**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Thursday 16 February 2017 at 9am
in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House, Chambers Street**

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)
Mr Patrick Garratt, Vice-President Academic Affairs, Students'
Association
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Students' Association Staff PGR
Representative
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
representative)
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Ms Katharina Heil, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CSE)
Dr Vashti Galpin, School of Informatics, Early Career Researcher
representative
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,
Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Attending: Mr Lawrence Dickson, University Health and Safety, Mr Richard
Sewell, AON (for item 4), Mr Robert Lawrie, Director of Scholarships
and Student Administration (for item 5)

Apologies: Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
Engineering (CSE)
Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College
of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student
Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CAHSS)

1.   Minutes of the previous meeting

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

2.   Matters Arising

2.1   HR Excellence in Research Award

The Vice-Convener reported that the six year review was completed in
September 2016. The University retained the award which is granted

by EU and supports the Researchers Concordat. The University is one of eight institutions in the UK to hold this award. The review report and action plan are available on the IAD website.
edin.ac/2kFxlOX

2.2 REF (Research Excellence Framework) 2021 consultation – electronic business

The consultation document had been circulated electronically requesting comments to be returned to Governance and Strategic Planning. The consultation response will be compiled by Research Policy Group and there was still an opportunity to comment before the next meeting to be held on Monday 20 February 2017.

2.3 PRES (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey) – electronic business

The committee had agreed the institutional questions and survey launch date of 6 March 2017 by electronic business. Comments had been fed back to Student Surveys Unit and their response circulated prior to the meeting. The committee briefly discussed opportunities for promotion via local School communication on "You Said, We Did". REC endorsed this approach and this would be fed back to Student Surveys Unit.
Action: Secretary

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 ExEDE

Additional to the agenda, the Convener reported on a recent visit with the Vice-Convener to Aarhus University and discussions on next steps for the collaborative doctoral programme. It was noted that a paper will be submitted to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee on the nature of assessment for this programme.

3.2 Chile: Doctoral Education Workshops

The Vice-Convener reported on the recent visit with the Convener to Chile. Workshops had focused on supervision, including celebrating supervision. The workshops had raised similar observations and questions in relation to doctoral education as those experienced in the UK. It was planned to continue developing links with South American institutions.

3.3 LERU Doctoral Summer School

The meeting noted the deadline for the internal selection for the League of European Research Universities (LERU) summer school of 10 March 2017. As in previous years, the internal selection panel will

include the Convener and the committee's College Dean representatives.

3.4   Edinburgh Enlightenment Scholarships

The Convener is continuing School meetings to discuss the proposed new scholarships. Central Management Group (CMG) had requested more detailed figures and comparison with existing models. A paper will be submitted to CMG's March meeting.

3.5   European University Groups

Coimbra
In an addition to the agenda, the Convener reported on a recent meeting of the Doctoral Studies Working Group. There is interest within Coimbra on the UKs approach to scholarships and interest in discussions on the viva process. European universities are looking to forge continuing links with UK institutions post-Brexit. Coimbra's first 3 minute thesis competition final will be held at the general meeting in June in Edinburgh and visits are being planned during June for the Doctoral Studies Group with counterparts in Edinburgh.

LERU
The increasing number of programmes offering to teach in English was noted. Impact and knowledge exchange are components of the EU funding round and LERU institutions were interested in the UK approach to this.

For Discussion

4.   AON (University insurers) Health and Safety Management Review

The University Health & Safety Training and Audit Manager, and representative from the University's insurers provided an update on the Health and Safety Management Audit. The Code of Practice for Management of Research Staff was noted as useful in embedding health and safety training in career development. Recording training plans and development were highlighted as was a systematic approach to including this within appraisal discussions. Links between risk assessment and ethics approval were discussed and the University's duty of care to researchers as well as subjects of research. The Health and Safety Management Audit is continuing.

5.   Scholarships

The Director of Scholarships and Student Administration provided an update on current scholarships and criteria and eligibility for applicants. Current PhD scholarships are the Principal's Career Development Scholarships (PCDS) with145 scholars receiving £2.6million and Edinburgh Global Research Scholarships (EGRS) with 90 scholars receiving £1.1million. PCDS is funded through School and central funds and EGRS through central funds. It was

noted that central funds for scholarships are obtained through request to the Planning Round.

The proposed Enlightenment scholarships aim to address School issues with PCDS and the advent of online application helps flexibility in scholarship allocation. It was noted that applications for scholarships greatly exceed what is available. It was also noted the current timing for annual reviews for PhD funding and decisions is challenging for providing scholarships in the following academic session.

The committee thanked The Director of Scholarships and his team for their continued work and support.

6. **Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development Programme**

The Vice-Convener introduced the paper which set out the outcomes of the scoping exercise, proposed an approach to governance for the programme and three work streams. It was emphasised that this was not the Postgraduate Research Experience Project and no extra resource was available. The timescale for completion of the programme was likely to be much longer than had been proposed for PREP. Therefore, it is essential to clearly identify enhancements that can be achieved within existing resources and recognised that no additional work could be added. Additional work identified would require a business case to bid for resources.

REC **agreed** the proposal that the committee would act as programme board.

The committee discussed the profile of the programme and gaining buy-in from stakeholders. It considered clarity on what is being done was key for expectation management and sufficient time and focus would be required for stakeholder buy-in. It considered that a higher internal profile was critical to success, framed as continuous improvement and aligning with what is currently available and in progress. This should be combined with senior level awareness and ground level engagement. The Personal Tutor network was identified as an example of the kind of forum which could successfully achieve ground level engagement. The committee considered that an external profile was not appropriate for the programme.

