangements

3. **Convener's Communications**
    3.1   ELIR – Enhancement-Led Institutional Review
    3.2   League of European Research Universities (LERU) Doctoral
            Summer School 2016
    3.3   Coimbra Group
    3.4   ExEDE – Excellence in European Doctoral Education

FOR DISCUSSION

4   **Digital Research Services: 10 Year Planning**   REC 15/16 2A

5   **Space Enhancement Management Group: postgraduate research
    space pilot**

6   **What an Edinburgh PhD should be:**
    6.1   Postgraduate Research Fees
    6.2   Edinburgh Doctorates   REC 15/16 2B
    6.3   What is an Edinburgh PhD   REC 15/16 2C

7   **Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal   REC 15/16 2D -
    Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS)** (1.3*)   CLOSED

8   **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey: College responses**
    8.1   Humanities and Social Science   REC 15/16 2E
    8.2   Medicine and Veterinary Medicine   REC 15/16 2F –
    8.3   Science and Engineering   to follow

9   **Postgraduate Degree Regulations:**
    9.1   Leave of Absence   REC 15/16 2G
    9.2   Regulations review themes   REC 15/16 2H
    9.3   Double-Award PhDs   REC 15/16 2I
    9.4   CHSS: non-examining chairs and recording of vivas   REC 15/16 2J

11 **Postgraduate Research Experience Project: PREP**

12 **Task Group: Flexible PhD**

FOR INFORMATION

13 **Knowledge Strategy Committee report**   REC 15/16 2K

14 **University Quality Framework Review**   REC 15/16 2L

15 **Enhancement Theme update**   REC 15/16 2M

16   **Any Other Business**
        15.1 Conference and event attendance/forthcoming events
                15.1.1 UKCGE: Supporting Good Supervisory Practice
                15.1.2 ARC Postgraduate Practitioners Group
                15.1.3 Russell Group Postgraduate Research Special Interest
                        Group
                15.1.4 Researchers 14

17   **Date of next meeting:**
        1 March 2016, Board Room, Evolution House – all meeting dates are published online at:
        http://edin.ac/1g8lkcA

Susan Hunter
Academic Services
5 January 2016

REC 15/16 2A

<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Researcher Experience Committee

12th January 2016

Digital Research Services: 10 Year Planning

Executive Summary
Information Services is developing a 10 year plan for delivering future Digital Research Services. This will deliver a fully integrated service, covering every phase of the research journey from concept development to exploitation. It will present and support our services more coherently, regardless of who provides the service, and will address gaps in service

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
Excellence in Research.

Action requested
For information.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
This plan will form a major part of Information Services planning submission for 2016/17.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   Initial project planning estimates a yearly spend of approx. £5M per year. This indicates the level of spend required to achieve our vision, but the expected balance of IS investment, central University investment, and direct cost recovery from grants is still being worked through.

2. **Risk assessment**
   With the research process becoming ever more reliant on digital services across the full phase of the research journey, a failure to invest in this area will increase the risk of falling behind our competitors. Conversely, investment will support our industry and translational partners, improve the research process and provide a quicker path to discovery.

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   There are no direct equality or diversity implications from this paper. The introduction of any new services would be subject to appropriate Equality Impact Assessments.

4. **Freedom of information**
   This paper is open.

Key words

Originator of the paper
Tony Weir, Director of IT Infrastructure, Information Services; 5th January 2016

Description of paper

1. This paper present the initial planning for a comprehensive and integrated Research IT Service.

Recommendation

2. There is no recommendation associated with this paper.

Background and context

3. The University currently provides a range of research IT services, with services been operated by local research groups, through school and college services, to institutional services provided by support groups, and access to national providers. The University has benefited from EPCC hosting national facilities, and we should fully capitalise on the opportunities such facilities can offer. There is a perception that the range of services on offer are not fully utilised.

4. The number of different providers of research IT services, and the lack of integration between those services, presents a confusing picture for our researchers. This complex range of stakeholders involved in providing existing services can be bewildering for researchers. It is often unclear who should be contacted for support and what is available to whom.

5. Research is becoming more computational and data-intensive, and this trend will continue. Simulation and data analysis are augmenting and replacing traditional experimental techniques and this requires underpinning digital services.

6. Through ongoing dialogue with the University's research community, and building on work done over the summer to better understand the current landscape, we have identified that there are a number of gaps in service provision.

Discussion

The Vision

7. The vision is to provide a fully integrated Research IT Service that is leading edge and world class to support all aspects of Edinburgh's research IT needs including: computational services; research datasets; research data management; research software development and best practice; data analytics support & tools; research publication and knowledge exchange; research administration & research collaboration.

8. By integrating our research IT services, we will facilitate cross disciplinary and collaborative research; enable industrial partnerships and commercialisation; and provide a base for increasing, driving and broadening participation across all fields in computational research, data science, research collaboration and the collaborative use and exploitation of research data.

9. A key outcome will be to accelerate the research lifecycle: improved research administration and collaboration services accelerating preparation and exploitation of research – with the active phase of research accelerated by our computational and data services.

10. Our services should support researchers at every phase of their journey, from initial concept development, funding bid and project initiation; through the active phase of research; to publication and output management; and to exploitation to achieve its widest impact.
11. Our services should support our industry partnerships and wider collaborations, through secure and easily accessible services.

Achieving the Vision

12. To achieve this vision we need to:
    - present and support our services more coherently. This will simplify the researcher journey and increase uptake of research IT services, regardless of who is providing the service. This will require investment in support services, specifically in research facilitators to guide our researchers, and consultants to understand the researcher's challenges and provide digital pipelines to enact their investigation.
    - address the gaps in service: provide the underlying e-infrastructure capacity to drive our digital research and a full range of services to support the researcher at each stage of their journey.

13. In mapping out the services required to deliver this vision we have categorised them as:

    Research Analysis and Simulation Services: the e-infrastructure, tools and services to deliver computational research including high throughput and performance compute services; flexible cloud services; packaged analysis software; reproducible research environments.

    Research Data Services: services to manage our research data and to perform data driven research, such as underlying data storage and archiving services; secure data services/data safe havens; electronic lab notebooks and laboratory information systems; a data visualisation suite; crowd sourcing platforms.

    Research Collaboration and Connectivity Services: services to raise the external visibility of our research, and to establish internal and external partnerships, such as researcher blogging tools and improvements to researcher profile services; and to deliver improved data network infrastructure.

    Research Outreach Services: the people-driven support services such as: research facilitators to guide our researchers to appropriate services; comprehensive consultancy services; training in computational methods, programming languages, analysis packages, data analytics and data management.

14. Our approach would be to deliver sustained yearly investment to ensure the platforms and services remain current and to capitalise on latest technologies.

Resource Implications

15. Initial project planning estimates a yearly spend of approx. £5M per year, with a current profile of spend presented as:
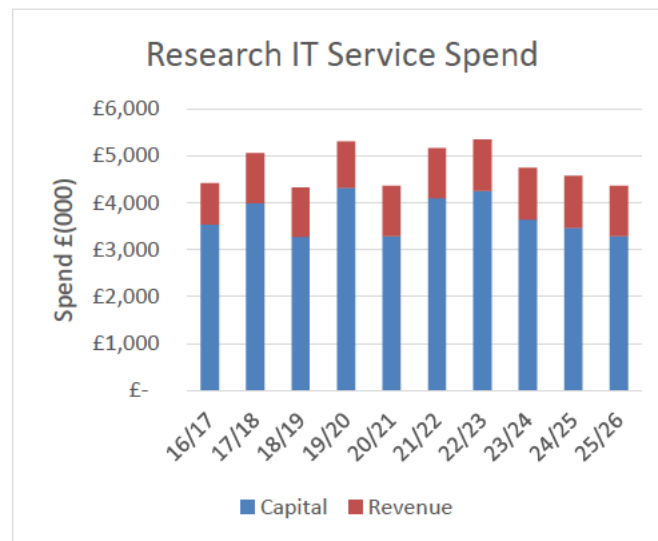
This indicates the level of spend required to achieve our vision, but the expected balance of IS investment, central University investment, and direct cost recovery from grants is still being worked through.

Risk Management

16. With the research process becoming ever more reliant on digital services across the full phase of the research journey, a failure to invest in this area will increase the risk of falling behind our competitors. Conversely, investment will support our industry and translational partners, improve the research process and provide a quicker path to discovery.

Next steps/implications

17. This paper presents our early planning and further work is required to refine content, costings and pace of spend. Further engagement with the research community is required to confirm our direction of travel.

Further information

18. Authors

Tony Weir
Director, IT Infrastructure
Information Services

11 November 2015

Presented by:

Tony Weir
Director, IT Infrastructure
Information Services

REC 15/16 2B

Edinburgh Doctorates – a Discussion Paper

Executive Summary
This paper aims to stimulate discussion with the aim of developing our policy and practice to: define the Edinburgh PhD; increase transparency and consistency across the University; stem the drift towards two- (or multiple-) tier doctorates. It contains a proposal that at the University of Edinburgh, a doctorate should be awarded for 540 Credit Points at Level 12, as stated in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, and that anything above this is considered additional to the doctorate and not required for the award of the degree – see page 3.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
This aligns with the University Strategic Goals of Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research. It also aligns with the REC priority to develop a clearer idea of what an Edinburgh PhD should be.

Action requested
For discussion and to consider the proposal on page 3.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
Implementation will be achieved via the University Postgraduate Degree Regulations and communication will be undertaken by REC College members through their respective College Committees and by Academic Services in the annual communication on policy and regulation updates.

Resource / Risk / Compliance
1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   None as the paper is for discussion

2. **Risk assessment**
   None as the paper is for discussion

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the annual regulations review.

4. **Freedom of information**
   The paper is **open**

Key words
Study period

Originator of the paper
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw, Assistant Principal Researcher Development
23 October 2015

Edinburgh Doctorates – a Discussion Paper

This paper aims to stimulate discussion with the aim of developing our policy and practice to:

- Define the Edinburgh PhD;
- Increase transparency and consistency across the University;
- Stem the drift towards two- (or multiple-) tier doctorates.

Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC) is currently consulting on a discussion paper "What should an Edinburgh PhD be?" Against a background of frequent requests for new variants of the PhD degree, involving different styles of assessment, increased formal coursework or study at a distance, the aim of the consultation is to determine what critical elements define a PhD, and what aspects can be more flexible. In parallel with this consultation, this paper encourages colleagues to consider the credit framework that underpins doctoral degrees awarded by The University.

The increased demands for flexibility in doctoral programmes is being driven by the funding bodies who are requiring the inclusion of more structured material and more explicit skills development, for example, as an integral part of funding bids for DTP/DTCs and CDTs. There has also been a trend towards inclusion of other activities (public engagement, teaching etc.) without extending the period of study. While the intention to increase the graduate's employability laudable, this trend has tended to distract from the core activities that define a PhD and have contributed to the development of wide variations between programmes. There is a danger that a two- (or multi-) tier system of doctorates will develop.

The aim of this paper is to stimulate discussion with the aim of converging towards a clear understanding of what is required, in terms of volume of study (or credits), for the award of a doctorate at the University of Edinburgh.

According to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), "Doctoral degrees are designed at SCQF Level 12 and are allocated at least 540 SCQF Credit Points of which a minimum of 420 are at SCQF Level 12." A single Credit Point "represents the amount of learning achieved through a notional 10 hours of learning time which includes everything a learner has to do to achieve the outcomes in a qualification including the assessment procedures."

This means that a doctoral degree represents the equivalent of (at least) 3 years of fulltime study (40 hours per week). If we expect our PhD students to participate in additional training activities, then we need to allow them time to do so. This was REC's main concern with the Principal's Career Development Scheme PhDs, which required the student to engage with an additional theme, while still only providing support for 3 years.

It also means that, if we wish to award Credit Points to coursework or other activities during a 3-year doctorate, then we need to reduce the number of Credit Points associated with the thesis and its defence, by awarding some of the 540 credits for the training components of a doctorate. Extrapolating this approach results in the professional doctorate in which a large proportion of the credits are awarded for coursework.

