

The University of Edinburgh

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
to be held on 27 June 2018 at 2.00pm
in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House, Chambers Street
Convener: Dr Patrick Hadoke**

A G E N D A

1. **Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2018** Enclosed
 2. **Matters Arising**
 - 2.1 Enlightenment Scholarships
 - 2.2 PGR Space – Old Kirk Project
 3. **Convener’s Communications**
 - 3.1 Service Excellence Programme – postgraduate research activity update
 - 3.2 UKCGE Scottish Forum
- For Discussion**
4. **Distance PhD Progress Update** REC 17/18 5A
 5. **Update: Progress on Taking Control of Your Career** REC 17/18 5B
 6. **Supporting Postdocs at the University of Edinburgh** REC 17/18 5C
 7. **Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development: Progress reports June 2018** REC 17/18 5D
 8. **Heads of Graduate Schools Postgraduate Research Experience Survey themes discussion outcomes**
 9. **Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Students** REC 17/18 5E
 10. **Task group remits and membership** REC 17/18 5F
 11. **Regulations**
 - 11.1 Supervisor attendance at oral examination
 - 11.2 PhD by Research Publications
 12. **Maternity Policy for University of Edinburgh Scholarships** REC 17/18 5G
 13. **Annual review of effectiveness of Senate Committees** REC 17/18 5H
- For information and formal business**
14. **External Engagement:**
 - LERU
 - UKCGE
 - Coimbra
 - UNICA
 - Universitas 21

H/02/26/02

- 15. **Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee: 23 March 2018 meeting** REC 17/18 5I
- 16. **Research Policy Group report**
- 17. **Any other business**
 - 17.1 **Conferences and events**
 - 17.1.1 UKCGE Conference – July 2018
 - 17.1.2 Vitae Conference – September 2018

Susan Hunter, Academic Services, 20 June 2018

REC: 27.06.18
H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 5A

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

26 June 2018

Distance PhD Progress Update

Executive Summary

The paper provides an update on progress with recommendations, challenges and barriers to implementation identified by the Distance PhD Implementation Task Group.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University's strategic objective of leadership in learning.

Action requested

REC is invited to note the paper. There are no specific actions identified in the paper. However REC is invited to consider whether the challenges and barriers discussed in the paper need to be fully addressed considering that distance PhD student numbers are low and there is currently no institutional strategic priority for growth in this area.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

There are no specific actions associated with the paper.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. **Resource implications (including staffing)**

There are resource implications associated with some of the "Challenges and Barriers" identified on page 3.

2. **Risk assessment**

A risk assessment is not included as no specific actions are identified. However there may be risks to the quality of distance PhD provision if challenges and barriers are not addressed.

3. **Equality and Diversity**

No specific equality and diversity issues were identified by the working group. However, it is anticipated that distance PhD programmes would help facilitate accessibility for protected characteristics groups such as disabled students.

4. **Freedom of information**

The paper is **open**.

Originator of the paper

Professor Sian Bayne, Assistant Principal Digital Education
Susan Hunter, Academic Services
20 June 2018

Distance PhD progress update

The paper provides an update on progress with distance PhD programmes. It includes information from the Colleges on student recruitment and programme development. There is also an update on progress with recommendations and challenges identified by the previous Researcher Experience Committee (REC) task groups which explored Distance and Flexible PhDs.

Work to date is intended to provide frameworks and support for Schools which wish to pursue approval for distance PhD programmes, and to ensure that there are no blockages in regulations or codes of practice for those that wish to do so. Numbers of distance PhD students are currently low, however with the expansion of distance learning MSc programmes, and a general move toward greater numbers of students wishing to conduct doctoral study at a distance, it is important that the University supports high quality supervision, technology access, and clear processes for Schools that wish to grow this form of provision.

1. College updates:

1.1 Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

Distance PhD programmes are currently under development in the College. There have been expressions of interest from Medical Education and from the Vet School with each indicating a wish to recruit two students onto the online distance learning scheme. The College is currently evaluating the detail of these applications which require provision of more information before a decision is made about whether to approve them or not.

1.2 Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

Two Schools, Health in Social Science (HiSS) and Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS), have active distance PhD programmes. There are currently a total of three part-time students studying on these programmes (one in HiSS and two in PPLS). A proposal for a distance PhD programme is currently under consideration in the School of Education: Education already has three part-time distance PhD students from a pilot phase of provision.

1.3 Science and Engineering

The College currently has no plans to develop or recruit to distance PhD programmes. There are a number of students in the College who have long term leave of absence which equates to a similar student experience to that of distance PhDs.

2. Task Group final report – March 2017

REC received a report from the Distance PhD Implementation Task Group on 14 March 2017. The report identified challenges and barriers to implementing distance PhD programmes as well as progress with recommendations from the previous Distance/Flexible PhD task group. An update on these is provided below. The Committee is invited to consider whether the challenges and barriers identified below need to be fully addressed in view of

the low numbers of distance PhD students and as there is currently no institutional strategic priority for growth in this area.