The committee discussed the three proposed work streams. It was noted that mentorship would be an investigation of mentorship models and was not introducing a mentor for every PhD student. This would include looking at what happens already and other models such as peer support.

REC **agreed** the three proposed work streams and the approach of a network and consultation for Supervisor Training and Support, and Mentorship and Well Being, and a task group for Personal and Professional Development Record.

It was noted that the communications strategy will begin with College consultation. The programme work streams will also be useful for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) environment statement.

7. REF 2021 Preparation

The Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy reported that post-consultation work will be done with REC and the communities it represents.

The committee discussed the implications of the approach of submitting all eligible staff to REF. It was noted that the definition of eligible staff was not yet clear but that a different approach to supporting staff would be needed.

The committee was asked to consider whether the University should be helping more early career researchers to become independent. It was noted that the definition of early career researchers was not clear within the University, nor in relation to REF. During discussion the committee considered whether this might be a discipline level decision and that a threshold and characteristics would aid definition.

Governance and Strategic Planning will feed in views on independent researchers to Research Strategy Group and a further update on REF preparation will be available to a future meeting.

Action: Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy

8. Student-Staff Liaison Committees and Postgraduate Research Student Representation

The Vice-President Academic Affairs, Students' Association reported on work with CAHSS and CSE on developing representative spaces for postgraduate research students. Student Staff Liaison Committees were perceived to be focused on undergraduate needs. There had been some developments in representation for tutors and demonstrators, but this did not address all postgraduate research students or their representational needs.

The committee was asked to provide a steer for Schools in looking at this type of specific representative space for postgraduate research students.

It was noted that the Students' Association will have new posts for postgraduate research representatives from October 2017. During discussion the importance of not conflating postgraduate research student needs and tutor and demonstrator representation was highlighted. It was considered that clarity on the separate roles and identifies of these groups was needed at all levels. The model of a training needs discussion with School postgraduate research directors each semester for all postgraduate research students was noted.

REC supported the Students' Association's work in this area and agreed that the Students' Association would share good practice examples with Academic

Services for communication with Schools. This should be backed up with discussions at College committees.

Action: V-PAA, Academic Services, College Deans

9. **Reviewing the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students**

The Secretary reported on the outcomes from the focus groups held in December 2016. Both supervisors and research students had attended and a lot of useful information had been gained.

Defining the status of the Code of Practice was important in providing direction for the review and REC was requested to give a steer on this.

REC **agreed** that the Code of Practice was a guidance document and could be repurposed as a handbook.

It was noted that in order to carry out an effective review and produce a useful and accessible publication, a longer timescale would be needed.

REC **agreed** the revised publication date would be the start of academic session 2018/19.

10. **Task Groups:**

10.1 **Distance PhD Implementation Working Group**

The group had last met in December 2016. Its final report was due to be submitted to the next REC meeting in March.

10.2 **MSc by Research**

The Director of Academic Services updated the committee on progress to date. The relevant regulations were being redrafted for clarity and clarity of responsibility and a report will be available to the next REC meeting in March.

10.3 **Review of Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators**

The Director of Academic Services introduced the paper which included a link to the draft consultation document. This re-presents the Code as a policy document which aims to ensure consistency of practice and will have final approval at Learning and Teaching Committee.

For Information

11. **Prepare for Doctoral Success:** a new online induction course for doctoral students – results of pilot

The Vice-Convener introduced the paper which described a step in building a suite of online courses. The course would also support distance students and would need to be scalable. This course is provided centrally with acknowledgment that local provision is also available. It has been positively received by students and there are plans to promote it more widely in future.

12.   Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) – question set and promotion

The committee noted the paper including the survey period and promotion plans. It was noted that Research Policy Group had discussed the previous low response rate, however the results had shown positive changes.

13.   University Research Strategy

The committee noted the paper and that there was a short opportunity to submit any further comments before Research Policy Group meets on 20 February. It was noted that the strategy was intended as a vision statement.

14.   Research Policy Group report

The main focus of the next meeting will be discussion on preparation for REF 2021. A report will be available for the next REC meeting.

15.   Knowledge Strategy Committee report

The committee noted the paper.

16.   Progress on Committee Priorities

The committee noted the paper. The Convener will discuss the early career researcher item with the Head of Research Development, IAD with a view to further discussion at a future REC meeting.

17.   A.O.B.

17.1   Conferences & Events
17.1.1 Russell Group Special Interest Group
The next meeting will be in April in Belfast. A summary of email communication will be made available to REC members.
Action: Vice-Convener, Secretary

17.1.2 UKCGE: Benchmarking Elements of PhD
Several REC members had attended this event in January. The Secretary will circulate the meeting report when available.
Action: Secretary

17.2/

17.2 QAA Focus on the postgraduate research student experience

Details had been circulated prior to this meeting. The event will be held on 18 May in Glasgow, and discussion will include a topic on postgraduate researchers who teach. Members are encouraged to attend.

17.3 Associate supervisor

CMVM raised Associate Supervisor status for postdocs who act as supervisors. The Convener will discuss with CMVM prior to the next REC meeting.

RESERVED BUSINESS

18. Higher Degree: DSc Submission

In its capacity as Higher Degrees Committee, the committee approved an award for DSc in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

Date of next meeting
Tuesday 14 March 2017, Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

Susan Hunter
17 February 2017