540 Credits, Level 12,

No Credits for Coursework

540 Credits, Level 12,

Manv Credits for Coursework
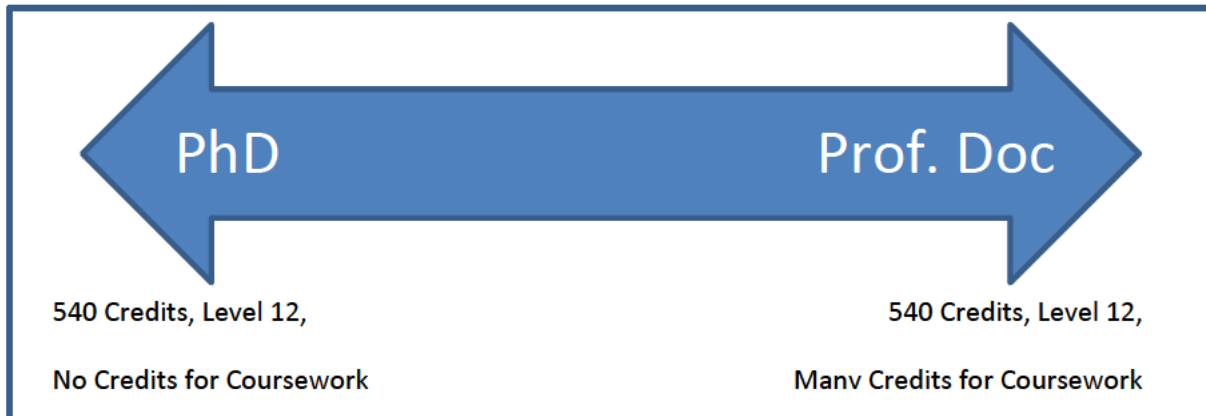
Alternatively, we could increase the period of study to account for the additional Credit Points and the hours associated with them. While SCQF is clear about the minimum Credit Point requirements for a doctorate, it is not helpful that it does not specify an upper limit. This has allowed the development of a wide range of doctorate programmes across the sector with different requirements and different period of study. While this is not, in itself, a problem, it is confusing to call them all PhDs.

It is proposed, therefore, that at The University of Edinburgh, a doctorate should be awarded for 540 Credit Points at Level 12, and that anything above this is considered additional to the doctorate and not required for the award of the degree. This would apply to all doctorates awarded by the University, including the PhD, the PhD By Publication, and Professional Doctorates. It would not prevent the University from offering programmes with, for example, the title "PhD with xxx", but it would clear be to staff, the student and, equally importantly, potential employers, what part of the programme is a PhD and what part(s) is additional.

JPB 23rd October 2015

REC 15/16 2C

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

12 January 2016

What is an Edinburgh PhD

Executive Summary

This paper is provided as a discussion paper to be considered along with the Edinburgh Doctorates paper. The aim is to confirm a common understanding of the current, essential elements of the Edinburgh PhD. This will then inform future discussion on potential developments in the Edinburgh PhD offering.

The paper comprises the results of benchmarking with other institutions and internal consultation with Schools, Colleges and support services. The discussion paper "What should an Edinburgh PhD be?" was circulated in September 2015 and comments received are summarised by four broad themes: study period and degree structure, assessment, community and research environment, and employability.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with the University Strategic Goals of Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research, and the Strategic Theme of Outstanding Student Experience. It also aligns with REC's priority to develop a clearer idea of what an Edinburgh PhD should be.

Action requested

For discussion – In consideration with the Edinburgh Doctorates paper, the Committee is invited to confirm the current, essential elements of an Edinburgh PhD.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
The paper is for discussion only.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)** None as the paper is for discussion.

2. **Risk assessment** None as the paper is for discussion.

3. **Equality and Diversity** None as the paper is for discussion.

4. **Freedom of information**
    The paper is **open**

Key words

Originator of the paper
Susan Hunter, Academic Policy Officer
Academic Services

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

What should an Edinburgh PhD be? Consultation and benchmarking results

Introduction

Intended outcomes proposed in the discussion paper:

- A definition of what is fixed and what is flexible which will serve as a reference point for the consideration of alternative models and formats of doctoral education.
- A benchmark statement for managing expectations and communications.
- Influencing the look and feel of our postgraduate research offering.

REC priority (2): Develop a clearer idea of what an Edinburgh PhD should be, through benchmarking, consultation, and alignment with broader thinking in the University (for example the development of the Strategic Plan, work regarding collaborative provision).

Benchmarking

Desk-based research on Russell Group, Universitas 21 (U21) and League of European Research Universities (LERU) institutions shows:

Study Period

This is defined in a variety of terms, including "normal", "minimum", "maximum" and "average". However, in general, UK institutions have a three-year study period with a submission period, although some provide for longer periods negotiated at admission, for example where there are funding implications. U21 and LERU institutions may have shorter or longer "minimum" study periods but allow a longer maximum submission period.

Merit and Distinction

The majority of institutions award on a pass or fail basis with the opportunity to resubmit with corrections. Only one institution (Helsinki) stated a pass with distinction as an option for PhD thesis. There are Deans lists in a couple of Australian universities and a few institutions internationally award "cum laude" status.

Public defense

No UK institutions were found that allow public defense of the thesis. Of the institutions that provide for public defense of the thesis, the majority are held within the university, academic community. Only a couple of institutions allow other, public attendance. Usually the public defense is after, or followed by, a closed viva examination, which is the formal examination of the thesis.

Consultation – Gathering Responses

REC circulated a discussion paper and Schools, Colleges and Support Services commented on the themes and questions raised, and on anything else that they considered important to PhD study at Edinburgh. Comments received came from across the University at both College and School level, and included student comments from College committee reps. The consultation particularly focused on the student experience; however, the Committee recognises that supervisors and supervision are key elements of that experience.

Consultation themes

Study Period and Degree Structure

Commenters thought that funding, timelines and completion rates needed holistic consideration. The mismatch of funding for a four-year period of study was emphasised.

Comparison with longer North American study periods was important to some disciplines where their students are in competition with North American PhD graduates for research careers. However, differences relate not only to the length of study, but also to the PhD degree structure. Differences in the structure in North America include training at the start of the PhD, coursework, and examination for progression.

However, others commented that the four-year period[1] is adequate and that while a longer period of study may produce narrow specialism, it may result in less flexibility for alternative career choices. Preparing our PhDs to be well placed for transition into the labour market is important.

A longer study period may be beneficial for training for teaching, knowledge exchange, impact, and for developing publishable papers. Centres for Doctoral Training provide this kind of training; however, it is not available to all students.

One suggestion was that a UoE central graduate training facility, expanding upon what is already offered by the Institute for Academic Development, might provide this for all students.

Commenters did not think international experience was an essential element of the PhD. However, they did think some time abroad should be encouraged as it enriches the student experience.

Assessment

Generally, commenters thought that the current model allows for adequate assessment of academic and personal development.

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[1] It was unclear from comments whether the "four-year" period was perceived as the 36 months prescribed period of study plus 12 months submission period, or as four years of study as in the integrated PhD. Postgraduate Degree Regulations Study Period Table

Distinction or merit for PhDs would be difficult to assess. It is possible that examiners may feel pressure to award distinctions and that would lead to the award becoming meaningless.

Recognising and rewarding researcher development was supported, and suggestions for achieving this included; a University panel that could assess commendations, a best thesis award, and a UoE doctoral prize (funding for study award).

There was some support for a doctoral supplement. However, there was no support for public defense of the thesis.

Community and Research Environment

Commenters highlighted the diversity of our student cohort and the University's international academic community. Time in Edinburgh is vital for induction into University research culture and for developing professional networks. Physical attendance is essential for some disciplines. Students particularly valued the opportunities that mentoring and tutoring provide for engaging with undergraduate and other postgraduate students.

Being in Edinburgh promotes all students engaging actively with UoE research culture. The quality of supervision and supervisors as models of research excellence are important elements of the student experience and research environment. Therefore, some commenters thought that it was important that student research projects align with the University research priorities. However, others thought this was less important and that alignment with Research Council priorities also needs to be considered.

Commenters noted difficulties for community development and adequate supervision for distance students.

The emphasis in Centres for Doctoral Training (CDT) on cross-institutional student cohorts might be a risk to students identifying with the UoE community. Some areas had experienced a detriment to cohesion with the wider School community where students identified with their CDT. However, there were also benefits from CDTs in attracting high quality PhDs and providing a stimulating research environment.

Employability

Two comment streams emerged related to academic and non-academic career paths. Some commenters thought that we should not be training for any particular job. Others though that students should be treated as junior researchers, or academics in training.

Generally, commenters thought that industry experience is not essential. However, there should be flexibility for students to gain work experience, and supervisors should support this. Such experience helps PhDs to be well placed to transition into the labour market, and is consistent with Research Council priorities to include collaboration with non-academic partners. Model career trajectories would be useful for students for both academic and non-academic career paths.

REC 15/16 2E

The University of Edinburgh
Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

12 January 2016

CHSS Response to PRES as Requested

Executive Summary
Contains school reports, a summary of these, a list of actions for the College as a whole, and a page reflecting on the challenge of meeting student's expectations in terms of teaching opportunities.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
The proposal is intended to enhance the student experience.

Action requested
For canvassing of views in REC. We would also like to advance discussion on the allocation of time for PhDs to undertake university work, harmonise the use of multipliers, contracts, recruitment, review and training procedures.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
HSS PG Dean will report back to CPGSC

Resource / Risk / Compliance
1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   Risk of further student dissatisfaction if employment issues are not resolved.
2. **Risk assessment**
   No risk in discussing the paper
3. **Equality and Diversity**
   Quite central to the discussion
4. **Freedom of information**
   Open

Key words
Student experience, PRES

Originator of the paper

Professor Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Humanities and Social Science

College of Humanities and Social Science Response to the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) for the Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

Reports from individual Schools indicate many strengths to the student experience. These reports are attached (Appendix C). They also highlight areas requiring improvement. This report is informed by formal responses from Schools to the PRES tabulated results and free comments, discussion at College and School PG management committees, in turn informed by School discussions at Student-Staff Liaison Committee meetings and focus groups. Three College Deans also met with students at a session organized jointly between the HSS QAE team and EUSA to discuss PGR matters on 24 November 2015. The challenges are reiterated in the ELIR draft report (Appendix B). There are challenges in 5 key areas.

- Training for PhD students who teach and fairness in allocating teaching roles
- Quality and quantity of study space
- In some cases access to supervisor time
- Consistency of practice across the University
- Financial support for study (this is not addressed explicitly in PRES, but may contribute to some of the challenges raised by PRES)

Areas of significant improvement

Improvements are best captured at School level. The PRES results show improvements in some areas in all schools, for example, in research culture and research skills training. Economics reports a significant increase in the numbers of students expecting to complete within the allotted timescale, and improved communication, opportunities for students to develop contacts and networks, and higher satisfaction with resources. LLC reports positive gains due to a good seminar programme. Amidst a generally good performance, PPLS reports higher satisfaction in the communication of requirements and deadlines for formal progress monitoring. SPS reports significant improvement in responses to the quality of supervision. ECA also reports higher satisfaction with supervision, and imparting of research skills. Divinity also reports high satisfaction overall. Most School reports indicate that the PRES scores are still below expectations, and there is room for significant improvement.

Any significant areas showing a lack of improvement (where improvement might have been expected)

There are common threads in the reports from Schools. Economics highlights challenges in the area of research culture, professional development, support for teaching (in spite of regular tutor meetings), and challenges posed by a difference is start date between PhD study and the teaching semester. HCA identifies variability in research culture between and within subject areas. In a very detailed report, Law identifies study space issues, limits to out of hours access, limited opportunities to discuss research with other students and members of staff, lack of detailed feedback from supervisors, limited opportunities for teaching, training for teaching, induction and training for January starts, limited support to attend conferences, and

library resources. In a detailed report LLC identifies a very low rate of satisfaction with the Library resources, both print and electronic. Students feel disengaged with both research culture and the department staff apart from their immediate supervisor contacts.

LLC also notes that students are now less inclined to feel that the University values and responds to feedback, probably reflecting students' dissatisfaction with the move from small shared offices to large suites with combined social and study space. Apparently many students feel isolated and have a relatively low sense of belonging to their subject/department, and a significant number don't know who to approach apart from their supervisors and doubt that their concerns are heard. LLC also identifies the serious issue of support for teaching. In some cases PhDs may be asked to do repeat teaching rather than develop a broader teaching portfolio.

PPLS also reports that support and guidance for teaching registers lower satisfaction, and in some cases the teaching load is too heavy. SPSS also identifies inadequate access to study space and computing facilities, and inadequacies in the provision of teaching experience. SPSS also reports that some students blame shortcomings in their supervision on the supervisor's workload and work conditions. ECA reported a decline in satisfaction, specifically resources, research culture, teaching experience, responsibilities, and the quality of study space and computing provision.

I think that most schools recognize common challenges, whether or not made explicit in each report.

What the Schools are planning to do to maintain or enhance the PG experience in light of the results

Plans to enhance student satisfaction are already in train in many schools, and are tailored to their particular modes of research. For example, doctoral study in the Business School includes a substantial taught component and the School will increase the number of PGR courses offered, and introduce a single entry date to aid induction, orientation and course selection. They will build the culture of the programme via a cohort photo, School sweatshirts, and work with the Doctoral Society on academic and social activities. The school will also offer more formal preparation for teaching assistant, and provide an integrated Personal Development Programme.

