Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
held on 25 September 2018 at 2pm
in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

Present: Professor Neil Mulholland (Convener), Dean of Postgraduate Studies,
            College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
            Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Early
            Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine
            (CMVM)
            Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science & Engineering
            (CSE)
            Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students'
            Association
            Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff PGR Representative
            Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for
            Academic Development (IAD)
            Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
            Daniel Dodd, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CMVM
            Ben Möws, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CSE
            Dr Katie Nicoll Baines, Early Career Research Representative, CMVM
            Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
            Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
            Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Apologies: James Saville, Director of Human Resources
            Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
            Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
            Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education
            Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
            representative)

Attending: Lynsey Pilcher, Edinburgh Global (item 4)
            Cat Cairns, Service Excellence Programme (item 5)
            Theo Andrew, Information Services Library Services, (item 6)

1.   **Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2018**
     The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

2.   **Matters Arising**

     2.1 Old Kirk Project

     The Committee noted that the October meeting of the project board had been
     rescheduled. Discussions on a virtual Old Kirk were in hand but were not part
     of the current project.

     2.2 **Enlightenment Scholarships**

     The Committee noted that the Dean of Students, CSE had been in discussion
     with Colleges and University Senior Management on proposals for future
     scholarship plans. These will initially be discussed at the Enlightenment

Scholarships Management Group on 2 October and a paper will be brought to a future Committee meeting.

3. **Convener's Communications**

3.1 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE): supervisor accreditation

The Director of Postgraduate Research, CMVM reported on plans for the University to participate in a UK pilot being run by UKCGE. Initial plans are for three to five supervisors to go through the application process followed up by a survey of supervisors and the institution. Further details will be circulated when available.

Action: PH

3.2 Postgraduate research recruitment update

The Committee noted the September 2018 figures. The Committee discussed capacity in relation to resources and student support services, the potential for cohort creation and for annual recruitment reports to this Committee.

4. **Increasing Go Abroad Opportunities for Postgraduate Research Students**

The Committee noted the paper and heard from Edinburgh Global about Erasmus+ funding, including the benefits and opportunities for postgraduate research (PGR) students. Edinburgh Global would also like to capture current PGR activity abroad and identify potential funding opportunities to students. The Committee was invited to identify channels for communicating and publicising Erasmus+ to students and staff.

The Committee discussed potential restrictions where terms of student funding may exclude them from obtaining additional funds for activity abroad. Edinburgh Global undertook to check funder conditions in relation to Erasmus+.

The Committee noted that existing bilateral agreements would need to be updated to include postgraduate research students. It also noted that institutions with collaborative arrangements with the University will have their own Erasmus funding and students registered with other institutions will be eligible to apply through their home institution.

The Committee discussed potential channels for communication and publicising Erasmus+ including: postgraduate societies, supervisor briefings and the Students' Association newsletter. The Committee noted that Edinburgh Global plan to develop case study examples on where students go for future publicity information. Edinburgh Global will send links to Erasmus+ information and communications content for Colleges to cascade to Schools.

Action: Edinburgh Global

5.   **Service Excellence Programme – update on postgraduate research activity**

The Committee noted the paper on work being undertaken by the Student Administration and Support strand of the Programme. The Committee received a verbal update on the new Service Excellence Programme (SEP) postgraduate research (PGR) team. Specific PGR workshops are being held on processes for supervisor appointment, admissions, milestones and how these will be captured for the PGR Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), annual progression reviews and assessment. Outcomes from the workshops will be submitted to the Programme Board for prioritising and sign off in April 2019 with implementation planned thereafter.

The Committee requested clarification on where conversion and increasing volume of PhD applicants was being looked at in terms of systems. The SEP representative will confirm whether the Student Recruitment and Admissions strand of the Programme covers this.

Action: CC

The Committee discussed the desirability of simplified recording and monitoring of supervisor training, recording student funding and the ability for administrators to override annual progression reviews to enable progress through the system.

A list of workshop attendees will be provided by SEP for circulation to the REC College Dean representatives.

Action: CC to Secretary

6.   **E-only submission of the final version of PhD theses**

The Committee noted the paper and was invited to provide feedback on the proposal to move to online only submission of final theses in 2020/21.

The Committee noted that students without PURE profiles or those with dual profiles can be accommodated. Information Services (IS) is investigating systems for digital curation, which will be accessible, long-term and include disaster recovery, for example through multi-site storage. A long lead-in is needed to allow bidding for resources and staff to support the new system. The planned developments will reduce costs for students in binding and printing theses and for the University in storage. IS envisage there will be potential for flexibility in retaining analogue thesis copies in exceptional circumstances. The move to digital curation is consistent with sector practice and IS will consult on plans across the University.

The Committee supported the proposal.

7./

7. **Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development: progress reports**

The Vice-Convener reported that the Task Group on Supervisor Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will meet at the end of October. The task group has identified online training elements for the CPD framework but developing these will require a larger project. The task group will consult with stakeholders on the framework, including minimum expectations and where the framework sits within regulatory governance. Provision of welfare and support training, such as the mental health support training, was subject to capacity and resource. The Committee discussed links with the planned UKCGE supervisor accreditation pilot and recognition through national and Students' Association awards. It was noted that Research Councils require supervisors to be trained but do not currently require accreditation.

