

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Tuesday 12 January 2016 at 2pm
in the Board Room, Evolution House, Edinburgh College of Art**

- Present: Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal
Researcher Development
Professor Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Studies (Research),
College of Humanities & Social Science (CHSS)
Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean Postgraduate Research, College of
Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
Engineering (CSCE)
Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Advice Co-ordinator, EUSA
Dr Fiona Philippi, Deputy Head of Researcher Development, Institute
for Academic Development (IAD)
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
representative)
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CHSS)
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Shasta Marrero, School of GeoSciences (Research Staff Society
Rep)
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student
Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,
Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Attending: Professor Konstantin Kamenev, School of Engineering
Ms Gillian Mackintosh, Academic Services
Mr Tony Weir, Director IT Infrastructure, Information Services (item 4)
Ms Gillian Nicoll, Estates and Buildings (item 5)
Mr Tommy Angus, Estates and Buildings (item 5)
- Apologies: Mr William Clayton, Postgraduate Convener, EUSA
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

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

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Online annual progression monitoring

The meeting noted that there has been excellent engagement with this project across the Colleges. Student Systems have attended College committees and some areas are already using the system. The

meeting also noted the continuing good work by Ruth McCallum to address issues raised.

REC had proposed the system should be mandatory from January 2016. However, following discussion it was **agreed** that phased introduction would continue during 2015/16. REC also **agreed** that mandatory reporting for all postgraduate research students who have annual progression reviews will be effective from September 2016/17.

2.2 eBusiness: Statutory Reporting of Collaborative Supervision Arrangements

The meeting noted the paper, which was circulated by email in November 2015. The paper provided information on changes to statutory reporting in relation to Collaborative Provider data and co-supervised students.

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 ELIR – Enhancement Led Institutional Review

The outcomes of the review are likely to feature postgraduate research student experience, and tutoring and demonstrating.

3.2 League of European Research Universities (LERU) Doctoral Summer School 2016

Committee members were reminded that the deadline for submitting candidates for consideration by the internal selection process is 11 March 2016.

3.3 Coimbra Group

Following restructuring and relaunch, the group has set up a doctoral studies working group. The Convener has been invited to chair this working group and an action list is being prepared. The final draft of the action list will be circulated to REC members when available.

www.coimbra-group.eu/

Action: Convener

3.4 ExEDE – Excellence in European Doctoral Education

Collaborative provision with Aarhus University currently has six students across the three UoE Colleges. A paper will be submitted to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC), proposing a specific group to meet to ensure assessment arrangements and clear responsibility for management of the collaboration with Aarhus is in place.

Action: Convener

FOR DISCUSSION

4. Digital Research Services: 10 Year Planning

The Director IT Infrastructure presented on Information Services' plans for IT support for research. The Committee welcomed this initiative and noted that a secure and robust service is essential. The Committee also suggested that increased student satisfaction with the service is related to ease of access to a friendly help point.

The Director IT Infrastructure explained the Federation of Excellence, which entails IS working with Schools to embed support rather than providing a centralised service. Developments will fit with PURE but also enhance visibility of researcher profiling externally. The broader development plans will increase capacity and capability in existing areas as well as expanding into new areas.

The Committee was invited to provide any additional comments by email to: Tony.Weir@ed.ac.uk.

5. Space Enhancement Management Group: postgraduate research space pilot

Estates and Buildings representatives from the Space Enhancement Management Group (SEMG) updated the meeting on current developments in relation to the Teaching Improvement Programme. Focus will be on the Holyrood Old Kirk development with plans for a postgraduate study space centre to be included.

The meeting discussed how to facilitate postgraduate research consideration into ongoing discussions on space utilisation and development. Estates and Buildings have feedback from recent projects in the Schools of Mathematics and Divinity, and a range of views from discussions across the University. Student feedback was gained from lunchtime sessions attended by the Director of Timetabling and there is a EUSA representative on SEMG.

The potential for a student survey was discussed and REC agreed to share College responses to PRES in relation to space with SEMG.

Action: Secretary

The discussion also noted the need to define what adequate space means. The changing nature of research was noted and the implications for postgraduate research students.

Comments from this meeting will be reported to the next SEMG meeting and communication between SEMG and REC will aim to give explicit consideration of postgraduate research needs in the longer term.

6. What an Edinburgh PhD should be:

6.1 Postgraduate Research Fees

The Convener reported on recent discussions. A briefing paper is being prepared which will include an evolving model for specific PhDs where the University pays tuition fees. Published fees will not be changed. Colleges will be asked to identify Schools to participate in a pilot relating to this model during 2017/18.

6.2 Edinburgh Doctorates

The meeting noted the paper and discussed credit in relation to PhD programmes. During discussion themes emerged relating to funding council expectations of extra training for PhDs, time available and whether this includes induction and submission periods, support for additional activity, and whether training is credit bearing. The meeting also identified exit award and assessment of credit as items for further discussion and noted the need for transparency.

6.3 What is an Edinburgh PhD

Continuing the discussion above, the meeting noted the paper. The Committee **agreed** to convene a special working group meeting, comprising members of REC, in spring 2016. The group will consider a summary of different existing models of the PhD and where the University might wish to develop in future.