Economics look forward to 2 large conferences as a way of enhancing student engagement, they have scheduled Friday lunches for students, are considering reintroducing peer review of tutorials, will provide a separate "writing-up" guide with details of the pre-viva, viva and post-viva requirements, and will provide ready access to previous theses. HCA's welcome week has been expanded this year and complemented by small group mid-semester Q&A tea parties. They will use such occasions to explain the rationale of study space allocations and for managing student expectations. They will introduce a peer observation programme and a part-time tutor liaison committee. Changes in Law are already in train, such as repeating the PGR training programme for January starts, consolidated funds for conference attendance in years 2 and 3, and offers of significant financial support channelled through the PGR Student Board for student reading groups and events. Training for teaching

2E

has also been an issue that has been addressed in recent years by providing more support to tutors. LLC is discussing the need to resolve whether the poor response to resources means they need to invest more or tell students they need to draw on specialist resources outside the University (NLS, etc). They are reviewing how to involve students more in school seminars, and will start a PhD common room. In its largest Department, English, students can apply for teaching opportunities and teach a practice tutorial with an experienced member of staff. This practice tutorial is part of the selection process, and successful candidates receive mentoring while they teach. LLC will recommend this model to other subject areas in the School. It is a practice that could be considered across the College.

Following a postgraduate research students focus group, PPLS have issued procedures for appointing, training and supporting PG tutors, and introduced a tutor portfolio that serves as a formal record of support activities. SPS defines several areas requiring action, such as supervisor training, subject group responsibilities, and the need for more work in fostering teaching skills. ECA intends to update all marketing materials for PGR programmes to indicate what study space facilities students can expect, to make a case to HSS for renting space in Argyle House, to extend student-led PhD seminar programmes and funding for student-led conferences, engage with the international 3 minute thesis contest, and to introduce a PGT to PhD mentoring support scheme. In collaboration with IAD they are developing a mentoring scheme, a series of 'microresidencies' with alumni, and new policy documents for tutor recruitment. In Education, the PG Deputy Director is meeting with PGR student representatives regularly, looking at ways to align PGR students with REF themes and enhance the research and community linkages between staff and students. Divinity is focusing on professional skills developments, including training events on writing CVs, career support, academic publishing, training for PG tutors and has appointed a Teaching Fellow to address these areas.

Additional Actions by the College as a Whole
- The College will continue to disseminate good practice through reports and discussion at the College Postgraduate Studies Committee (CPGSC).
- Supervisor briefing/training events will continue to raise the PRES result for discussion and emphasize student experience.
- The College will continue with training events for Scholarship applicants and supervisors supporting student applications to maximize the financial opportunities for PhD students.
- CPGSC will discuss how the Scottish Graduate Schools can be brought into discussions about student experience.
- The College will continue to provide scholarships and other financial support to PhD students, to support schools in this, and to publicise funding opportunities.
- The College will encourage consistency in contracts and expectations of students who teach: e.g. types of contracts (GH or casual), rules for applying the "multiplier," procedures for recruitment, and include training hours in contracts. See Appendix A.
- CPGSC will workshop ideas amongst academic staff about tutor mentoring, peer review, training and in-practice recruitment and selection.
- CPGSC and the PGR dean will discuss with Estates plans and PhD study space provision to raise awareness of estates options and constraints.
- The College will Support IAD and Schools to develop College-wide tutor training.

Richard Coyne PGR Dean • College of Humanities and Social Science • 9 December 2015

APPENDIX A

Hours worked by PhD students

PRES has highlighted that PhD students are concerned about different practices between schools: type of contract, different uses of "multipliers" and different hour limits. They also want opportunities to work in the University. Do the University's rules on hours mean that non-RCUK funded students will (or continue to) work under the radar outside of the University? Are the rules clear and consistent?

Recent communication from CHSS HR Office reminds Schools that Tier 4 students are restricted to 20 hours a week during semester time, and that Schools are expected to adhere to the recommended maximum of 6 hours work per week for full-time PhD students and 15 hours work per week for all other full-time students.

For information, the Careers Service web page at

http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/careers/postgrad/phd/employment-for-phd-students/combining-work-and-phd/guidance-on-part-time-work

states:

> The general rule of thumb at the University, and in line with major funding bodies, is no more than 6 hours per week, or 180 hours per year for a full-time PhD. If you are in receipt of any funding for your PhD, be sure to check what restrictions and conditions there are, if any, on the amount of part-time work you are allowed to do. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

The Research Councils Training Grant Guide Section 28 is at

http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/RCUK-prod/assets/documents/publications/TrainingGrantGuidance.pdf

It states:

> 28.1. Students may undertake teaching or demonstrating work when this is compatible with their training and provided their supervisors approve. The total time spent (including preparation and marking) should not interfere with the progress of the PhD. The amount of time is at the RO and supervisor's discretion but it is recommended that this is no more than six hours in any week. It must not be compulsory and must be paid for at the RO's usual rate and supported by appropriate training. Costs for demonstrating or teaching may not be taken from the TG.

> 28.2. Students may also undertake a small amount of other paid work, provided the supervisor gives consent and it does not delay or interfere with the research training.

APPENDIX B

ELIR Draft Report Area for Development

13. Postgraduate research student experience - analyse the needs and experience of postgraduate research students at school, college and university level to ensure that they are effectively supported in the context of the University's plans to increase the research student numbers. The University should review the effectiveness and regularity of supervisor training and ensure that the University's Code of Practice is communicated effectively to all staff and research students and implemented consistently. The University should also make certain that postgraduate research students who teach are appropriately trained and supported for the role (including in the provision of assessment and feedback) and are made aware of the career development resources available through the Institute for Academic Development.

University of Edinburgh Business School

Response to PRES results 2015

- The overall results

While we are pleased to see that we are generally consistent with the College and the University, or ahead in some areas, there are some points that we will be looking to address. The overall score for the School is down 1% to 76%, in comparison to the College score of 81% and the University score of 86% (although the School 'Overall Experience' score is at 81% in section 2, which is 1% above the College score and identical to the University score). We have started to implement a new strategic plan that will, we anticipate, increase the general satisfaction score. For example, we are taking steps to increase the number of PGR courses being offered within the Business School. We have also moved to a single entry date, which will address the dissatisfaction that the students who start in January feel regarding problems with courses being taken out of line with the other students, the lack of a comprehensive University orientation, and the general feeling of not being part of the main September cohort. Further, we are taking steps to build the culture of the programme (e.g., providing a cohort photo, giving students School sweatshirts, working with the Doctoral Society on academic and social activities).

- Any areas of significant improvement (as indicated in the survey)

We were pleased to see satisfaction with resources increase by 20%, pushing the School ahead of College and University scores.

Teaching experience improved by 19%, and while this is ahead of College and University scores, it is still only 57%. We would like to develop this area, but it is difficult to do so with current restrictions on PhD students teaching. This is something that we could perhaps discuss at the College level.

The library score improved by 10%. This probably reflects changes centrally, particularly with electronic provision, but we also have a good Business School library from which the PGR students benefit.

Professional development has increased by 6% to 79%. We are continuing to try to improve this area in order to raise the employability of our students, particularly in elite universities. To this end, we are offering more formal preparation for being a Teaching Assistant; have changed the 'Introduction to the PhD in Management' course to focus on requirements for publishing and other academic requirements.

- Any significant areas showing a lack of improvement (where improvement might have been expected)

Research skills showed a -1%, which is negligible, everything else has improved or remained the same. We are, however, providing additional opportunities for students to develop their research skills, and prizes for those who are successful in publishing their research in leading journals.

• Any free form comments from the survey that provide further insights into the student experience

 Some of our students are concerned about a lack of space. This is a common theme across most Schools, and is something that we are looking at, while recognising that it is difficult to address given the current constraints of the Business School building. This may be alleviated if we move to a new building. The other main area of dissatisfaction for some students is in the quality of supervision. We are in the process of developing additional requirements for supervisors in order to try to ensure that students receive a high quality of supervision.

There were a small minority of comments about accessing the support staff and responsiveness to emails, the support team have reviewed their opening hours and are actively managing student expectations.

• What the School is planning to do to maintain or enhance the PG experience in light of the results

 As we note above, we are in the process of implementing a new strategic plan. As this takes place over the next year, we are hopeful that the students will find that they have an enhanced PGR experience. One mechanism we are looking at is the development of an Integrated Personal Development Programme for our doctoral researchers, utilising the wider resources of the Business School and in collaboration with IAD.

Professor John Amis
Mrs Charis Wilson
27 Oct 2015

REC 15/16 2E

Divinity

Reflection on PRES Results

PRES runs alternate years, so there are reports for 2013 and 2015, but not 2014

In the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) for 2015, the School recorded a very high overall satisfaction rate of 93%, up from 85% in PRES 2013. Relatedly, marks were up in all areas from 2013, except for professional development, which was down just 2%. Regarding research supervision, which forms the centre of the PGR experience, students reported an outstanding 97% satisfaction, up from 87% in PRES 2013. Regarding academic community (the area which yielded the disappointing 67% satisfaction among PGT students in PTES 2015; see wiki ad loc.), PGR students reported a much stronger 85% satisfaction, which could suggest that the School is doing a better job integrating PGR students than it is PGT students.

Our main area for improvement in serving PGR students is professional skills developments, to which end we have scheduled a series of training events on writing CVs, navigating the academic job market, academic publishing, and other like topics (some in-house, others in concert with the University IAD), and in particular have built in a system for teacher training for PG tutors spearheaded by our recently appointed Teaching Fellow Dr Linden Bicket. We will closely monitor student feedback on this area in the next PRES.

Dr Matthew Novenson
School QA Director
September 2015

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) – 2015

School of Economics – Response

Overall results:

There was an improvement in the response rate from 50% to 59% over 2013 and an increase in the overall experience from 79% to 90%. Both the response rate and overall experience are above the College and University average.

Significant Improvements:

There were significant improvements in a number of areas. Perhaps most striking has been the large increase in the numbers expecting to complete within the allotted timescale (up by 37 percentage points). This is probably the most important factor associated with the other positive changes.

There has been significant improvements in communication, professional development and resources.

Communication: The feeling that the School and institution values and responds to the concerns of students is also up by 37 percentage points; knowledge of whom to approach (other than the supervisor) with concerns about the programme is up by 31 percentage points.

Development: There has been a big increase in the number who have developed contacts or professional networks during their programme (up by 31 percentage points) although this shows room for improvement. The identification of training and development needs by the supervisor is up by 29 percentage points.

Resources: All resource questions show a significant increase. There is a 90% score on the provision of adequate computing and research facilities (up by 26 percentage points) and the score for provision of specialist resources is up by 26 percentage points.

Areas which show cause for concern:

There are two main areas where scores are lower than we would wish. The first area is research culture. Although up by 10 percentage points, it remains low at 65%. The second is professional development including teaching. The scores for professional development excluding teaching are considerably up but remain low. The teaching experience score was down by 20 percentage points and is the only large drop in score over the 2013 survey.

The scores on the understanding of the required standard for a PhD and final assessment procedures remain relatively low.

Other evidence of student experience:

The comment fields did not add much extra useful information in this case. The HoS was praised for his leadership and commitment to PGR matters. The PRES results have been usefully discussed at the Student-Staff Liaison Committee. Students there felt the response rate was low.

School plans for enhancement:

We shall be talking to colleagues and students about how to improve the PhD student research culture. Two large conferences will be hosted by the School in 2016 and 2017 and we expect to fully involve our PhD students in these events as well as are other regular events and seminars. We have already agreed that the School will participate in the three minute thesis competition again this year. We have not participated in the previous two years because our PhD cohort is relatively small and there was a certain amount of fatigue from the students most of which had participated previously in the School level competition. We have booked the common room for Friday lunch time so that PGR students can have lunch together,

The fall in the score on appropriate support and guidance for your teaching (a fall of 20 percentage points) is somewhat surprising. There has been now obvious change in procedures and tutors are supported by regular weekly tutor meetings. One issue is the timing at which students start tutoring. Entry onto the PhD programme is officially 1st October (because many students may not have results from their masters programmes until late in September) and teaching starts late in September.

From this year we have from this year reduced the tutoring load for first year students commensurate with an increase in the PhD course load for first years and this may make a difference. We are adding more structure to the weekly tutor meetings this year. The first part of the meeting involves a mix of informal discussions about aspects of teaching and the second part of the meeting incorporating a greater focus on course-specific material that they are going to teach in upcoming weeks. So far the first part of the meeting has included a general discussion on approaches to teaching and preparing for tutorials, a discussion of good and bad teaching we have experienced at school and university, and another discussion on student engagement in tutorials. We are also considering reintroducing peer support/review of tutorials in which experienced and inexperienced tutors are paired. We also plan to introduce more variety to the catering for the tutor meetings, which take place on a Tuesday lunchtime.

