

**Meeting of the Senate Researcher Experience Committee
held on 25 January 2019 at 2pm
in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House**

Present: Dr Paddy Hadoke (Convener), Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Early Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Professor Stephen Bowd, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff Postgraduate Research (PGR) Representative
Dr Sharon Maguire, Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's representative)
Ben Möws, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CSE
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Apologies: Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students' Association
Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
James Saville, Director of Human Resources (HR)
Daniel Dodd, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CMVM
Dr Katie Nicoll Baines, Early Career Research Representative, CMVM
Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education

Attending: June Bell, Human Resources
Dr Adam Bunni, Academic Services (item 9)
Sarah Harvey, Service Excellence Programmes

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2018

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

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Old Kirk Project

The Project Manager had provided a brief update covering the review of capital projects and value engineering for the Old Kirk Project. Tenders are due back on 28 January 2019.

2.2 Scholarships

The Dean of Postgraduate Research, CSE represents the Committee on the Student Recruitment Strategy Group, which is reviewing all scholarships

including postgraduate. HR advice on students undertaking teaching as a condition of their scholarship is being sought.

2.3 Senate Committee input to the planning round

The Committee had conducted electronic business to input comments to the Director of Academic Services. One Committee member raised a comment on prioritising postgraduate research space and this would be discussed further under items 4 to 5 on the agenda. The Committee noted that due to the devolved budget structure, College and School support is required to influence the planning round.

2.4 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Head of Researcher Development, IAD had submitted the institutional response to the consultation. Vitae will publish consultation responses and the revised Concordat is due for publication at the end of March 2019. There is a University of Edinburgh postdoc member on the Concordat writing group.

2.5 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) Supervisor accreditation pilot

The Convener reported that the pilot has launched and UKCGE has provided documentation including a guide for applicants. Colleges will nominate two participants each by 22 February 2019. Colleges should select for a breadth of disciplines and experience. UKCGE will run a webinar for participants on 8 March 2019.

Action: Convener to circulate information to Colleges

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Task group on sexual violence

The Convener is a member of one of four work streams associated with the task group. The work stream the Convener is a member of will look at shaping policy. A report will be available to a future Committee meeting.

3.2 Policy on disclosure of intimate relationships

The University Executive has approved the policy, which is relevant to student-supervisor relationships. The Students' Association was involved in developing the policy and HR will host the policy document on their website.

The Committee noted that communicating the policy and awareness raising are key to implementation. The Committee identified some potential communication routes, including the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students, Supervisor Briefings, induction events and College communications.

3.3 Postgraduate research quality assurance

Academic Services will invite the Committee to participate in future discussions on the reporting process. The Dean of Postgraduate Research, CSE will attend the next Senate Quality Assurance Committee and provide a report to the next Committee meeting.

4. Postgraduate research student experience

The Committee noted the paper identifying themes that have an impact on the student experience. Evidence included Postgraduate Research Experience Survey results, internal quality reviews and input from postgraduate research student reps. Paper B for item 5 on the agenda provided some statistics to inform discussion.

The Committee discussed expectations of the student-supervisor relationship, including perceptions and consistency of experience. The Committee also noted that some partner agreements include a student-supervisor contract. The Committee noted induction as a key point to set expectations and noted there may be inconsistency in student induction experience. The Committee noted that Student Recruitment and Admissions are looking at induction. The Head of Doctoral Education, IAD is participating in this work and can report to a future Committee meeting.

Action: SM

The Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students sets out responsibilities for both students and supervisory teams. Academic Services' evaluation of the Code of Practice will cover student-supervisor relationship expectations.

Action: Academic Services

The Committee discussed the links between postgraduate research (PGR) space and community. Discussion covered opportunities for collaboration (noting discipline dependencies) and supporting students to feel engaged. The Committee considered the possibility of guidance for Schools on providing PGR space. The Dean of Postgraduate Research, CSE will take this to the Space Strategy Group for discussion. The Conveners will consider PGR space at the next Committee agenda-planning meeting.

Action: AM to Space Strategy Group

The Committee noted that Academic Services plans to evaluate the policy on recruiting, supporting and developing tutors and demonstrators in time to submit a paper to the March Committee meeting.

The Committee noted that an item on mental health is planned for the next meeting.

