The University of Edinburgh
Internal Periodic Review
Year on response report

Internal Periodic Review of: School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences – Postgraduate Provision
Date of review: 30 November – 3 December 2020
Date of 14 week response: 09 June 2021 – extended to 07 July 2021
Date of year on response: 11 March 2022

Rec no	Recommendation	Timescale	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion
1	**Annual progression review:** The School ensure a robust and constructive process for student's annual reviews **Annual progression review:** That the progression element of annual review needs to be properly addressed	Feb 2022	This issue had been flagged in the School prior to the IPR process however due to competing demands on academic administration, action in 2020/21 was delayed. Plans for the future include: - **Supervisor training/briefing**: sessions specifically about the progression review - **Student briefing**: The School currently holds a briefing session for first year PhD student in January each year. This briefing will be extended to all PhD students regardless of year of study. The session will highlight the importance of the review process and set out expectations. The School Postgraduate Committee has started to discuss how to approach setting/confirming expectations of the review. It was noted that due to the diversity of our subject areas and projects within subject areas, setting a School level expectation on documentation needed could be challenging. It may therefore be best to consider this at subject area level. This will be a standing item on the PG Committee agenda through the first semester of 2021/22 so that plans can be confirmed prior to the review period in spring/summer 2022. **Year on update:** Following discussions within subject areas, further developments to the process have been agreed as follows: • Philosophy are trialling a second year talk as part of progression.

			• Psychology are reinstating a panel system for assessing annual reviews. Panels associated with specific research groups will meet and consider all annual reviews associated with the group. This will allow for a group overview of progress within the area and allow for discussion of specific cases prior to the student meeting. • Linguistics & English Language are including annual review process and training into their larger plan for PGR training activities (see below – section 5) • These subject area decisions have been discussed at the School PG Committee, which will continue to play an active role in monitoring their efficacy moving forward and in sharing information and best practices across subject area boundaries.
2	**Student Voice:** The School needs to have a more robust and systematic approach to engaging with students around needs, aspirations and expectations and that the School take advantage of their engaged student body to ensure the student voice is included in informing strategic decisions	Ongoing	The School takes the student voice seriously and actively incorporates it into strategic decision-making. We have established regular communication channels with our student body including the following activity in the 2020/21 academic year. The School Postgraduate Staff/Student Liaison Committee met regularly through the academic year and students are invited to participate in providing feedback regarding their studies and the plans of the school in this forum. PPLS intend to continue with this practice. In spring 2021, PGT students in the School were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss student support and communications within the School. We will continue to apply these methods to strategic decision regarding long term planning including the potential restructuring of masters programmes. **Year on update:** • Further to feedback from students and committee members, the School has decided to split the current SSLC into two distinct SSLC's, one dedicated to PGT concerns, the other specifically targeting PGR concerns. • A new role has been created, currently designated Head PG Tutor, to train and coordinate PG Personal tutor performance; this role will persist and be renamed under the new student support system, serving the role of monitoring and coordinating cohort leads.

			• A challenge moving forward is ongoing difficulty in recruiting student representatives; it is anticipated that the new PhD PALS scheme (see below, Section 5) will facilitate recruitment.
3	**Strategic governance structure:** Recommends that the School reflect on governance structures that promote and support learning and teaching enhancement across the School	Ongoing	The School Teaching Enhancement Strategy Group (STESG) launched in June 2021 with the specific aim to develop an integrated approach to teaching practice and training of staff, GH Tutors and PhD students. Recommendations from STESG are expected to be available by the end of December. **Year on update:** The work of this group has been delayed due to competing priorities. The work is still planned and will inform future practice and process within the School.
4	**Strategic governance structure:** Recommends that the School reflect on the Skills Centre governance structure	Ongoing	STESG includes membership from the School Skills Centre. It is anticipated that the STESG recommendations will feed into further discussions regarding the governance of the Skills Centre. **Year on update:** As above
	Strategic governance structure: Recommends that the School establishes a more coordinated structure to link with the Learning Technologists to review what courses can be delivered that are tailored to student needs	Ongoing	The School is keen to further develop the relationship between teaching offices, course organisers, and learning technologist in the future. The School is currently in the process of recruitment in our Learning Technology team following two members leaving for other opportunities. Recruitment has been delayed due to the various challenges related to recruitment in 2021/22. The School expects to resume development in this area as soon as we have a full complement of staff to support our activities. **Year on update:** • Recruitment was delayed; however a Technology Enhancement Learning Manager is now in post for the School and so work on this will commence in preparation for future years.