We will consider what extra support and training we can offer for tutors. This will include making students aware of the specialists courses offered to tutors by the Economics Network and IAD tutors and demonstrators programme as well as the IAD programme on the introduction to academic practice.

In response to the low score on the knowledge of final assessment procedures (65%) and low score on understanding of the required standard for the thesis, the school has produced a separate "writing-up year" guide with details of the pre-viva, viva and post-viva requirements. This guide will be updated annually. Students will also be directed to DSpace to access past dissertations to help with an understanding of what is required for the final thesis.

Date: October 2015
Authors: Tim Worrall

Responses and Actions to ECA PTES Results 2015

ECA Postgraduate Studies

In overall terms the results from PRES 2015 are in line with the PRES 2013 results, with 'overall experience' down 1% in 2015 to 74%, compared with 75% in 2013. However, in itself this result is very poor when compared with other Schools across CHSS and the University. Further to this there are specific areas that have seen a marked decline in satisfaction, specifically 'Resources', 'Research Culture', 'Teaching Experience' and 'Responsibilities'. This document outlines how these areas of dissatisfaction will be addressed by the ECA PG Office.

Before discussing the action points it is important to highlight the areas where satisfaction was at its highest, most notably in 'Supervision'. Overall satisfaction with supervision stands at 86%, up 7% from 2013. 91% of respondents note that their supervisors have the skills and subject knowledge to support their research, whilst 81% of respondents report that supervisors help them identify training and developments needs as a researcher, up 13% from 2013. The results for 'Research Skills' also show improvements from 2013, up to 86% in 2015 from 80%.

Specific action points:

- #1 'Resources': [This action point has resource implications]

The results for 'Resources' were very disappointing. In overall terms, although down just 1% from 66% in 2013 to 65% in 2015 the granular data shows deep dissatisfaction. Responses to the question 'I have a suitable working space' stand at 42%, down 9% from 2013. Likewise, the question 'There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities' shows dissatisfaction with a figure of 56% compared with 68% in 2013. The level of dissatisfaction with resources does not come as a surprise, particularly with changes to study space provision due to decant and ongoing buildings work. Whilst the level of dissatisfaction with study space may be a result of the shift in culture that has taken place over 2014/15, in order to address these concerns we plan to carry out the following:

• Ensure that all marketing materials for PGR programmes clearly describe what study space facilities are available. We need to be clear about what we offer
• Investigate the potential (both financial and logistical) of renting space in Argyle House. A case for this will be put to CHSS
• Address the longer-term issue of the growth in total numbers of PhD students. Although the growth of PhD provision is one of CHSS's strategic goals any growth has to be sustainable, including the impact

on resources
• Ask individual Schools to investigate the availability of
bookable/allocated communal PhD spaces in their estates. The School
of Art, and ESALA have recently carried this out, and History of Art
have hot-desking facilities for PhD students working as UG tutors
• Ensure that that longer-term planning of work spaces for PhD students and tutors is built
into P&R. Comments from PhD students (and academic staff) describe the imbalance
between the UG and PGT
study spaces, and those offered to PhD students

- **#2 'Research Culture':**

Whilst the levels of satisfaction with research culture are not as low as the availability of
study space there is still cause for concern, particularly with the opportunities to discuss
research with other research students. This stands at 53%, down from 59% in 2013. In order
to address these concerns we plan to carry out the following:
• Adopt a multi-scalar approach to improving research culture across
ECA that recognises the importance of disciplinary specificity whilst
offering opportunities for cross-ECA research networking.
• At a local level we will ensure that research groups in each of the five
Schools are proactive in establishing focused research seminars, with
the potential for 1st year PhD students to organise the seminars.
Schools will be asked to identify an academic who will oversee the
School-level seminars, either PGR Director or Research Director
• We will establish cross-ECA research seminars for PhD candidates.
This will be undertaken by the ECA Deputy Director for PG Studies in
collaboration with PGR Directors in each School
• Ensure that the 3-Minute Thesis competition is embedded into the
annual calendar for ECA. We will organise an ECA-wide heat for the
competition to take place in February 2016
• IAD's Devolved Research Funding will be targeted towards improving the research culture
of ECA, through the following means:
- PhD students and early career researchers will be able to apply
for up to £3000 to organise conferences or workshops (we are
funding three conferences/workshops)
- Chancellor's Fellows in each of the five Schools will be taking
part in a research methods-focussed talks programme starting in
November 2015. This will be targeted at PhD students as well
as the wider ECA community and beyond
- PGT-to-PhD mentoring support scheme: in collaboration with
IAD we are developing a mentoring scheme where onprogramme
PhD candidates will work with on-programme PGT

students who are interested in applying to UoE for PhD study.
These paid roles will require PhD students to offer support in
developing research proposals
- Alumni Employability Micro-Residencies: a series of 'microresidencies' will be developed
to enable alumni to run
workshops targeted at PGT and PGR students with a focus on
employability.

- #3 'Teaching Experience':

The third area where there is a clear level of dissatisfaction is with teaching experience.
Only 36% of respondents were satisfied with the level of support and guidance they
received for their teaching activities. This is down 3% from 2013. Whilst it is not clear
whether this result reflects the wider issue of the availability of teaching opportunities this
is nonetheless an important area to address. Action has already been taken in the 2014/15
academic year to ensure that disparities in teaching opportunities and level of support
across ECA were addressed. In particular, new policy documents were developed, ensuring
a transparent recruitment process was put in place, alongside clear
guidelines on the support structures available to PhD students working as UG tutors.
Although the current PRES results may not take into account the changes in policy, we plan
to follow-up on these changes to policy by carrying out the following:
• Coupled with the issue around resources and study spaces outlined
above ensure that all Schools are aware of and offering suitable work
spaces for PhD candidates working as UG tutors
• Develop a peer-support scheme for PhD tutors. Experienced PhD
tutors will be required to offer peer-support to new PhD tutors
• Further identify and communicate the numerous training opportunities offered by IAD
• Ensure that course organiser role descriptors fully outline the support
that course organisers must provide to any PhD students working as
UG tutors
• Investigate whether or not the maximum number of hours that PhD
students can work as UG tutors is appropriate. PGR Directors in each
School have already been asked to gather feedback from PhD
students, and the ECA Deputy Director PG Studies will be feeding this
information back to the University's working group on PhD tutoring.
• We are investigating the potential of a Level 12 'Reflecting Teaching
Practice' course that could be offered to PhD students either in
semester 2 of year 1 or semester 1 of year 2. As this will take time to
validate the PG and UG Directors will be offering four training sessions
on UG teaching.

- #4 'Responsibilities':

The final area where there is notable dissatisfaction is to the question title name 'My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students'. This stands at 48%, up from 43% in 2013, but still low. Although recent changes to the Committee structure for PG Studies should ensure greater opportunity for PGR student feedback, in order to address these concerns further still we plan to carry out the following:

• Establish a student-staff PGR liaison group. This will be chaired by the ECA Deputy Director PG Studies, and may form a part of the new PGR subcommittee, or a standalone group

• Ensure that all five Schools provide opportunities for PGR students to feedback at School-level en cover half of the expenses if a conference in a year)".

PRES Response: Moray House School of Education October 2015

The PRES results for the school are mixed. The overall summary does not appear positive but the primary themes are more encouraging. The more detailed scores are more useful in shedding light on the nuances.

We are pleased that the primary theme results show improvement in all areas except one (resources down 1%). This is the result on an ongoing effort to enhance PGR experiences and build community. This is a challenge in a school with 80+ students who are researching in a wide diversity of subjects and disciplines. We have made good progress in developing ongoing seminar series of both student presentations and staff developmental sessions in addition to the bi-annual interweaving conference which has received very positive reviews. Our new depute director for PGR is working hard to implement changes and enhancements for the PGR community and is meeting with reps regularly, implementing a new system to ensure there is transparency for teaching and research opportunities and encouraging student led initiatives. We are also working to align PGR students with REF themes and therefore develop the community linkages between staff and students much more. Further, we are working on streamlining admissions processes and supervisor allocations to ensure that supervision teams are strong and that less experienced staff are mentored by more experienced staff.

Report on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey for 2015: HCA 30 October 2015

Overall, the PRES report for HCA showed a marked improvement from the last time the survey was conducted in 2013 both in terms of 'overall experience (71% to 78%) and within individual themes. Satisfaction with supervision had improved from 76% to 81%; with research culture from 54% to 67%; with research skills from 74% to 80%; with professional development from 65% to 79% and with the library from 64% to 76%.

The creation of the post of Deputy Director with specific responsibility for post-graduate research students and the steps taken by the previous holder of the post to provide support for PGRs, including the creation of new opportunities for scholarly and social interaction and new training opportunities, has undoubtedly played a major part in these improved figures in 2015.

Amidst this generally upward trend, there are still a number of areas for further improvement.

1. **Research culture**. Free text comments suggest variability in research culture between subject areas and within subject areas. The creation of new research groups in HCA in 2015-16 may help to achieve greater consistency across the School in terms of research culture.
2. **Induction**. Responses to the question: 'I received an appropriate induction to my programme' show improvement from 59% to 66% but this figure remains relatively low. There was a fall from 67% to 62% in positive responses to the question: 'other than my supervisor, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme'. Free text comments also suggested some uncertainty as to timelines and expectations. The programme for welcome week has been expanded this year and complemented by small group tea parties in weeks 6 and 7 held by the Director and Deputy Director to answer questions and to encourage new research students to reflect on their working practices, goal setting and expectations of their degree programmes after the first rush of induction week. A revised document setting out sources of support within HCA has been created for the graduate school wiki.
3. **Resources**. Many of the free text comments expressed a frustration with a lack of desk space and library resources. There may be more scope for explaining the rationale of desk allocations and for managing research student expectations, both in terms of work space and library resources, and this could be incorporated into induction events. There may be scope for reviewing and consulting on the current system of rationing desk space to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose and commands broad support among the PGR community.
4. **Teaching experience**. While satisfaction with teaching experience has increased from 40% to 50%, these figures remain low. The training programme for part-time tutors has been expanded for 2015-16 and tutors will now be included in a peer observation programme being rolled out across HCA to contribute to developing the skills of part-time tutors and embed best practice. A new part-time tutor liaison committee is being set up to take effect from November 2015 and this will provide a new channel of communication for part-time tutors. However, there is clearly scope for further progress in this area.
5. **Supervision**. While overall satisfaction with supervision was high, in one particular area, 'identifying training needs', satisfaction rates were lower (67%). There may be scope for making better use of the annual review to review training needs, and this question will be looked at as part of a review of the Annual Review process in November 2015.

In conclusion, the results of the 2015 PRES survey demonstrate a broadly positive research student experience in HCA while also offering clear indicators of the key areas to target for further improvement.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2015

School of Law: Results and Response from the PGR Director

48 PGR students in the School of Law responded to PRES, which corresponds to 46.2% of our population. 79% of PGR students surveyed were satisfied overall with the experience of their research degree programme. This percentage is down from the last survey, when 88% of students reported an overall satisfaction with the PhD programme. It would appear that this drop has in part been caused by significant decreases in relation to one or two areas, discussed below.

Highest levels of satisfaction were expressed in relation to support received from supervisors (92%) and library staff (96%). This is satisfying as these members of staff put in a lot of hard work and effort to ensure the best possible PGR student experience. There have also been increases in scores relating to opportunities to discuss research with other research students (from 74% to 81%) and the research ambience (from 72% to 75%).

Lowest levels of satisfaction were recorded in relation to the suitability of working space (50%) and the provision of computing facilities (61%).

There have been significant drops in the results in relation to these two issues. This picture suggests that recent developments in relation to the PGR community, particularly the move to their new office space in the South Basement of Old College, has significantly affected the experience of PGR students. That accommodation is the largest concern of our PGR community is also reflected in the free text comments that were given, which noted numerous concerns about office spaces and computing resources including "no natural light" and "tiny" desks, lack of proper fixed computers, poor ventilation. We are also aware that there have been concerns regarding access to the PhD offices out-of-hours. The School is fully cognizant of these problems and it is confident that the long-term plans to renovate Old College will address many of these issues. In the meantime, the School is committed to working with the PGR community in order to try to find solutions. At the same time, not all of the issues are within the control of the Law School, such as out-of-hours access to the South basement of Old College.

