

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee  
held on Tuesday 14 March 2017 at 9am  
in the Board Room, Chancellor's Buildings, Little France**

- Present:** Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal Researcher Development  
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)  
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)  
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)  
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)  
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Students' Association Staff PGR Representative  
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services  
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service  
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy, Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)  
Miss Theresa Sheppard, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Attending:** Dr Vashti Galpin, School of Informatics, Early Career Researcher representative  
Professor Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Assistant Principal Research-led Learning (item 4)  
Mr Gary Jebb, Director of Estates (item 4)  
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Estates Planning & Special Projects (item 4)
- Apologies:** Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)  
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources  
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science  
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)  
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CAHSS)  
Mr Patrick Garratt, Vice-President Academic Affairs, Students' Association  
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's representative)  
Ms Katharina Heil, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CSE)

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017**

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

**2. Matters Arising**

### **2.1 PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) – electronic business**

Following the committee's agreement of the institutional questions and survey launch date, the committee agreed by correspondence that the Personal Outlook question set would not be included in PRES 2017 for Edinburgh.

### **2.2 Review of Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators**

It was noted that the draft policy for tutors and demonstrators was with Schools and Colleges for formal response and that the deadline was 17 March 2017.

## **3. Convener's Communications**

### **3.1 Postgraduate Research Boards of Examiners' event: 16 February**

The meeting had focused on Viva examinations at a distance and had been an interesting and successful event. Suggestions were sought for topics for next year's meeting.

### **3.2 Code of Practice for Research Staff**

A meeting had been held to discuss health and safety issues and had recommended some small amendments. The updated document was available online.

### **3.3 Universitas 21 Doctoral Studies Group**

It was noted that the Group was due to meet in Dublin the following week and that discussion would focus on collective or singular participation in European and North American surveys similar to PRES.

## **For Discussion**

## **4. Review of Postgraduate Research Student Space Discussions**

Professor Cunningham-Burley, Mr Jebb and Ms Johnston were present for the discussion on the work of the Space Strategy Group (formerly the Space Enhancement Management Group). The aim of the Group was to align the Estate Strategy more closely with the aims of learning and teaching and focused on space usage and logistics with additional regard to future requirements.

With regard to postgraduate research student space, discussions of the Group were focused on understanding the institutional requirements for postgraduate research students both in creating personal spaces within their Schools and in creating community spaces and opportunities for shared learning.

A survey on staff experience of the estate had been circulated and a similar survey for students was planned. The Committee was asked to discuss the kinds of spaces that needed to be developed, where they should be found and how to manage the difference between personal and shared space in relation to postgraduate research.

In discussion, the following key points were made:

- a) The Old Kirk project was an opportunity to provide flexible spaces for postgraduate research students to use for their studies and seminars as well as communal areas for socialising and collaboration.
- b) It was noted that discussion on postgraduate research space generally would take account of spaces for postgraduate research students in Schools and should also acknowledge the needs of research students as distinct from students on taught programmes.
- c) There were significant differences in the requirements of separate disciplines, which had caused issues of compliance in the past, while the expectations of research students in relation to the availability of space should be managed; it was noted that central guidance on the minimum standard of space availability was required.
- d) Parity between students was an issue, since postgraduate students who were tutors and demonstrators had access to spaces for staff members only, and these were unavailable to non-tutors/demonstrators.

The following points were agreed:

- a) A clear line of communication should be established between the Committee and the Space Strategy Group, with a representatives from both groups attending each other's meetings on an annual basis.
- b) The report from the Task Group on Space should be distributed to the Committee, which would enable members to contribute to the survey to students on space. This business would be conducted electronically.
- c) The Convener would seek feedback from Queen's University Belfast on the progress of its graduate centre.

**Action: Secretary; Convener**

## **5. Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development: Programme Board**

Dr Philippi provided an oral update on developments following discussion at the previous meeting of the Committee. Since the last meeting, Colleges had been consulted via their committees as part of the communications strategy and feedback had been sought from Schools on the best method of consultation and communication.

The Committee was updated on each of the three work streams as follows:

- Supervisor training and support: Dr Philippi had attended a UKCGE supervisor event which had focused on supervisor networks across the UK.

Following discussion at the event, further consideration would be given to an internal event to support and highlight the work of supervisors.

- Mentorship and wellbeing: Academic Services was undertaking a study to provide background information on thesis committees; discussions were being held with Development and Alumni on different kinds of mentor schemes and structures for postgraduate research students.
- Personal and Professional Development Record: Dr Hadoke would lead a task group which would set an agenda for this work stream.

## **6. Task Groups**

### **6.1 Distance PhD Implementation Working Group – Final Report**

The Committee noted the final report and considered further action. It was noted that further discussion would be held electronically with regard to the funding arrangements for students on distance PhDs, the issue of freedom of movement between programmes, and recruitment. The Committee would be updated with regard to these discussions at its next meeting.

**Action: Secretary**

### **6.2 MSc by Research Task Group – Proposed Changes to the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees**

The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees in relation to MSc by Research Degrees. It was noted that the regulations should clarify the Schools' responsibility in informing students if they were to be examined by Boards of Examiners within Schools, and in informing students if they were to be awarded a Merit or Distinction.

## **7. Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses – Policy Evaluation**

The Committee considered the evaluation of College experience of the policy. It was noted that the disparity between disciplines was a challenge to publishing further guidance and it was agreed that the issue would be revisited in a year's time once the policy was well established.

## **8. Committee Planning**

In addition to work already underway, the Committee agreed that a strand would be included on early career researchers that would support the work of Dr Sara Shinton of IAD. It was agreed that Dr Shinton would be invited to the next meeting of REC to discuss her work on early career researchers.

The Committee will also monitor the situation with regard to enlightenment scholarships in the forthcoming session.

It was noted that REC should highlight the need for the Student Recruitment Strategy to address the recruitment of postgraduate research students.

**Action: Secretary**

## **9. REC Committee Membership**

The Committee was invited to review its membership and to note that several co-opted members were coming to the end of their term of office.

It was agreed that the following representatives would be included for the forthcoming session: Head of a Graduate School; representative from School administration; PhD advisor; and Director of a DTC. It was noted that a representative of early career researchers would be desirable. Consideration would also be given to the continued membership of those who had attended few meetings.

## **10. Knowledge Strategy Committee report: 20 January meeting**

The Committee noted the report

## **11. Arrangements for consulting with stakeholders on learning, teaching and student experience matters**

The Committee noted the paper.

## **12. Research Policy Group report**

It was noted that a short formal report would be available at the next meeting of REC.

## **13. University Learning and Teaching Strategy**

The Committee noted the Strategy.

## **14. Any Other Business**

### **14.1 Conferences & Events**

#### **14.1.1 UKCGE 23 February 2017**

This event was noted under item 5.

#### **14.1.2 LERU Doctoral Summer School report**

The Convener updated the committee on the wide-ranging and interesting discussions at the event.

#### **14.1.3 Coimbra Annual Meeting**

Details would be circulated about the meeting on 30 June with an invitation to contribute.

**Action: Convener**

### **14.2 Postgraduate Research Student Status**

It was noted that this item would be postponed to the next meeting of the Committee.

Theresa Sheppard  
17 March 2017