The output from the special working group meeting will provide an outward facing statement on the Edinburgh PhD and confirm regulation parameters for PhD programmes. To inform the group's discussions, information will be sought from Colleges on existing PhD models in relation to; time away, exit awards, credit-bearing elements, compulsory elements both for the degree and for funding requirements, and length of programme.

Action: Secretary to confirm date and venue and canvass Colleges for information prior to the meeting.

7. Careers in research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS)

The meeting noted the paper, which provided a comparison of results with Scottish and Russell Group institutions. Although response rates were lower than in previous years, significant improvement to the response relating to appraisal was seen across all Colleges. Further analysis of results is available on request from the Institute for Academic Development (IAD).

The meeting discussed meaningful use of the results and opportunities to try to increase the response rate. Significant effort had been made by IAD, Schools and Colleges to maximise response rates, however the surveys may be a low priority for researchers. Further investigation on sector response rates and opportunities for staff engagement will be made and reported to the next REC meeting.

**Action: Deputy Head of Researcher Development, IAD to contact Vitae
Action: Convener to discuss with HR**

8. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES): College responses

REC receives College responses to PRES for institutional oversight and to gain an overview of emerging themes.

8.1 Humanities and Social Sciences

The meeting noted the report and the work being done within the College to complement the PRES results. The main theme emerging from the College response discussed at the meeting related to support and training for tutoring and demonstrating.

8.2 Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

The meeting received a tabled paper and noted the report and work being done within the College to complement the PRES results. The College Dean Postgraduate Research noted that the effort put into training supervisors has been positively reflected in the College results. The main themes emerging from the College response discussed at the meeting related to support and training for tutoring and demonstrating, and student perception on the institutional value of their feedback.

8.3 Science and Engineering

The meeting received a verbal report from the Dean of Students. A paper will be circulated once this has been discussed at the College committee.

REC identified two institutional themes emerging from the College reports: support for tutoring and demonstrating, and student engagement and feedback.

Action: REC agenda

9. Postgraduate Degree Regulations:

9.1 Leave of Absence

The meeting noted the paper, which proposed a change to the regulation. This addressed statutory institutional reporting requirements and the University's requirement to know where students are. The meeting also noted equity of student experience and the need for regular contact when students are not in Edinburgh. It was noted that there is no regulatory requirement for residency in Edinburgh, but the regulation clarifies that study should be in Edinburgh.

REC **agreed** the new regulation, subject to a minor change to the wording, which will be submitted to the next CPSC meeting and the regulations review. It was noted that CSPC has final approval of the regulations in April.

Action: Secretary communicate to regulations review

9.2 Regulations review themes

The meeting noted the paper and was asked to give a steer to the regulations review panel on themes raised during consultation.

REC supports; Merit for MSc by Research, examiners being asked to comment on the lay summary, a deadline for final submission of the thesis.

REC did not support non-examining chairs as standard practice, or mandatory recording of viva examinations.

Action: Secretary communicate to regulations review meeting

The meeting discussed PhD by Research Publications and following the regulations review meeting, REC will discuss this item further.

Action: REC agenda

9.3 Double-Award PhDs

The meeting noted the paper, which proposes a change of policy. The decision must be taken by CSPC but REC was asked to give a steer on the proposal.

REC considered that tight criteria, particularly a single assessment process, good intelligence from the International Office and due diligence would be essential for any double award proposal. REC supported a proposal paper being prepared for submission to CSPC.

Action: Convener

9.4/

9.4 CHSS: non-examining chairs and recording of vivas

The meeting noted the paper and the proposals had been discussed under 9.2 on the agenda. REC did not support the proposals.

10. Postgraduate Research Experience Project: PREP

The project bid has been submitted to the Planning Round and lobbying for support continues.

11. Task Group: Flexible PhD

The task group will meet on 22 January 2016 and an update will be available for the next REC meeting.

FOR INFORMATION

12. Knowledge Strategy Committee report

The meeting noted the paper.

13. University Quality Framework Review

The meeting noted the paper. REC is invited to provide a postgraduate research perspective and comments are requested by 29 January 2016 to Linda.Bruce@ed.ac.uk.

14. Enhancement Theme update

The meeting noted the paper. REC members are invited to submit contributions to the Gearing Up event.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 Conference and event attendance/forthcoming events

15.1.1 UKCGE: Supporting Good Supervisory Practice

The Secretary attended this event in November 2015 and will circulate notes to the committee.

Action: Secretary

15.1.2 ARC Postgraduate practitioners Group

The Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services attended this event in November 2015. One of the themes related to student mental health. The meeting briefly discussed this and identified it as a potential topic for the REC summer meeting.

15.1.3 Russell Group Postgraduate Research Special Interest Group

The Deputy Head of Researcher Development, IAD attended this meeting. Student mental health had featured on the agenda

as had PRES results. This is a useful forum for discussion which next meets in April 2016.

15.1.4 Researchers 14

The Deputy Head of Researcher Development, IAD attended this meeting. Membership comprises research intensive institutions and discussion included support through mentoring for postdocs and review of the Researchers' Concordat. It will discuss CROS at the end of February 2016.

15.1.5 Postgraduate Research Board of Examiners Briefing

This new internal event will be held on 17 February 2016.

16. Date of next meeting

1 March 2016, Board Room, Evolution House

Susan Hunter
14 January 2016