Other issues that have come up in the survey include:

- Limited opportunities to discuss research with other students and members of staff
- Lack of detailed feedback from supervisors
- More opportunities for teaching
- Gap between submission and viva
- Training for teaching
- Induction and training for January starts
- Limited support to attend conferences in order to present work
- Resources in the library
-

It would appear that some of these concerns relate to a small number of students and they do not reveal systematic problems (e.g. gap between submission and viva; lack of detailed feedback from supervisors). Other issues in this list have already been addressed in changes that have been introduced in the last two years:

- We have introduced a repetition of the PGR training programme for students starting in the second semester;

- We have consolidated the money that is available for students to attend conferences during the second and third year in order to give them more flexibility to decide which conferences to attend;
- We provide significant financial support, channeled through the PGR Student Board, for student reading groups and events;
- Training for teaching has also been an issue that has been addressed in recent years by providing more support to tutors.

A concerning result is that some students have a perception that their feedback is not valued – only 53% of respondees said that they believed the institution values and responds to feedback. The School clearly has some work to do to alter this perception. In reality, the School listens to feedback from students on a regular basis. The School has a PGR Student Board, which meets twice per semester and whose function is to provide a link between the student community and the School. The School is encouraging students to make more use of this forum so that systemic issues can be discussed and addressed in a prompt and effective manner. The results of the PRES have already been discussed with the PGR Student Board at their September 2015 meeting in order to get more information that might be relevant to addressing some of the issues raised. Furthermore, office space is a standing item on the PGR Student Board agenda, which will allow problems to be picked up at a relatively early stage. The PGR Student Board also provide an opportunity for the School to manage expectations of the PGR community, who need to understand that there are limited resources and other constraints (such as space) which may limit what we can provide.

PRES is only one way in which the School collects feedback from the PGR student community. As well as regular meetings with student representatives through the PGR Student Board, the School also conducts occasional polls amongst relevant students concerning key issues, such as PGR training and access to desks/computers.   The results of these ad hoc surveys do not always correspond to the overall PRES results, which suggests that PRES may not be getting the full-range of student views.

James Harrison

Director of Postgraduate Research

School of Law

November 2015

School of Literature, Languages and Cultures (LLC)

Postgraduate Research Experience Results Report 2015

Overall Satisfaction   78%

2013 comparable response: up 1%

> Overall, the level of satisfaction is high and has improved by 1% from 77% to 78% since 2013. In comparison with the PGT survey however the response rate is very low at 37.8% as opposed to 56.5%. This is 1.6% up on 2013 survey however this is noted to be an area of concern. More effort should be made to encourage student to take part in the survey.

> Students show the highest evaluation for the level of supervision (87%), and the lowest satisfaction with teaching experience (43%). Resources generally remain an area of concern. Students have produced a very low rate of satisfaction with the Library resources, both print and electronic (but especially print at 48% of satisfaction). In principle, students appreciate the competence of their supervisors and quality of research seminars organised by the respective departments, however many of them feel disengaged with both research culture and the department staff apart from their immediate supervisor contacts. We note, though, that satisfaction with the research culture is up 17%, suggesting that we are moving in the right direction even though more clearly remains to be done.

1. Supervision   87%

2013 comparable response: up 6%.

This is the highest result among all the categories. All areas show improved indicators.

> The areas of most significant improvement and positive trends:

> a) 'regular contact with supervisors' agrees up by 9%
> b) 'supervisors help identify training and development needs as a researcher' agrees up by 8%
> c) 'supervisors have skills and knowledge to support my research' agrees up by 6%

2. Resources   63%

2013 comparable response: down by 1% and overall level of satisfaction is low.

Areas of improvement:

> a) There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities agrees up by 12% from a low 52% to 70%

Areas of concern:

a) 'I have access to specialist resources necessary for my research' up by 1% however the overall satisfaction level is low as 65%.

ACTION: PG Management Committee has discussed this issue and agreed that we needed to establish clearly what students' expectations were. We need to establish whether UoE needs to invest in more resources, or whether we need to communicate more clearly that the nature of specialist research in the Humanities means that students are likely to need to access specialist resources outwith UoE, e.g. via the National Library of Scotland, national and international archives, interlibrary loans. Subject area PG officers will ask PhD students to submit book recommendations directly to them, so that books can be ordered for the Library.

3. Research Culture   69%

2013 comparable response: up 17%.

This is the highest increase in student satisfaction among all the categories however the overall figure still remains rather low at 69%. The improvement could be explained by the overall enhancement in the research culture in LLC reflected in the high score for research environment in REF 2014.

Areas of significant improvement:

a) 'My department provides a good seminar programme' agrees up 13% to 81% and moves out of the zone of concern.
Areas of concern:

In other areas of this category despite some significant improvements satisfaction remains low, or relatively low.

a) 'research ambience in department stimulates my work': agrees up by 4%, leaving the overall result low at 56%.

b) 'I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students': agrees up significantly by 27% to 69%. This is likely to reflect the work that the School has done over the last 3 years in supporting PG initiatives via the Student-Led Initiative Fund. This has led to the creation of new reading groups and other community-building events. The improved result is still relatively low.

c) 'I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department': agrees up significantly by 23% (to 69%) however the improved result is still relatively low.

The results show that although students acknowledge the good research environment of the School departments, thy do not sufficiently engage with it, or feel stimulated by it. Many PGT students feel rather isolated from the departments and from their peers.

ACTION: PG Management Committee to discuss. It could consider a broader involvement of students in the process of organisation of departmental seminars: selecting invited speakers and engaging with them. Subject specific PG research seminars are another way forward – students already engage in these. The recent decision to create a PhD common room should create further opportunities for students to discuss their research.

4. Progress and Assessment   77%

2013 comparable response: up 2%.

N/A

5. Responsibilities   72%

2013 comparable response: down 4% to 72%

Areas of improvement

a) 'I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student' up by 3% to 87%'
b) 'I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student' up by 2% to 87%
Areas of concern:

a) 'My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students' down 16% from 66% to 50%. This is the most significant drop in satisfaction across the survey. It probably reflects students' dissatisfaction with the move from small shared offices to large suites with combined social and study space, as a result of the move to 50 George Square.

b) 'Other than my supervisors, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme' down 2% from 67% to 65%. This is a low level of satisfaction.

These figures shows that many PGR students feel rather isolated and have a relatively low sense of belonging to their subject/department; a significant number of them do not know whom to approach apart from their supervisors and doubt that their concerns, when expressed, are heard.

ACTION: discuss this issue at a PG Management Group and SSLC meetings. The School has recently decided to create a separate common room for PGR students, separate from the study space, and this decision has been warmly welcomed by the students.

Supervisors and subject area heads should ensure that students are more involved in the life of the subjects/departments, and feel an integral part of the subject area they work in. We will work to ensure that all students are aware of their subject PG officer.

6. Research skills   86%

2013 comparable response: up 14% to 86%

This is the second highest improved category across the survey. All fields in this category have improved, some have reached indicators of 91% which are highest in the survey.

Areas of most significant improvement

   a) 'My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme' agrees up 20% to 80%
   b) 'My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme' agrees up 15% to 91%

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c) 'My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme' agrees up 15% to 91%

7. Professional development

2013 comparable response: up 9% to 78% and removed this category from the 'to be concerned' zone.

Areas of most significant improvement

a) 'I have developed professional contacts and networks' agrees up by 14% to 72%.
b) 'My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audience' agrees up 12% to 79%.

8. Teaching experience   43%

2013 comparable response: down by 13%

This position shows a largest drop in satisfaction in the Survey, as the rate of satisfaction has lowered from 56% to 43%. This category should be treated as the highest concern.

ACTION: We will consult with students to explore the causes of the low level of satisfaction. PG Management Committee discussed the issue, and colleagues suspect that it may relate to the nature of teaching experience – the fact that we may not be able to give students the opportunity to do research-led teaching, and that they may be asked to do repeat teaching rather than develop a broader teaching portfolio.

PG Management Committee recognised that there is a balance to be struck: we should offer all PG students the opportunity to apply for teaching opportunities at UoE, but we cannot guarantee to provide every student with teaching opportunities: we can only offer teaching that needs to be done, and we have to make sure that the teaching offered meets QA requirements.

PG Management Committee agreed that English Literature provides an example of best practice in terms of quality assurance, training, and the transparency of the selection process. Students apply for teaching opportunities and teach a practice tutorial with an experienced member of staff. This practice tutorial is part of the selection process, and successful candidates receive mentoring while they teach. This model will be recommended to other subject areas in the School.

9. Library   72%

2013 comparable response: down by 1% to 72%. Although the satisfaction rate is quite high and the downward trend is small in certain most important areas related to the Library collections satisfaction dropped very significantly.

Areas of significant improvement

a) 'I have received adequate help from Library staff' agrees up by 14%

Areas of concern:

a) 'the library's print collections are sufficient to my needs' agrees down by 14% to a very low 48%. This is the second lowest rate of satisfaction in the Survey.

REC 15/16 2E

Response for PRES 2015 School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences

b) 'the library electronic collections are sufficient to my needs' agrees down

Overall results   by 11% to 62%, which is a low rate.

The results from this year's PR_S showed a marked improvement in our research students' evaluation of their experience, with the overall approval rate

reaching 90% (compared to 71% in the 2013 survey).

ACTION: PG subject officers will ask students supervisors

and **Areas of significant improvement (as indicated in the survey)**

to The largest improvement in terms of primary themes was made in 'Progress & !ssessment' which went from 56% to 75% (a 19% increase)/ Within that theme, two questions received much higher agreement ratings than the last time. 'The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me' (46% → 69%)-and 'I understand the requirements and deadline for formal monitoring of my progress (66% → 88%)'. In other primary areas, we have witnessed large increases for 'Research _ulture. Opportunities to become involved in the wider research community' (48% → 71%) and 'Professional _evelopment. I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme' (59 → 83%).

send in book recommendations for the Library. We will also investigate whether students are

Any significant areas showing a lack of improvement (where improvement might have been expected)

The rating for 'support and guidance for teaching' has gone down from 64 to 58%. This has been independently identified as an area of improvement, and we have taken measures to address the issues and expect to see some improvements for the next round of PRES. Please see below for more detail.

Any free text comments from the survey that provide further insights into the student experience

Most free text comments confirmed what we could garner from the quantitative evaluation. There were several comments to the effective that the teaching load given to PhDs in some areas was too heavy, which may partly account for the low

rating for the 'support and guidance for teaching' statement/

successfully accessing the

existing electronic resources, or whether there are genuine shortfalls in particular areas.

10. Academic Community   77%

2013 comparable response – no change

Lara Ryazanova-Clarke

LLC PG QA Officer

Report on the 2015 PRES: School of Social and Political Science (SPS)

Sent to PG Dean 4/11/2015
Authored by SPS Graduate School Deputy Director James Mittra, additional points by Luke March, SPS Graduate School Director

Summary

The 2015 survey shows a slight improvement in response rate for SPS from 37.8% in 2014 to 40.4%, with an increase in overall satisfaction from 76% to 80%, which is marginally below the College as a whole (increase to 81% from 77%) and the University (increase to 83% from 81%). For SPS, areas that have improved are supervision (+10%), resources (+1%), Professional development (+1%), and library (+2%). Areas that have shown a drop in satisfaction are research culture (-2%), progress and assessment (-1%), and teaching experience (-3%). Responsibilities and research Skills remain unchanged. The new theme of 'academic community' received a satisfaction score of 66%.

The significant increase in satisfaction with supervision (from 77% to 87%) is very promising, and most of the slight drops in satisfaction were in areas still scoring within the 70%-89% range, apart from research culture (61%) and teaching experience (35%).

Detailed Results by category

- Supervision: The response to all 4 questions showed a significant increase in satisfaction. 'supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to support my research' (from 87% to 95%), 'contact with supervisor' (from 82% to 90%), 'feedback from supervisor' (from 76% to 90%), and 'supervisors ability to help with training and development needs' (from 62% to 72%). This is a very positive and promising result.

- Resources: the most significant improvement here was 'access to specialist resources to support research (from 56% to 63%). There was a slight drop in satisfaction with 'suitable working space' (67% to 66%), computing facilities and resources (57% to 56%), 'library facilities' (73% to 70%). T<u>he access to adequate working space and computing facilities is a known and continuing problem within the School that needs to be addressed if satisfaction in these areas is to improve</u>.

- Research Culture: The question 'my department provides a good seminar programme' remained at 71% satisfaction, and there was a slight increase in satisfaction with 'opportunities to discuss work with other students' (61% to 63%), although the latter is still quite low and reflects scores for the College as a whole. However, there

What the school is planning to do to maintain or enhance the PG experience in light of the results

In response to feedback on areas concerning tutoring and teaching support, we have issued a set of procedures for appointing, training and supporting PG tutors. These procedures been developed in consultation with administrative and academic staff as well as postgraduate research students (focus group) and Subject Tutor Representatives. In order to enhance our professional and pastoral support for tutoring, we have also developed a tutor portfolio that serves as a formal record of support activities.

was a significant drop in satisfaction with 'research ambience of my department' (58% to 52%) and 'opportunities to become Mits Ota, PPLS Director of Postgraduate Studies involved in the wider research community, beyond the department' (60% to

57%). These are quite low numbers, but this may be a particular issue in specific research areas rather than a School-wide problem.