2.1 Challenges and barriers

2.1.1 Funding (scholarships or allowances against fees) for PhD study at a distance

A reduction in funding for centrally funded scholarships due to less unrestricted funding being available from the University's Development Trust, means it has not been possible so far to secure funding for distance PhD study. The working group considered that prioritising discussion on distance scholarship availability was important to ensure consistent experience and provision for all PhD students.

Update: There is currently work being undertaken by the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions to produce a paper for Fees Strategy Group on scholarship priorities for recruitment. The paper is intended to establishing a typology of scholarships and initiate a conversation about whether current provision is impactful and future priorities. REC may wish consider contributing to this conversation to highlight the importance of distance learning scholarships and any comments on award level.

2.1.2 A clear solution is needed for covering the costs of participation by distance PhD students in online MSc modules

This doesn't yet easily fit into the current income and expenditure attribution model, so an exemption would need to be put in place to allow the transfer of costs between schools. This could be done, and indeed there are exemptions in the model for other situations, but the view from colleagues who look after this is that distance PhDs and associated cost transfer would need to be happening at volume for it to be put in place. The second aspect is the cost itself and this needs to also be linked to the fees charged on courses; a proposal on fees would need to be submitted to Fees Strategy Group.

Update: CMVM has been asked to submit a proposal fully showing the financial effects, including changes in demand anticipated by the proposed fee structure, for MSc by distance learning.

2.1.3 A support community and stimulating academic environment is essential to PhD study

The task group acknowledged the importance of having a recognised individual centrally with responsibility for developing methods and events programmes to build the PhD (distance) community. It was also suggested that curation of online research methods training could be done centrally, possibly through an online doctoral training centre. Resourcing for any central provision is yet to be identified. Working group members will participate in discussion on learning from Centres for Doctoral training facilitated by the College of Science and Engineering in spring 2017.

Update: this recommendation was originally targeted to Schools and Information Services Group (ISG) and it is anticipated that the pilot programmes will provide learning in relation to community and academic environment for distance PhDs.

3. In Progress

3.1 Supervisor training must include material directly addressing support for distance PhD students

The task group agreed awareness of distance PhDs would be included in Supervisor Briefings and bespoke guidance on supervising at distance would be developed by the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and Colleges.

Update: IAD includes awareness of distance PhDs in Supervisor Briefings. Consideration of bespoke guidance on supervising at distance will be taken forward as part of the REC supervision CPD framework task group.

3.2 Access to specific items of software normally available to residential students on School or central PCs must be addressed

Information Services Group (ISG) currently provides a service to deliver non-standard software to postgraduate taught distance users via a hosting service within University of Edinburgh using the Citrix platform. As part of the IT Roadmap and ISG strategic plan, ISG are developing a new facility for the provision of technologies to enable remote access to applications, services and the desktop environment to students and staff. This is due to go into pilot in semester 2 of 2016/17 and will be launched for session 2017/18, replacing the previous Citrix-based service.

Update: Information Services Group (ISG) currently provides a pilot service delivering a limited range of software for use in teaching and learning using the Citrix platform, primarily aimed at postgraduate taught distance programmes. As part of the IT Roadmap and ISG strategic plan, ISG are expanding the Citrix platform to provide access to a wider range of users, both local and remote, using their own devices. The number of software titles available will also be increased. This enhanced service will be released into service in July 2018.

3.3 Access to University of Edinburgh Library hardcopy-only materials must be resolved

Library and University Collections division in ISG will field and resolve any requests of this nature. It is not anticipated that journal licencing will present any problems for matriculated students accessing resources online. There are potential difficulties for access to print materials, depending upon the subject and location of distance students. The Library suggests that this should be taken into account by Schools and Colleges when considering distance PhD provision.

Update: nothing further to update at present.

3.4 Sufficient online training courses in research methods and generic skills should be developed (or sourced externally)

A pilot has been developed by IAD, the "Preparing for Doctoral Success" course on LEARN (beginning October 2016). A new accredited MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) for research methods training has been developed by the Schools of Education and Social and Political Science which could be extended to other contexts. Pilot activities will be evaluated

by their developers. Lynda.com is being promoted to researchers by IAD. ISG play a support and consultancy role. The working group suggest online training courses should be curated centrally but recognise that resource for this has yet to be identified.

3.5 English language requirements should be the same as those for residential PhD students, through the first years of experience of offering PhD at a distance

English Language Education plans roll out of a new online English testing system across the University in January 2018.

Update: After a recent review by senior management, the online language test is now due to complete its pilot phase in the new year 2019 with carefully planned and identified rollout following thereafter. The English Language Education (ELE) department within the Centre for Open Learning agree that it is important to revisit the synergies that there may be with supporting online PhD students alongside their other means of language testing. If more detail and timescale can be provided by the Committee then ELE would be pleased to follow this up and consider this cohort as part of their current review and project planning.

3.6 To ensure lessons are learned from the early developments in distance PhDs, REC should receive annual reports

First annual reports were received from Colleges at the 27 September 2016 REC meeting. Future reports on developments will also be received from the Assistant Principal Digital Education.