| 5 | **Student experience:** Recommends that the School reflect on the positive aspects of the PGT experience, for example student academic support, and consider how these can be channelled to enhance the PGR student experience | 2021/22 and Ongoing | The School intends to work with students to create opportunities for PGT and PGR student to socialise and mix throughout the coming academic year. Currently, restrictions on large group meetings will limit in person opportunities.

It is anticipated that ongoing work on progression review as detailed above and networking opportunities as mentioned below, will highlight areas for enhancing the PGR student support and experience.

Year on update:
• The Head of Student Experience has initiated discussions regarding the development of a PhD PALS scheme analogous to existing, successful PALS systems for both UG and PGT — this will facilitate peer support and recreation through organization and funding of group events

• Student led activities have now resumed with research group meetings, Work in Progress seminars and PG conferences now being organised in line with current guidance. We will continue to facilitate and support these endeavours. |
| | **Student experience:** Recommends that the School consider ways to provide additional assistance to drive and support opportunities for PGR networking and building a community of practice | Ongoing | The School has made some progress on this during the current academic year:

PPLS PhD Community Sharepoint
In March 2021 the Postgraduate Administrative Office worked with Learning Technologist to develop a Sharepoint area for the PhD Community. PhD Reps were consulted at each stage of development and provided input.

This space includes information about networking opportunities and skills training as well as providing links to social spaces and suggestions. The Sharepoint area is linked to MS Teams chat areas to allow for discussion/sharing ideas.

Engagement with this from the PhD community is currently limited but steady. We plan to work with the incoming PhD reps and wider community to develop this further over the coming academic year.

SolidariTea
SolidariTea is a student led informal coffee morning for PPLS PhD students held monthly. It |

is an opportunity for PhD students to get together to provide support for each other and talk about the PhD life. The reps for 2020/21 will be stepping down in the summer – the Head of Student Experience is in consultation with the reps to provide support for handover and continuation of this initiative

Training/Events
Each subject area has offered training in writing and publication for PhD students and the hope is to continue the development of this and further community/training opportunities in the coming year(s)

Each subject area in the School has created working groups to discuss further the development of training opportunities for PhD students. These groups will report back to the School PG Committee by the end of Semester 1. Feedback From STESG will also contribute to this discussion.

The School surveyed students regarding school level events and hosted an event entitled Zen and the Art of Academia where current academics discussed how they progressed in their careers and took questions from the students in attendance.

Year on update:
Following working groups in each subject area, plans are in place to enhance PhD student training and cohort building, as well as providing further guidance for supervisors within the subject areas.

- Philosophy will continue to run and develop their Pro-Seminar course for first year students as well as reviewing and enhancing their ongoing Professional Development Seminars offered throughout the year.

- Psychology will utilise their research groups (see Section 1) to build PGR cohort community. All students will be associated with a relevant group that will evaluate and provide specific training. More generally, a series of training and networking workshops are planned for the PhDs within Psychology.

- Linguistics & English Language have developed a year by year training plan for PhD students within the subject including the following:
    - First year students training conference