- Progress and Assessment: satisfaction was down slightly for 'appropriate induction to research programme' (75% to 74%), 'understanding the required standard for the thesis' (76% to 74%), and 'final assessment procedures were clear (74% to 72%). There was a slightly larger drop in satisfaction for 'understanding requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of progress' (85% to 81%), but the overall satisfaction is still very high.

- Responsibilities: overall satisfaction increased for 'institution values and responds to feedback' (51% to 56%) and 'awareness of supervisors responsibilities' (81 % to 85%), but there was a drop in satisfaction for 'other than supervisor, I am unclear who to approach if I am concerned about my programme' (77% to 71%), and 'I understand my responsibilities as a research student' (86% to 85%). These drops are not too significant and still reflect a high degree of satisfaction.

- Research Skills: two areas showed slight improvement, 'skills in applying appropriate methods have developed during programme' (88% to 90%) and 'understanding of research integrity has improved' (80% to 81%). Satisfaction that 'skills in critical analysis have improved' remained at 86% but there was a drop in satisfaction for 'my confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme' (75% to 71%). Generally, there is very high satisfaction that we are delivering excellent research training, but there may be room for improvement in facilitating more creative and innovative activities and skills.

- Professional development: Overall satisfaction increased for 'ability to manage projects improved' (68% to 75%), 'ability to communicate effectively' (70% to 71%), and 'developing professional contacts (63% to 66%). However, there was a more significant drop in satisfaction for 'I have increasingly managed my own professional development during the programme' (79% to 72%). However, this question is a little unclear, as we don't know if students feel they have to take responsibility for career development because they feel there is no support, or if we equip them with the skills to manage their career effectively.

- Teaching experience: there was a drop in satisfaction with 'support and guidance for teaching' (38% to 35%), which is well below the University and College level.

- Library: there was an increase in satisfaction with the library for all questions – 'level of service' (86% to 88%), 'help provided by staff on using library search and research tools' (81% to 82%), 'adequate electronic collections' (65% to 68%) and 'adequate print collections' (52% to 58%).

- Academic community: this new question about 'feeling part of an academic community' registered a satisfaction rate of 66%, which is similar to the scores for research culture.

- Overall experience: there was a slight improvement in 'satisfaction with the experience of my research degree' (76% to 80%), but a marginal decline in 'confidence to complete research degree within the expected timescale' (81% to 79%).

Free Text Comments

The free text comments largely reflected the raw data.

- In terms of supervision there were many examples of excellent practice, with some students saying their supervisors were 'wonderful', 'supportive and challenging', 'highly skilled in their fields, offer constant and regular support', 'my

supervisors are outstanding' etc. However, there were also many examples of students experiencing less than ideal supervision, with statements such as 'very difficult to get in touch with supervisors', 'work not read', 'supervisors could be more helpful in guiding our early careers after PhD', 'my supervisor does not answer my emails, does not turn up to meetings, and when we do meet, has often not read the paper I sent in advance', 'lack of guidance on whether I am on track' etc. Some felt complaints about supervisors were listened to but not acted upon. Interestingly, a number of students who were dissatisfied with their supervision did not feel this was necessarily the fault of the supervisor, but that their supervisor had too heavy a workload to give them the attention they needed. One stated 'my time with my supervisors was very important and very supportive and what feedback there was very valuable, but they were overcommitted ... it was difficult to schedule meetings ... only one of my supervisors read a full draft of my thesis ... I offer this not as criticism of them but of their working conditions and ethos and system by which responsibilities are distributed.'

- Resources: <u>Most of the free text comments here related to the inadequate working space (crowded, nowhere to store securely confidential files, misuse of space by other students, students expected to manage the space themselves etc), and IT (computing 'cumbersome and out of date', 'SPS computing has wasted weeks if not months of work for me' etc).</u>

- Research culture: the free text comments were mixed for research culture. Some students felt their department had an excellent research culture, and seminar programme, that benefited their research and that they had opportunities to meet and discuss research with students and staff outside their subject areas. Positive statements included, 'My department (African studies) is absolutely fantastic, I'm really happy with the research culture', 'Great community spirit amongst all SSPS researchers and students', 'ample opportunities to discuss my own work, attend seminars and become involved in research outside my own PhD project', 'the research culture in X is excellent; there are lots of opportunities'. However, some expressed much less satisfaction. Statements such as ' In X department, I have not had a positive experience. The culture is more intimidating, less open and more hierarchical', 'there is very little opportunity to assist research staff', 'the department was a deeply unpleasant place to be a part of and I never felt welcome or comfortable', 'there is relatively little engagement from the side of the department/staff to include PhD students in exchange/collaboration etc and to create more of a sense of community'.

- General experience/other issues: there were some responses stating induction was too basic, and there was little encouragement to be part of a wider community. Others stated a need for more PhD specific training and courses. Others felt supervisors needed more training, although this does not correspond with the generally favourable satisfaction with supervision. A couple of respondents felt that deadlines and milestones weren't communicated to them effectively. There were also some very positive general comments, such as 'I absolutely love this University, the School, and my research experience'.

Overall Evaluation

Generally, the increase in student satisfaction to 80% is very pleasing, and there are many key areas we have improved significantly (Supervision being a clear example). Areas where we have done less well 'teaching experience' (better management of expectations

and training of tutors may be needed) is very low and 'research culture' and 'academic environment' is satisfactory but could and perhaps should be much better. However, it is clear that this is not a School-wide problem and that there are pockets of excellent practice in ensuring research students are engaged with a vibrant research culture. Other areas (communication of expectations, assessment, training etc) don't seem endemic issues, but may just require more joined up approaches to ensure information is relayed to students in clear and appropriate ways.

It is also notable that our School is very devolved in many ways towards subject areas and that many comments are subject-specific and difficult to generalise. For example, student satisfaction ranges from 100% (Social Anthropology) to 60% in Politics.

Areas for Action
- Need for a continued discussion about space and how we effectively communicate this to students.
- Supervision: While generally excellent, supervisor training should reiterate roles and responsibilities, and student expectations to ensure good practice continues. May be a need for some attention to supervisor workloads to ensure they are able to provide suitable levels of supervision to all of their students.
- Research culture and academic community: While the School should and does do a great deal to foster a sense of academic community, it is also a subject group responsibility and there may be a need to make sure there are opportunities for students in all subject groups to be part of a vibrant research community. This is something that is clearly very important and needs to be addressed. We will be making extra efforts to circulate PRES results to subject areas to inform their discussion.
- Professional development and skills: the School does provide very good training in transferable skills, and runs workshops to support research students throughout their PhD programmes and this is recognised. But there may be opportunities for improvement in how these are structured and communicated to all students so that they continue to meet their expectations and this may help foster a broader sense of academic community.
- The teaching experience scores are worrying. However free text comments do not give a clear indication of what is going wrong here. There is clearly the need to discuss this issue more widely and to do more work on teaching skills etc to help improve the 'teaching experience' satisfaction, as some students clearly felt they weren't being adequately equipped to teach.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES 2015) - School of Health in Social Sciences

The School of Health in Social Sciences covers a range of disciplines at doctoral level, Clinical Psychology, Nursing, Counselling and Psychotherapy as well as Interdisciplinary Health. MScR programmes are also available in these areas. Alongside these PGR programmes there is a substantial population of Professional Doctorate students (around 140) mainly in Clinical Psychology who undertake research at doctoral level but are classed as PGT students.

1.   Overall Results

Year	2013	2015
Overall experience	81%	74%
No. of Responses	36	39
Population	80	86
Response Rate %	45.0%	45.3%

These headline figures are demonstrate that three quarters of our PRG population who responded are satisfied with their overall experience, but disappointing in that they show a fall of 7% compared to 2013 and are 9% below the University score, 7% below the College score. This headline figure is based on the answer to a single question 'Overall, I am satisfied with my research degree programme'.

a.   Results by Primary theme, % Agree (NB one student response in HiSS is equivalent to around 2.5%)

Primary Theme	School of HiSS			CHSS 2015	UoE 2015
	2013	2015	+/-		
Supervision	76	81	5	86	86
Resources	51	70	19	72	81
Research Culture	46	50	4	66	70
Progress and Assessment	76	73	-3	77	77
Responsibilities	81	73	-8	75	77
Research Skills	89	86	-3	84	85
Professional Development	73	71	-2	76	77
Teaching Experience	44	60	16	49	54
Library	74	88	14	78	78
Academic Community	-	62	-	72	73
Overall Experience	81	71	-10	80	81

2.   Areas of significant improvement

In all areas 50% or more of our students are satisfied. In 3 of these areas a substantial increase (> 10%) is seen: Resources, Teaching Experience and Library; in 2 areas, Supervision and Research Culture, a marginal increase (< 10%).

3.   Significant areas showing lack of improvement

In 4 areas a marginal decline (< 10%) was seen: Progress and Assessment, Responsibilities, Research Skills and Professional Development. Overall Experience (which combines the 2 questions on overall satisfaction with the experience of the research degree programme and confidence with completing within the expected timescale) has dropped by 10% to 71%. Academic Community a new measure in the 2015 Survey is 62% compared to a College average of 72%.

4.   Free Text Comments

These comments provide an interesting and diverse set of views from a few individual students. There were clearly a few who were very dissatisfied with many aspects of their experience and wrote extensively, but these were balanced to an extent by positive comments from other students, whilst one third made no additional comments.

The issues that were apparent are:

1.   Supervision: whilst there were reports of excellent supervision and good practice, a minority expressed concerns around availability of supervisors, quick responses and feedback.
2.   Resources: The large PGR space came under considerable criticism.

3. Research culture: This attracted strong negative comments and presents a challenge to such a diverse school as HiSS. There is a clear desire for the PGR students to have greater contact with academics in their discipline areas and across the school.
4. Location: Students living away from Edinburgh faced additional difficulties in engaging in the PGR community.
5. The challenges faced by part time students juggling a range of conflicting demands.

5. Plans for enhancement of PGR Student experience
1. Expectations of supervision (from both sides) need to be clarified and managed to optimise PGR student support.
2. Develop the collegiate and research-oriented atmosphere within the school with clarity over areas of research interest.
3. Ensure a welcoming and supportive community for ALL students.
4. Improve the working environment and its use (within the severe constraints of the existing accommodation).
5. Encourage PGR students to engage more with the research community and each other professionally, socially and virtually.

Researcher Experience Committee

12th January 2016

Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey MVM Commentary

Response rate 34.2%

Executive Summary:

PGR students in MVM (population 935) consists of PhD students on a variety of 3 and 4 year programmes as well as clinicians doing MD degrees (2 years).

There was an increase or no change in satisfaction in the *majority* of responses.

Satisfaction with the following was >90%
- ✓ Supervisor skills
- ✓ Regular contact with supervisor
- ✓ Supervisor feedback
- ✓ Development of skills during programme
- ✓ Development of critical analysis during programme
- ✓ Understanding of research integrity
- ✓ Ability to manage projects

Lowest satisfaction – scores less than 65%

- ❖ My Institution values and responds to feedback from research students = 60%
  Down from 65% in 2013. Contrasts with the positive response to feedback from supervisors.

- ❖ Teaching experience – support and guidance = 59%.
  Up from 55% in 2013.
  MVM has a variety of options for teaching but not enough to go around – need to work out what training has been given.

Overall satisfaction remains high with some improvements in following:
'Opportunities to become involved in wider research community' +6% to 70%
'the final assessment proceedures are clear to me' +4% to' 75%
'the library print collections are sufficient for my needs' +6% to 73%.

There is no room for complacency and an increase in training and support at all levels is planned.

Professor Philippa Saunders
Director Postgraduate Research Training MVM.

REC 15/16 2G

The University of Edinburgh
Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

9 December 2015

Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Leave of Absence

Executive Summary

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) reporting requires that the University records when a student is continuing with their studies and is not located in Edinburgh. The paper contains a proposed change to the Postgraduate Degree Regulations on Leave of Absence to take account of concerns raised by Colleges regarding the current regulation and to take account of statutory requirements (for example HESA and UKVI).

Colleges provided examples of Leave of Absence requests following the last committee meeting. Examples, summarised in Appendix I, show that Leave of Absence is granted for students who are actively engaged with their study in the majority of cases.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Goal of Excellence in Education. Recording of leave of absence is a requirement for statutory reporting.