5. Management information: submission and completion rates

The Committee noted the paper, which provided publicly available information, and a closed appendix including management information from the University's Business Information Suite.

6. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Committee noted the paper inviting consideration of adding institutional questions, whether to include the wellbeing section and free text comments questions.

The Committee noted that institutional questions are optional and any such questions should be realistic, add value and be deliverable.

The Committee discussed the value of adding institutional questions relating to wellbeing. Members were asked to consider and provide suggestions to the Secretary by Friday 1 February 2019. The Committee will approve any institutional questions by electronic business before the deadline in mid-February.

Action: Committee members, Secretary

The Committee approved including one free-text institutional question from PRES 2017.

The Committee approved excluding the PRES wellbeing section.

The Committee approved free text comment questions being visible in the survey.

Action: Secretary communicate to Student Surveys Unit

7. Excellence in Doctoral Research and Career Development: progress reports

The Head of Doctoral Education, IAD reported on progress with the task group on career and professional development for supervisors. The draft final report is due for the Committee's March meeting. The Committee noted the report will make a recommendation on the timing and mandatory nature of supervisor training. As the March meeting will be too late to get this Committee's support for including a statement on supervisor training in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations for 2019/20, the Director of Academic Services proposed that the Committee support this inclusion. The Committee supported including a statement on the timing and mandatory nature of supervisor training in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2019/20: that supervisors must undertake supervisor training every five years (and that staff from other institutions who are supervising our students must either undertake University training or equivalent training at their institution).

Action: Academic Services include in proposals to Curriculum and Student Progression Committee

The Committee noted that IAD will recruit a student intern to continue the work on mentorship and wellbeing.

The Committee noted that the final report from the task group on personal and professional development record, including recommendations on content for a PGR Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) was submitted to Service Excellence Programme (SEP).

8. Service Excellence Programme – postgraduate research update

The Service Excellence representative updated the Committee on the Programme's postgraduate research activities. An update on business priorities will be available at the next Committee meeting. The Committee will have an opportunity to influence business cases after the Programme Board confirms priorities in March 2019.

The Committee requested an update to the improvement opportunity for recording supervisors. The Committee asked Service Excellence to update the three-year cycle reference to reflect the recommendation from the task group on career and professional development for supervisors.

Action: SH (SEP)

The Committee discussed challenges for system change requests. It noted change requests could be explored in the Programme's detailed design phase. The Committee also noted the potential relationship between the proposed University-level PGR Programme Handbook and the Programme and Course Information Management strand of SEP.

The Committee asked about opportunities to feed into the prioritisation process. The Service Excellence representative will flag this and feedback the Committee's comments to SEP.

Action: SH (SEP)

The Committee approved a formal communication from the Convener on the importance of postgraduate research considerations.

Action: Convener

9. Regulations

9.1 PhD and MPhil criteria

The Committee noted the paper, which proposed amendments to the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. The Committee considered the proposals and asked for publishable material to be included in Regulation 45 MPhil criteria. Academic Services will revise the proposed regulation changes and circulate to the Committee for further consideration by electronic business.

Action: Academic Services

9.2 PhD by Research Publications

The Committee noted the paper, which proposed amendments to the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. The Committee broadly supported the proposals but as the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS) is the principal user of this degree type, it asked CAHSS to propose appropriate wording in relation to eligible candidates and the timeframe for publications to Academic Services. Thereafter, Academic Services will circulate a revised proposal for consideration by electronic business.

Action: CAHSS, Academic Services

9.3 Assessment and Degree Regulations Review

The Committee noted the paper, which proposed amendments to the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees and the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. The proposed amendments mainly consisted of essential changes for clarification, which did not change existing practice or policy. The Committee supported the proposed changes noting that in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine the preference for clinical students who have transferred from MD to PhD would be an exit award of MD rather than MPhil.

The Committee discussed one proposed policy change, which would allow resubmission of MSc by Research Degree dissertations. Following changes to the Taught Assessment Regulations for 2018/19 to permit resubmission of Masters dissertations, the MSc by Research Degree is the only degree that does not have a resubmission option. The Committee supported the proposed change with clarity that resubmission is permitted for corrections or modest rewrite with minimal supervision only.