The Peer Support project had finished early due to the PhD intern leaving the University. Resources already set up through the project included PhD cafes, peer support activity and toolkit. A proposal to recruit a PhD intern to continue the project will be submitted to the Deputy Secretary, Student Experience.

Recommendations from the task group on PGR HEAR have been submitted to the Service Excellence Programme.

8. **Regulations**

8.1 Supervisor attendance at oral examination: benchmarking

The Committee noted the paper and discussed the option for appointment of a Non-Examining Chair at the oral examination if the supervisor is attending. The Committee also discussed the potential for training for examiners and non-examining chairs in relation to conduct of the oral examination.

The Committee approved the proposal that no change to current regulations on supervisor attendance at the oral examination was required.

8.2 PhD by Research Publications: benchmarking

The Committee noted the paper and discussed the use of PhD by Research Publications degree awards. The Committee noted that these awards are particularly useful in some areas of CAHSS. The Committee discussed the need for good supervisory support for applicants, the maximum registration period of 12 months, the need to allow creative works for submission and for clarity on submission requirements.

The Committee approved the proposal that Academic Services will carry out work to strengthen the existing regulations and bring proposed changes to the Committee, prior to seeking approval from Curriculum and Student Progression Committee for any regulation changes.

Action: Academic Services

8.3 Thesis assessment criteria

The Committee noted the paper and discussed the possibility of including assessment criteria in potential examiners training. The Colleges will explore examiner training further with IAD and report back to a future REC meeting.

Action: College Deans and IAD

The Committee approved the proposal that Academic Services will review the relevant regulations, examiner report forms and postgraduate research examiner handbook to ensure consistency.

Action: Academic Services

9.   **Senate Committee Planning**

9.1 Senate Committee input to 2019-22 Planning Round

The Committee noted the paper and that employability will be added to the initial priorities. The Committee discussed the need for a postgraduate research narrative to be added to the priorities as a whole and to the employability addition. The Committee discussed the potential to add provision of core postgraduate research (PGR) training as a priority including support for staff.

Action: Academic Services

9.2 Annual review of effectiveness of Senate Committees

The Committee noted the paper, which contained short-term actions in advance of a wider external review of Senate Committees' effectiveness.

10.   **Students' Association Priorities**

The Committee noted the paper and discussed the need for a postgraduate research narrative. The Committee discussed expanding the point on Personal Tutors in section 2 to include supervisors and tutors and demonstrators. The Committee noted that UK initiatives on mental health and wellbeing will focus on postgraduate and that University postgraduate representatives will increase the student voice on University committees. Further comments on the paper can be submitted to: megan.brown@eusa.ed.ac.uk

11.   **Senate Committee Operation**

11.1   Committee priorities

The Committee noted the paper.

12./

12. External Engagement

12.1 League of European Research Universities (LERU)

The Committee noted the paper and that a positional paper on the nature of supervision is being prepared. It was noted that the Concordat on early career researcher support is being reviewed. The Head of Researcher Development, IAD will be invited to a future meeting for further discussion on this topic.

Action: Secretary

Initial discussions on potential central support for doctoral and early career researchers will be presented to a future REC meeting.

Action: AM, PH

12.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)

The Committee noted that widening participation discussions are extending beyond undergraduate provision. Recent discussions had highlighted the necessity for strong management structures for postgraduate centres, such as the Old Kirk project.

12.3 Coimbra

There was nothing to report.

12.4 Network of Universities from European Capitals (UNICA)

The Committee noted the discussions on approaches to Doctoral College provision and the Professionals in Doctoral Education (PRIDE) network.

12.5 Universitas 21

There was nothing to report.

13. Planned task groups

13.1 Student status of PhD student after thesis submission

The Committee noted that this task group had been paused pending further activity by the Service Excellence Programme.

13.2/

13.2   Practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study

The Committee noted that the first meeting was planned for 25 October. The Committee approved the addition of an administrative member from CAHSS.

14.   Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee: 25 May 2018

The Committee noted the paper.

15.   Research Policy Group report

15.1   Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 draft guidance – summary of key information

The Committee noted the paper and that Committee membership of Research Policy Group is being sought.

16.   Any other business

16.1   Conferences and events

16.1.1 Vitae Conference – September 2018
The Committee was pleased to note that the 3 Minute Thesis competition had been won by a University PhD student.

16.1.2 UK Council for Graduate Education Scottish Forum – 30 November 2018
Committee members will be attending this event and a report will be available for a future meeting.

16.1.3 **Student Partnership in Quality Scotland (sparqs) – 5 October 2018**
Details of this event on student engagement and diversity of students will be circulated to the Committee.

Action: NK

16.1.4 **Russell Group Special Interest Group**
The next meeting will be held in Bristol.

16.2   **Students' Association Postgraduate Research Representative**

The Committee expressed its thanks for participation and contribution to Fabio Battaglio, the outgoing representative.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
28 September 2018