

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee  
held on 20 April 2018 at 2pm  
in the Hodgson Room, Weir Building, King's Buildings**

Present: Dr Antony Maciocia, (Convener) Dean of Students, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)  
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)  
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)  
Ms Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff PGR Representative  
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's representative)  
Mr James Saville, Director of Human Resources  
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences  
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences  
Ms Julia Ferguson, Academic Administration (CSE)  
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Apologies: Mr Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students' Association  
Ms Gabriela Hajduk, PGR Student Representative, CSE  
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services  
Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences  
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)  
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education  
Ms Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018**

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

**2. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising that were not included on the agenda.

**3. Convener's Communications**

**3.1 Interim Committee Convenership Arrangements**

The convenership will rotate between the three College Dean representatives in the meantime.

**3.2 PGR Space – Old Kirk Project**

The Convener provided the Committee with a brief update on progress regarding this project. Planned opening is early in 2020, with multi-purpose space, quiet study rooms and a common room. These are not expected to be bookable by any specific area. Design is intended to be flexible and debate is ongoing on dedicated Students' Association space within the new building. The Dean of Students, CSE will continue to provide academic input for REC on this item.

#### **4. Enlightenment Scholarships**

The Convener reported on the implementation group meeting held on 19 April 2018 where discussion focused on what has been achieved to date and identifying any steps required for implementation of the scholarships. Discussion had included funding, operation of the management group, communication with Schools and clarity of scholarships documentation. The group had identified a need for greater clarity in documentation on a range of issues, including that all teaching done by scholars must be paid for by the School.

The Committee noted that, as it had agreed at its last meeting, the implementation group will be replaced by a management group which will have strategic oversight of the scholarships (but not take day to day responsibility for the operation of the scheme) and will operate as a REC sub-group in the medium term. Schools will be asked to report to the management group on what they have put in place to support the Teaching and Professional Development streams of the scholarship. The Dean of Students, CSE will take on the academic leadership role for these Scholarships.

#### **5. Authorised Interruption of Study Policy – Update**

The Committee noted the paper which provided a University-wide policy on authorised interruption of study for all students.

The Committee welcomed the policy as a positive development, and was content with most of the content. It did however suggest minor revisions to two elements of the document. In relation to 3.5, the Committee suggested that the Policy should emphasise that students should be aware of the implications for funding, but that students should not necessarily contact funding bodies themselves. It also noted in relation to 8.2 that supervisors should plan to stay in touch with students in a way that suits the student and prepare for their return, but that it was important that this is differentiated from supervision.

Any further comments would be submitted to Academic Services by 18 May 2018.

**Action: REC members submit comments to Roshni Hume:**  
[Roshni.Hume@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Roshni.Hume@ed.ac.uk)

#### **6. Student Status**

The Committee had conducted electronic business during February 2018 to agree a request from the Director of Student Systems and Administration for a steer on the impact of systems enhancements. The Committee's steer related to Tier 4 implications for the "interrupted" system status at thesis submission for assessment and that the Committee supported a scoping exercise to be carried out by Student Systems and requested an update to be provided to a future meeting. It agreed that Academic Services would set up a group of relevant

colleagues to work with Student Systems to clarify the issues around student status.

**Action: Academic Services**

The Convener provided a verbal update on email communication from the Director of Student Systems and Administration regarding annual progression monitoring. The Committee noted that, since it was not yet clear when the postgraduate research lifecycle strand of the Service Excellence Programme would begin, or whether its scope would include enhancement of the annual progression monitoring progress, Student Systems is willing to explore whether it is able to undertake enhancements as part of core business.

**Action: Academic Services to liaise with Student Systems**

The Committee welcomed these comments and would look forward to a future update on progress.

**7. PhD with Integrated Study**

The Committee noted the paper which proposed some guiding principles on the structural elements of PhD with Integrated Study programmes. The aim was to gain clarity for students on assessment requirements, clarity for staff in setting up new PhD with Integrated Study programmes and to facilitate future transcript provision for postgraduate research students.

The Committee agreed that the proposals in the paper were appropriate but was unsure how straightforward it would be for Schools to operate them for all relevant programmes. The Committee agreed to set up a short life working group, to be convened by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, CAHSS including representation from relevant Schools and supported by Academic Services. The group will explore practical issues in relation to implementing the proposed guidance and ensuring clarity for students on PhD with Integrated Study programmes.