Action: Academic Services

10. Task Groups

10.1 Practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes

The Committee noted the paper, which comprised the task group's final report. The Committee discussed the proposed guidance, intended to support Schools setting up new programmes. The Committee considered that the benefit of PhD with Integrated Study is that it contains credit for taught elements. Therefore, the guidance should include that there is an expectation that programmes contain 180 credits of non-thesis credit. The Committee considered that the guidance on the submission period should be comparable to PhD programmes. That is, there is an expectation to have finished at the end of the period of study although there is some flexibility and submission can be up to the end of the fifth year in PhD with Integrated Study programmes.

Subject to these clarifications, the Committee approved the final report.

Action: Academic Services

10.2 Update on proposed work on Student Status of PhD students after the submission of the thesis

The Director of Academic Services provided a verbal report. The Committee noted that as Business Analyst support was not currently available from Student Systems, this work had been passed to Service Excellence Programme for consideration in its PGR lifecycle work stream. The Committee supported communicating to the SEP Student Administration and Support Board that this is a key piece of work.

Action: Convener include in formal communication to SEP

11. Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR)

11.1 ELIR 2020 update

The Committee noted the paper, which summarised preparations for the next external review and proposed contextualised themes. The Committee noted the focus on demonstrating positive outcomes from strategic activity, implementation and evaluation of impact. Some of the contextual themes identified in the paper cover postgraduate research activity. The Committee considered that there might be an opportunity to include School input on enhancements to the PGR environment.

The Committee supported the preparations and proposed contextual themes.

Any further comments can be sent to Nichola.Kett@ed.ac.uk

11.2 ELIR 2015 Recommendations

The Committee noted the paper. The Dean of Postgraduate Research is supporting Academic Services in providing a further update on PGR activity to the February 2019 Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

Any further comments can be sent to Nichola.Kett@ed.ac.uk

12. Task group on organisation and coordination of postgraduate research activities

The Director of Academic Services gave a verbal report. The Committee noted that this task group proposes to review some key aspects of postgraduate research. The task group plans to begin its review after the Senate Committees governance review is completed.

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13. External engagement:

13.1 League of European Research Universities (LERU)

The Committee noted that the deadline for student nominations to participate in the Doctoral Summer School is 1 March 2019. The University is hosting the Doctoral Summer School and there may be additional opportunities for students to get involved.

The Dean of Postgraduate Studies, CAHSS is attending the next LERU Doctoral Summer School meeting in Leuven.

13.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)

The Dean of Postgraduate Research, CSE and Committee Secretary attended the Scottish forum meeting in November 2018. Discussion had focused on doctoral supervision including some case studies highlighting success predictors and warning signs.

Colleagues from CAHSS will attend UKCGE's Mental Health and Wellbeing of Postgraduate Researchers event in May 2019. A report will be available to a future REC meeting.

13.3 Coimbra

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

13.4 Network of Universities from European Capitals (UNICA)

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

13.5 Universitas 21

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

14. Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee: 12 October 2018 meeting

The Committee noted the paper. The Committee discussed the item on access to University spaces after 5pm. The Committee noted that where card access was required, postgraduate researchers were experiencing difficulty in gaining access after 5pm in some areas.

15. Research Policy Group report

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

16. Any other business

16.1 Conferences and events

No additional conferences or events were raised.

16.2 College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, new Postgraduate Dean's priorities

The Dean of Postgraduate Studies gave a verbal report. The Committee noted that the Dean's remit covered both postgraduate taught and postgraduate research (PGR). A key priority in relation to PGR will be exploring training needs for non-academic routes for PhD students.

16.3 Conveners' meetings

The Convener reported the intention of the three Committee Conveners to meet on a monthly basis to discuss PGR matters. The Committee supported this approach.

Action: Secretary schedule meetings

16.4 New Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

The Convener reported that Professor Robert Semple has been appointed Dean of Postgraduate Research in the College. The Committee supported inviting him to the next meeting.

Action: Secretary

16.5 Students' Association Teaching Awards

The Students' Association reported receipt of a large number of nominations so far. Nominations are open for another two months and the award covers both undergraduate dissertation supervision and postgraduate research thesis supervision. Colleagues are encouraged to promote the awards through appropriate channels.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
29 January 2019