Action requested

REC is invited to endorse the proposed regulation change for submission to the annual regulations review. Curriculum and Student Progression Committee approves the regulations.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

This will be agreed by Curriculum and Student Progression Committee.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**

   Implementation of the regulation is likely to require Schools and Colleges to approve and record on EUCLID more instances of leave of absence than is currently the case. This will have resource implications for staff in Schools and Colleges, and in Student Systems.

2. **Risk assessment**

   There is a risk to the University if the student record does not accurately reflect the status and location of students (see page 3)

3. **Equality and Diversity**

   Equality impact assessment will be carried out on the regulations as part of the annual review.

4. **Freedom of information**

   The paper is **open.**

Key words

Leave, study location

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services
4 December 2015

Postgraduate Degree Regulations: Leave of Absence

Proposed change to the Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2016/17

"Leave of Absence

Students not on a recognised online distance learning programme will study in Edinburgh. Leave of absence is required for compulsory and elected activities related to the programme of study that are not undertaken on campus in Edinburgh. Students must seek formal approval from the College for any leave of absence to study away from Edinburgh that is 60 calendar days' duration or longer. Permission may be sought at admission or during the period of study. All approved leaves of absence must be recorded in the student record. Study location changes of less than 60 days must be agreed with the Supervisor or Personal Tutor, but do not need formal approval from the College and need not be recorded in the student record."

To simplify processes the Committee may wish to consider whether approval for leave of absence of 60 days or more should be delegated to Schools.

It should be noted that this proposal is likely to mean recording for taught students who work on their dissertations away from Edinburgh, as well as for students on collaborative programmes when studying at the partner institution.

Rationale for proposed change

The current regulation is causing confusion and inconsistent recording practices for leave of absence, since it is not clear whether leave of absence relates to location of study or the nature of the study. To be compliant with requirements for UKVI and HESA reporting, the University needs to know where students are studying. The proposed regulation is intended to strengthen processes by making it clear that leave of absence relates to study location. The 60 day period is the maximum period after which any interruption or non-engagement would become reportable for students on a Tier 4 visa.

Regulatory requirements

HESA and UKVI reporting requires the University to record when a student is continuing with their studies and is not located in Edinburgh. Online distance learning students are recorded separately, but all other students, including those on collaborative programmes,

must have their location of study recorded in the student record. Location of study must be recorded whether it is a compulsory element of their programme of study or activity that the student undertakes while engaged with their studies.

Benchmarking

Desk-based research on 24 Russell Group institutions showed that, in general, leave of absence is granted when the student is away from the home institution for activity directly relevant to the programme of study. Therefore, the proposed change to the regulation would be consistent with sector practice. See Paper B submitted to the 29 September 2015 REC meeting.

Practical implications

Processes are in place for Schools to report any changes of study location to Student Systems, through the Programme Change Request Form. Recording all study location changes of 60 days or more through this process reduces the potential compliance risks to the University.

Risk analysis

Inaccuracies in the student record represent a risk to the University's HESA returns and potentially, through audit by UKVI, to the University's trusted status as a sponsor of Tier 4 students.

In addition to recording location of study, the International Office has also suggested that, at some stage, the University may need to consider introducing regulations regarding student residency. For example, a requirement of on campus student to be resident in Edinburgh or its locality.

Susan Hunter
Academic Services
4 December 2015

Leave of Absence: summary of examples received from Colleges

Summary

Examples show that Leave of Absence (LoA) is granted for students who are actively engaged with their study in the majority of cases. HESA and UKBA reporting requires that the University records if a student is continuing with their studies and is not located in Edinburgh.

At its September 2015 meeting, the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee (REC) requested further information from Colleges on the types of LoA requests they were receiving from and granting to postgraduate research students.

Evidence gathered from the three Colleges shows:

- Students on LoA were actively engaged with their programme of study or writing up their thesis. There were a mixture of personal, family and academic reasons for requests. Among academic reasons were that part of the programme of study required activity away from Edinburgh, or that the supervisor was located away from Edinburgh.
- The maximum single period of leave granted was 15 months, although some examples contained requests for extensions to leave already granted.
- There was one instance of LoA granted for volunteering which was not directly part of the programme, where the student was participating in a recognised University of Edinburgh funded activity. However, the student then continued the majority of their leave period carrying out research related to their programme of study.

College comments

The current regulation wording is confusing as in most cases students are continuing to participate in their studies. Students may also need to be away for reasons that do not enhance their programme of study, for example family or personal circumstances, but are continuing their studies.

Colleges suggested that LoA is for students continuing with their studies and interruption is for students who are not. Leave of absence is not appropriate for annual leave requests as students are not continuing their studies.

If students are away from Edinburgh for activity that is not a necessary part of the programme, they may still be considered to be engaging with their study, depending on the type of activity. Colleges would welcome guidance on the types of activity that are covered by LoA and interruptions.

College examples

MVM   Relocation to Canada for personal, family reasons during 3rd year of PhD and working on thesis. 6 months duration

Principal's Go Abroad programme – volunteering in Chile for two weeks. Thereafter remain in Chile for PhD related fieldwork, which is part of the programme of study. Four months duration.

Data collection for PhD research in Kenya as part of the programme of study. Six months duration – extension.

With PhD second supervisor to develop primary research in Ethiopia as part of the programme of study. Eight months duration.

Leave in New Zealand for personal/family reasons while working on thesis. Two and a half months – extension.

Writing up in Kenya for personal (health) reasons. Three months duration.

SCE   Placement related to programme of study.

Spending significant period of study at CERN as supervisor is based there.

HSS   Mostly for fieldwork or if students need to return home for personal or family reasons but are still engaged with their studies.

Very occasionally for an internship.

REC 15/16 2H

Themes for Postgraduate Regulations Review 2016

Executive Summary

The paper comprises themes arising from comment collection on the Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. Colleges and Schools are asked to provide comments on the current regulations in advance of the review meeting to be held on 26 January 2016.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with the University Strategic Goals of Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research.

Action requested

REC is invited to consider the themes along with the Leave of Absence, Double Award PhDs and CHSS papers. Comments will feed into the regulations review.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Academic Services will feed comments from the committee into the regulations review and members are invited to attend the review meeting.

Curriculum and Student Progression Committee approves the regulations and key changes are communicated by Academic Services in the annual communication on policy and regulations amendments.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   None – regulations review is part of Academic Services core business.

2. **Risk assessment**
   Not included, although there is a reputational risk to the University and a risk to the student experience if University regulations are not robust and fit for purpose.

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   Academic Services will carry out an Equality Impact Assessment as part of the regulations review.

4. **Freedom of information**
   The paper is **open**.

Key words

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Policy Officer
Academic Services
5 January 2016

REC 15/16 2H
Items remitted from 2015/16 regulations review

Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2016/17

Items remitted to REC for consideration following the annual review in 2015:

- Leave of Absence – see paper REC 15/16 2G
- Extensions of Study
- Maximum Degree Completion Periods – see papers REC 15/16 2B and C
- Request for Reinstatement
- PhD by Research Publications

Current published Postgraduate Degree Regulations

Themes arising from comments for regulations review[1]:

Maximum Degree Completion Periods:
Implications for students with a viva after the maximum end date (access to Library etc). Students who have completed the period of study they were admitted to but have not yet received an award confirmation. Additional work on thesis – implications for T4, students beyond maximum end date. Confusion around relationship between additional period of study set by examiners and extensions allowed in Degree Regulations.

Supervision:
MSc by Research supervision expectations. What happens if the University is unable to provide supervision?

Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2016/17

Items for consideration by REC:

- Public defence of theses – **for discussion What is an Edinburgh PhD**
- Merit for MSc by Research [noted for discussion at REC 14 April 2015, also suggested in comments for regulations review]

Themes arising from comments for regulations review[1]:
- Non-Examining Chair as standard
- Lay Summary: asking examiners to comment on lay summary
- Oral Examination: Recording **(see CHSS paper)** and option to waive oral examination
- Final Thesis Submission: Deadline for submission of final version of thesis

Current published Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees

Higher Degree Regulations
Current published Higher Degree Regulations

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[1] Themes are drawn from comments received to 23 December 2015

REC 15/16 2I

<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

12 January 2016

Double-Award PhDs

Executive Summary

The University has a growing number of collaborative PhD programmes that lead to the award of a joint degree. Due to legal restrictions in their own country, some partner universities are unable to offer joint-award PhDs. This paper invites the Committee to consider whether it would be appropriate for the University to have the ability to make double awards when a joint award is not possible.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with the University Strategic Goals of Excellence in Education and Excellence in Research, and the Strategic Theme of Outstanding Student Experience.

Action requested

This paper asks the Committee to consider the strategic implications of a possible change to the Regulations to allow double-award PhD programmes with collaborative partners.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

If approved, a paper would be submitted to CSPC.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   None.

2. **Risk assessment**
   None.

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   None.

4. **Freedom of information**
   The paper is open

Key words

Originator of the paper
Jeremy Bradshaw, Assistant Principal Researcher Development

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

Double-Award PhDs

Introduction

The current Strategic Plan includes the target '11.1 Increase number of PhD students on programmes jointly awarded with international partners by at least 50%.' The University of on course to achieve this target.

There is template documentation for a high-level agreement setting out the intention to deliver joint PhDs and a more detailed agreement for each student on a joint-award PhD.

We are currently unable to offer joint PhDs with some of our international partners because their country's legislation does not allow joint-award degrees. These partners include Chinese universities, Polish universities in the Polish School of Medicine partnership, and some of our Universitas 21 and Coimbra Group partners. In order to enter into collaborative PhD provision with these partners, it would be necessary to make a double-award to successful candidates.

CSPC recently (2014) agreed to amend the regulations to allow double-awards for taught programmes but, at the time, specifically excluded research degrees from this arrangement. This paper invites REC to consider whether there are any strategic reasons why the University should not make double-awards for research degrees, before CSPC is asked to consider amending the regulations to allow them to be made.

The QAA consultation paper "Qualifications Awarded by Two or More Degree-Awarding Bodies Characteristics" (December 2014), defines joint and dual qualifications as follows:

Joint qualification: This is defined as an arrangement under which two or more degree-awarding bodies jointly develop and deliver a single programme (whether taught or research) leading to a single qualification awarded jointly by both, or all, participants. The degree-awarding bodies pool their awarding powers to award one qualification together. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests to the successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications. The defining characteristic here is that this is a joint enterprise from conception to implementation and award.

Double/multiple qualification: This is defined as an arrangement where two or more degree-awarding bodies jointly develop and deliver a single programme (whether taught or research) leading to separate qualifications (and separate certification) being granted by both, or all, of them. In some cases, the partners agree to award the same qualification but to issue separate certificates. Each certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement or Diploma Supplement indicates that a jointly delivered single programme is leading to two or more qualifications of the participant partners. Double and multiple qualifications have generally been developed as a result of legal impediments, in some jurisdictions, to a single joint qualification, or as a result of difficulties with the recognition of the certificate and transcript of a single joint qualification.

The intention would be that the only difference between our current join-award PhD programmes and any new double-award PhD programmes would be the nature of the certification. It is also intended that dual-awards should only be made when legal considerations explicitly prevent a joint-award.

Action Requested

Does the Committee agree that a paper should go to CSPC requesting an amendment to the Regulations to allow jointly-delivered double-award PhDs, under certain defined circumstances?

REC 15/16 2J

The University of Edinburgh

Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

12 January 2016

CHSS Paper about non-examining chairs and recording of vivas

Executive Summary
The CHSS Postgraduate Studies Committee (CPGSC) discussed this paper on Wednesday 9 December 2015. The committee does not endorse the proposal but asked that it be forwarded to REC to see whether the other two colleges have a view. The paper proposes that regulations and recommendations be amended to permit senior support staff to serve as non-examining chairs. It also recommends statements encouraging audio recording of vivas.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
The proposal is intended to enhance the student experience, but mainly to introduce efficiencies into the examination process.

Action requested
For canvassing of views in REC. The only action requested is that some opinions be sought to communicate back to HSS CPGSC.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
HSS PG Dean will report back to CPGSC

Resource / Risk / Compliance
1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   None, as we are not recommending any change.
2. **Risk assessment**
   It's for discussion so no real risk.
3. **Equality and Diversity**
   Were such proposals to be implemented then there might be E&D issues.
4. **Freedom of information**
   Open

Key words
Non-examining chairs, audio recording

Originator of the paper
Professor Andrew Snell, School of Economics
via
Professor Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Humanities and Social Science

Non Examining Chair (NEC): A proposed change to the University Regulation

The current regulation on NEC's reads:

The College must appoint a Non-Examining Chair if the Internal Examiner is acting for the first time, or is a member of honorary staff.

Application of the regulation

3.1 The appropriate process for appointing a Non-Examining Chair is the same as for appointing Internal Examiners (see regulation 2).