			▪ 5 one-day courses followed by a presentation - Second year workshops on paper writing and job applications - Induction documents for all supervisor to review with new students • The new Careers Consultant for PPLS is in touch with organizers for each of these subject area initiatives, and it is expected she will run career and employability sessions in collaboration with them in coming years. • The proposed PhD PALS group mentioned above will also contribute to PGR networking and community
6	**Market analysis:** Recommends that the School should engage with market demand and competitor market analysis to establish and understand the needs of future students and programme/course development.	Ongoing	The School utilises resources within the College insights team to provide market research data that will inform future discussions regarding the development of programmes. **Year on update:** Further to discussions regarding recruitment opportunities for masters programmes, a detailed contact list for specific departments in US institutions has been developed and utilised. As a result of this a recruitment information session for North American Students was held on 10th March 2022.
	Market analysis: Recommends that the School should reflect on its alumni activity	Ongoing	School alumni have been actively engaged with recruitment and conversion activities in 2020/21 including the following events. • Life after PPLS in March 2021 at which alumni talked about the steps they took after study and what they are doing now. • PGT Offer holder conversion event in June 2021. Alumni participated in subject area sessions and provided insight about their experience studying in PPLS. The School Postgraduate Office is working with the School Marketing & Communications team to build further relationships with our alumni. We hope that this will provide a basis for further involvement in events for our current and prospective students in the future. **Year on update:** Efforts to establish more comprehensive alumni lists and relationships are ongoing. • In 2022, alumni events targeted at current PG students will be held April 5 and 7, one featuring alumni who stayed in academia, the other alumni who moved into other sectors.

7	**Industry links:** It is recommended that the School reflects on and defines their links to industry.	Ongoing	The School has established links with industry in relation to the MSc Speech & Language Processing programme. Visiting speakers and lecturers regularly participate in activities in the School. We will explore further links to industry in other areas in the future. As noted above, the School intends to further develop relationships with our alumni. **Year on update:** As above
	Industry links: Recommends that the School explore opportunities for improved links with industry through invited guest speakers and some vocational/placement activity.		
8	**Tutors and demonstrators:** Recommends that the University and the School are mindful of the impact on tutors' workload due to increased undergraduate student numbers during this period of hybrid teaching. Furthermore, consider how tutor observations can be undertaken for the period of digital teaching provision.	Relevant to 20/21	This recommendation has also been referred to University HR (Linda Criggie) Tutor observations in 2020/21 were carried out within the School via digital means. From September 2021, we anticipate most tutorial sessions to revert to in person on campus and so standard practice for observation and feedback will resume. All subject areas have an academic staff member who co-ordinates and monitors the workload of tutors within that subject. Work to support tutors is ongoing and closely monitored.
	Tutors and demonstrators: Recommends that the School considers how marking load is distributed among tutors, how the quality of tutor teaching is linked to the undergraduate quality mechanisms and ensures equality of support for tutors.	Ongoing	**Year on update:** The increase in UG numbers has been discussed at School level and plans are in place for reducing this to a size optimal for delivering high quality student and tutor experience. In the interim, temporary staff have been hired in order to support this large population, and to ensure that tutorial group numbers are kept within reasonable limits.
9	**Feedback:** Recommends that the School review and reflect on feedback provided to students to ensure it is effective, explicit, useful and timely.	Ongoing	The timing of feedback in 2020/21 was affected by the impact of Covid-19 on our staff. All students were kept informed about when to expect feedback on their work. The form and quality of feedback is monitored in the School and External Examiners are also invited to comment on this during the Examination Board process. We will continue to monitor this as standard practice and provide guidance and support to markers where necessary.

			Year on update: In addition to these ongoing activities, we have implemented a system to track the quality of MSc dissertation feedback, in order to identify any recurring issues.
10	**Learning technology:** Recommends that the course development workshops continue and encourages the School to ensure the learning technologists are better integrated with the wider School community to enable academic staff to benefit from their knowledge and expertise, particularly their ability to support course design.	Pending	The School expects to resume development in this area as soon as we have a full complement of staff to support our activities. (see recommendation 4) Year on update: Still pending, see 4 above.

Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review
As noted in the responses above, the outcomes of the review have been discussed with students via the Staff/Student Liaison Committee and via specific communications regarding actions taken in response to the review.

For Year on response only: Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review
The majority of changes listed above will go into effect academic year 2022/23 so we have not yet been able to observe positive impact of these. However two changes have already received significant positive feedback from PGR students: 1. Solidaritea – which has been successful in building peer community and has been shortlisted for the Meaningful Connections Student Association award 2022; 2. A pilot version of a PhD only SSLC that was initiated explicitly to address PhD concerns regarding office space has been successful in that regard and has received positive feedback from the PhD community.