**Action: Academic Services draft remit and arrange first meeting**

**8. Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study procedure for postgraduate research students**

The Committee discussed the paper which sought clarification on the procedure for exclusion of postgraduate research students for unsatisfactory academic progress. The Committee endorsed the approach to item 1 (Failure to submit the thesis by the end of the maximum period of study). In relation to item 3 (Recommendation by supervisor(s) that a student should be excluded from their studies), the Committee confirmed that exclusion for failure to progress is assessed in the annual progression review framework, and that no exceptional mechanism of exclusion exists (or should exist) outwith the annual progression review process. In relation to item 2 (Failure to meet progression requirements),

the Committee confirmed that practice in all three Colleges was to provide students with an interview on request by the student if exclusion is recommended at annual review. The College Committee then makes the final decision on exclusion from study.

The Committee discussed the use of the term “satisfactory” in relation to annual progression reviews and how this may be being misinterpreted. It was agreed that Academic Services will seek clarification from Student Systems on the feasibility of terminology changes to the annual progression review online form, specifically in relation to terminology on “satisfactory” progress.

**Action: Academic Services**

**9. Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Students – new publication draft and design**

The Committee discussed the paper which provided draft content for the revised Code of Practice document. The Committee welcomed the new design and shorter format and was content with the broad approach. It also made some suggestions for amendments to be incorporated by Academic Services.

The Committee agreed that the publication would retain the title “Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students”. A final draft will be submitted to the next Committee meeting for approval prior to publication.

**Action: Academic Services**

**10. Committee achievements 2017/18**

The Committee noted the paper outlining progress on completing priorities for 2017/18.

It agreed that the Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher Experience, CMVM will take academic leadership of the Committee’s Early Career Researcher agenda.

The Committee suggested that the work on supervisor roles could be included in the Supervisor Career and Professional Development Task Group in the Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development Programme.

**11. Senate Committee Planning**

The Committee discussed the paper and endorsed the plans for 2018-19 subject to the Director of Academic Services adding the two working groups on student status and PhD with Integrated Study identified at this meeting.

**Action: Director of Academic Services**

**12. Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development:**

**12.1 Progress report on work stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support**

The Convener gave a verbal update on progress with the task group on career and professional development for supervisors. Its first meeting took place on 21 March where the group agreed that there is an opportunity to do something sector leading in this field and agreed on a number of overarching themes for a University framework for training to be accessible, accredited, reasonable and flexible.

**12.2 Progress report on work stream 2: Mentoring and Wellbeing**

The Convener gave a verbal update and confirmed that a paper will be available for the next Committee meeting

**13. Service Excellence, Student Administration & Support Update**

The Committee noted the paper.

**14. Associated Institutions update**

The Committee noted the paper which provided an update on progress with the review of Associated Institutions. It noted the links with the Supervisor Training and Support work stream of the Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development programme.

The Committee thanked Theresa Sheppard, Academic Services for her work in this area.

**15. Knowledge Strategy Committee report: 19 January 2018 meeting**

The Committee noted the paper.

**16. Research Policy Group report**

There was no formal report for this meeting.

**17. Any other business**

**17.1 Conferences and events**

**17.1.1 LERU April meeting**

The Dean of Postgraduate Students, CAHSS provided an update on the recent League of European Research Universities (LERU) meeting.

**17.1.2 Russell Group PGR Special Interest Group**

The Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher Experience, CMVM reported on discussions around studentships, submission, supervisor contracts and

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, and will circulate notes to REC members.

**Action: PH**

**17.2 LERU Doctoral Summer School**

The Convener confirmed that the University's candidate had been selected and formal notification would be sent by LERU during May.

**17.3 Heidelberg University**

The Secretary had visited Heidelberg's Graduate Academy on the Erasmus+ staff mobility scheme to share experiences of support for PhD supervision, student support and early career researcher training.

**17.4 Industrial action**

No issues were reported affecting postgraduate research.

The Committee expressed its thanks to Gabriela Hajduk, postgraduate research student member, for her contributions and participation.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services  
25 April 2018