3.2 The role of the Non-Examining Chair is to ensure that due process is carried out and to attend for the duration of the oral examination. The non-examining chair needs to be a person with appropriate experience of postgraduate research examining from within the University. The Non-Examining Chair need not be from the same School as the student. The Non-Examining Chair must ensure that all parties to the examination process fully understand the expectations of them and should offer assistance and facilitation where necessary. The Non-Examining Chair must not express an opinion on the merits of the thesis.

I propose to add the line

Add the line

The Non Examining Chair need not be an academic member of faculty but must have good experience and knowledge of the regulations governing the examination process.

Commentary

Some Schools find themselves in a position – via internal or external pressure - of requiring a non examining chair for every PhD viva. Other Schools would like to have a non examining chair to ensure due process is followed but cannot afford the time commitments as they have large numbers of PhD students. Divinity is one such School that springs to mind. Professor Jeffrey has recently been talking of the need to streamline and make more efficient various administrative processes in the University and my proposal follows this lead. I have already spoken to one School that would like to have the flexibility of being able to appoint senior postgraduate administrative staff to be NEC's – at least occasionally.

The regulation makes clear the role of the NEC; it is to ensure due process is followed. The fact that external NEC's are permitted underlines the fact that no specific academic knowledge in the area of the student's research is required to undertake the task. The NEC may not bring academic judgement to bear on the proceedings; hence the phrase "non-examining" in "non-examining chair". In the light of this it is surprising that the regulation

has been taken to imply only senior academic faculty are eligible. I would propose that senior postgraduate administrators also be allowed to be appointed NEC (if this is desired). The argument that such people have less knowledge of PhD exam regulations is spurious. In fact because they deal with such regulations all the time they are likely to be in a good position to chair PhD exams. If the issue remains one of lack of experience of the exam process itself the new regulation could follow existing practice for internals and require inexperienced NEC's to be "blooded" i.e. to act as NEC in one viva subject to oversight by an experienced mentor. The proposal does not compel any School to do anything. If a School is against the idea (with opposition coming from either the admin or the faculty side) then that School may continue as before. By contrast, if a School - after discussions with admin staff and faculty – would like the added flexibility of administrators being NEC's then this would become possible.

PhD vivas: A proposal to aid the viva process

Following on from the above proposal it would seem sensible to allow or encourage Schools to tape record PhD/MPhil vivas. This is a procedure that is compulsory at all University of York research degree exams and one that seems to have many advantages and no downsides.

Any recording would be subject to prior consent by the Examiners and the Student and would only ever be used ex post in the event of a dispute concerning either the process followed or disagreement about what was actually said. The discussions between the examiners after the student has left the exam room would not be taped. The recording would be destroyed as soon as the student receives and accepts the verdict of the examiners – typically the revisions being demanded.

It would seem there is little to no cost of this process - only benefit. Any party can block the recording – the procedure is voluntary. It is surely in all the party's interests to have a record of what was said during the exam. Aside from helping settle or deter appeals, the recording could be used simply as an aide-memoire for the externals when writing their reports.

It is within the orbit of any School to adopt recording of vivas without adding further regulation. But it would be good to obtain College's blessing and formal encouragement. I would also request the external examiner's form have a tick box saying "vivas are sometimes recorded for audit purposes. Do you wish not to have the examination recorded?"

REC 15/16 2K

Knowledge Strategy Committee Report

Executive Summary

The paper comprises the most recent Knowledge Strategy Committee report submitted to Senate.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University Strategic Goal of Excellence in Education.

Action requested

For information and to note formally

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

None the paper is for information only.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   None the paper is for information only.

2. **Risk assessment**
   None the paper is for information only.

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   There are no specific equality and diversity issues associated with this report.

4. **Freedom of information**
   The paper is **open**.

Key words

Originator of the paper
Dr Lewis Allan
Head of Court Services
October 2015

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

SENATE

Knowledge Strategy Committee Report

Committee Name
1. Knowledge Strategy Committee.

Date of Meeting
2. The Committee met on 29 September 2015.

Action Required
3. Senate is invited to note the key points discussed at the meeting.

Key points
4. *Student Data Project*
A project investigating the use of student data to support the enhancement of learning and teaching, the student experience and operational effectiveness was presented. The likely prioritisation of six broad areas identified were discussed – with understanding of applications and admissions, understanding the student cohort and analytics/predictive work linked to learning & teaching (benchmarking, survey data) highlighted. Connecting the project to existing work on learning analytics, consistent dashboards that can work with different data sources and using student data to identify areas for improvement were all suggested.

5. *Information Security Audit*
Summary results of an external information security assessment were considered. Top level challenges identified as priorities were discussed and the intention to establish an information security team to respond to the assessment, strongly supported.

6. *Data Architecture Review*
An external scoping study of the University's Enterprise Architecture capability was reviewed. Links with the student data project, e.g. avoiding creating dashboards that sit above an old data architecture of disparate systems, were discussed and the intention to establish a data architecture practice and a data dictionary noted.

7. *Other Issues*
The Committee discussed the development of the 2016-21 Strategic Plan, received reports on the activities of its three Thematic Committees (IT Committee, Library Committee and University Collections Advisory Committee) and granted delegated authority to the Chief Information Officer to progress with planned IT and Library expenditure in excess of £200,000.

REC 15/16 2L

<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

12 January 2016

University Quality Framework Review

Executive Summary

The paper presents the plans and consultation questions for the review of the University's Quality Framework as approved by Senate Quality Assurance Committee at its meeting of 3 September 2015. Senate Quality Assurance Committee will consult further on the framework during Semester 2 2015/16. The review will include quality assurance and enhancement processes relating to postgraduate research provision.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
The paper is relevant to the University's Strategic Goal of Excellence in Education.

Action requested
Senate Researcher Experience Committee is asked to consider the aspects of the quality framework which relate to the postgraduate research student experience and comment by 29 January 2016 (see page 2).

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
Following approval by Senate Quality Assurance Committee in May 2016 the revised framework will be communicated by Academic Services to stakeholders who will be responsible for implementing the revised elements of the framework.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   The review aims to streamline processes to the benefit of staff time.

2. **Risk assessment**
   Failure to align the University quality framework with the outcomes of the national quality framework consultations would constitute a risk.

3. **Equality and Diversity**

   Quality assurance processes are subject to Equality Impact Assessment.

4. **Freedom of information**

   Open.

Key words
Quality Framework, quality assurance, enhancement

Originator of the paper

Linda Bruce, Academic Services, December 2015.

University Quality Framework Review

Introduction

It is timely to review the University's academic quality framework. The current framework has been in place since the 1990s and has been modified incrementally to take account of the external context both in Scotland and in the wider UK, most significantly the requirements of the Quality Assurance Agency nationally and in Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

The funding bodies are currently reviewing the national frameworks for quality: the SFC through its review of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland, and the other UK funding bodies through their review of quality arrangements in the rest of the UK. Although the impact of the latter will be greatest in the other UK nations, the outcome in relation to the external examiner system and the future of the UK Quality Code will be directly relevant to the University's quality framework. In addition, an internal audit of the University's quality framework is planned for the current academic year. Beyond this, there is a general wish at all levels of the institution to streamline processes and reduce the burden on colleagues, while deriving maximum benefit from quality activity, and to develop further the enhancement focus of the University's framework.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee carried out an initial consultation covering all levels of provision (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) via colleges during Semester 1 2015/16. Further consultation with schools, colleges and EUSA will take place in Semester 2, and the outcomes of national consultations will be taken into account as they become available. The current internal consultation focuses on the University's academic quality framework; the student support service quality assurance framework was reviewed in 2014/15.

Senate Researcher Experience Committee is asked to respond to the consultation questions below in relation to quality processes for the postgraduate research student experience.

In particular, the Committee is asked to comment on the Postgraduate Programme Review method http://edin.ac/1MeGCnd, reporting on postgraduate research provision within the School Annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement Report http://edin.ac/1ILh6RT and the policy on Quality Assurance, Monitoring and Reporting of Postgraduate Research http://edin.ac/1MeGqEx, focusing on the extent to which these processes meet the needs of postgraduate research provision.

Responses should be made to Linda Bruce, Academic Services, at linda.bruce@ed.ac.uk by 29 January 2016.

Consultation questions

1. Identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps and areas for further development in processes at school, college and institutional level. In particular, identify where there is potential duplication, where there is the potential for streamlining processes, and where there is the opportunity to drive impact.
2. Identify where schools and colleges would benefit from further support at institutional level.

3. For schools: how do schools perceive their current role in the quality framework and those of the college and institution, and what should they be?
4. For colleges: how do colleges perceive their current role in the quality framework, and those of schools and the institution, and what should they be?

REC 15/16 2M

<u>The University of Edinburgh</u>
Senate Researcher Experience Committee
12 January 2016

Enhancement Themes – Update

Executive Summary
This paper provides the Committee with an update on Enhancement Theme (Student Transitions) activity, specifically identifying the Institutional Team's priorities.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?
The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Theme of 'Outstanding Student Experience'.

Action requested
Members are asked to **note** the paper.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?
Information is posted on a wiki and website. Monthly Enhancement Themes email updates are sent out to Institutional Team members and a distribution list of contacts (to be added to this, please email Nichola.Kett@ed.ac.uk). Institutional Team members are responsible for communicating about Enhancement Theme developments within the constituency they are representing and acting as key Enhancement Theme contact. There is a confirmed reporting structure. Communication and implementation will also operate at individual activity level.

Resource / Risk / Compliance
1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**
   The paper does not have resource implications.

2. **Risk assessment**
   The paper does not require a risk assessment.

3. **Equality and Diversity**
   This will be considered through individual areas of activity. Where relevant, individual activities would be required to undertake Equality Impact Assessments.

4. **Freedom of information**
   The paper is **open**.

Key words
Student transitions, enhancement theme

Originator of the paper
Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
23 December 2015

Gearing up for Transitions 2016 – Save the Date and Call for Contributions
The Induction Team and Academic Services are pleased to announce that the 4th annual Gearing Up event will take place on **Wednesday 2nd March 2016** in the John McIntyre Conference Centre, Pollock Halls**.** Please put this date in your diary and consider submitting and/or encourage colleagues to submit a proposal (deadline for proposals is 15th January). We are really keen to see a good representation from across the University and there are many different formats that contributions can take**.** See the [wiki](#) for further information.

Institutional Team Meeting – 8 October 2015

- For the forthcoming session the Team will focus on receiving updates on areas of work relating to the theme of **resilience** and exploring how they can support them as they develop. It is likely that the Team will seek to provide information on initiatives in "signpost" form and raise awareness through, for example, the annual Gearing up for Transitions event in March 2016.
- The Team agreed that by the end of the Enhancement Theme (summer 2017) they would produce a resource which helps Schools to understand students' transitions and the major characteristics of positive transitions.
- This year's funding will be used for: the International Graduate Departure Conference; the annual event (Gearing up for Transitions); creating an interactive student transitions map; and supporting individual projects.
- The agenda, papers and minutes of the meeting can be found on the [wiki](#).

Institutional Team Meeting – 4 December 2015

- The Team heard updates on the project funding granted, the Gearing Up event, and from the Theme Leaders' Group and sector-wide institutional team meetings.
- The Team continued to discuss important student transitions and defined what is meant by resilience. Updates were given by those members of the Team who are undertaking work which fits with the theme of resilience.
- The agenda, papers and minutes of the meeting can be found on the [wiki](#).

Small Projects Funding Awarded
Funding from the Enhancement Themes budget has been awarded to six projects on the theme of student transitions from across the University and EUSA. The Panel that reviewed the bids were extremely pleased with the quality and diversity of the bids. See the [wiki](#) for details of the projects.

Theme Leaders' Group Meeting – 1 December 2015
The Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) constitutes institutional staff and student members from across the sector, representatives from key stakeholder organisations, and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland members. The main discussion was around the Transitions Skills and Strategies work that QAA Scotland have been taking forward and it was confirmed that three more skills will be investigated during 2015/16, one of which is likely to be resilience. Members were advised that the Student Network will continue to focus on non-traditional students, with the exact nature of their projects still to be confirmed.

Sector-wide Institutional Team Meeting – 1 December 2015
The University was well represented at this event, with a record nine members of the Institutional Team in attendance. The focus of the event was collaboration.

2M

Annual Meeting with QAA Scotland Enhancement Team – 4 December 2015
The first part of this meeting was a discussion on the work that the University is undertaking as part of the Theme. The second part of the meeting focussed on School student transitions-related activities and three interesting presentations were delivered from Divinity, Mathematics and Biomedical Sciences. The PowerPoint presentations are available on the wiki.

Contacts

Professor Tina Harrison	Assistant Principal Academic Standards & Quality Assurance	Institutional Lead and member of Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC)
Nichola Kett	Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services	Institutional Coordinator and member of the Student Transitions Theme Leaders' Group (TLG)