Update: REC received an update on the business case being developed by CMVM in September 2017. This paper provides a progress update including annual reporting from Colleges.

3.7 Guidance documentation for supporting high quality PhD study at a distance

The Code of Practice for Researchers and Supervisors and Programme and Course Approval and Management Policy were reviewed for 2016/17. A major review of the Code of Practice is in progress and the task group has provided comments on content. Consideration is being given on guidance for inclusion in Supervisor Briefings for development by IAD and Colleges.

The task group did not make any recommendations on the guidance for video linked oral examinations. However, it did recognise that this needed updating. This guidance does not only apply to Distance PhDs but could form part of guidance documentation for supporting high quality PhD study at distance.

[PhD by Research oral examinations by video link guidance](#)

Professor Sian Bayne

Susan Hunter

20 June 2018

REC: 27.06.18

H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 5B

The University of Edinburgh

Senatus Researcher Experience Committee

27 June 2018

Update: Progress on Taking Control of Your Career

Executive Summary

This paper is a summary of the limited progress on implementing the postdoctoral research staff development framework presented to REC in September 2017 and to ask for recommendations from REC on how to get greater engagement.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

This framework would allow the institution to meet increasing requirements from funders to demonstrate its commitment and support for broader career development of funded fellows and research staff. It will directly impact on the committee priority for 2018/19 to

- Enhance support for Early Career Researchers (make more visible, enhance and structure provision, strengthen partnerships)

Action requested

REC to provide more detailed suggestions on how to implement the framework, following its earlier support.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Additional leads and opportunities will be followed up by IAD and progress will be reported on in early 2019.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

None

2. Risk assessment

None

3. Equality and Diversity

Improved career development opportunities for postdoctoral research staff will contribute to a more inclusive research environment through clearer signposting to support, line manager responsibilities and career trajectories.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is open

Key words Postdoc, IAD, Career Development, Researcher Development

Originator of the paper

Sara Shinton, Institute for Academic Development, 20 June 2018.

Reminder of Key points

The framework combines a navigation guide to professional development alongside a series of meetings with a line manager and/or mentor. Although the professional development opportunities are open to researchers, without the supporting meetings there are no mechanisms to ensure that the researcher has engaged with their career development, is taking appropriate actions towards a career goal and is aware of and receiving support for any other issues.

Successes

Following REC in September 2017, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Sciences developed and have since submitted a proposal for postdoctoral research staff which includes the framework.

The framework will be built into a number of UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships.

Interest in the framework has been expressed by HiSS and SPS (Schools of Health in Social Sciences and Social and Political Science) and will be followed up with meetings in the summer.

Meetings with postdoc champions in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE) – Engineering and Chemistry – have highlighted the value of the framework, but the role of the Postdoc Champion is inconsistent across the College. Although supportive, the postdoc champions don't have mechanisms to influence line manager actions and approaches.

Recommendations to improve uptake of framework:

- Development of the CSE postdoc champion role with consistent terms of reference which can be supported by IAD
- Develop a costing model to support implementation of the framework by including in research proposals

For discussion:

- What other approaches can be taken to embed the programme, bearing in mind the constraints on IAD resources?
- Should the framework be extended to include other emerging issues in researcher development such as mental health, bullying and harassment and research integrity?

Any comments or links to other key staff can be emailed to sara.shinton@ed.ac.uk

27 June 2018

Supporting Postdocs at the University of Edinburgh

Executive Summary

This paper is a summary of the information postdocs are able to access via the main University website, with recommendations on how to increase the postdoc profile and make the support available to them more visible. Alongside this, a benchmarking exercise was carried out to highlight what structures and systems are in place at other UK Universities to support researchers' personal and professional development.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

This review of postdoc support and visibility will allow the Committee to identify if we are promoting and supporting an outstanding research experience and being as competitive as we can be. This information can inform how we currently engage with and support research staff/postdocs around the University. It will directly impact on the committee priority for 2018/19 to enhance support for Early Career Researchers (make more visible, enhance and structure provision, strengthen partnerships)

Action requested

REC endorse a review of the University Research webpage and for IAD to seek support from Information Services Group (ISG) to improve access to research staff related information.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

If the feasibility and structure of a postdoc centre is of interest, a paper will be produced following visits to key institutions over the next 6 months and presented to REC in early 2019.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

- 1. Resource implications (including staffing)**
Resource for reviewing the University Research web page will need to be sought from ISG.
- 2. Risk assessment**
There is a potential impact on future funding if postdoc support is not strengthened and made more visible.
- 3. Equality and Diversity**
Clearer signposting to support and information for postdoctoral research staff will contribute to a more inclusive research environment by reducing reliance on local cultures and support.
- 4. Freedom of information**
The paper is open.

Key words Postdoc, IAD, Career Development, Researcher Development

Originator of the paper

Nicola Cuthbert, Sara Shinton, Institute for Academic Development, June 2018.

Postdoc Visibility

Although we are aware of the support for postdocs in the institution through the activities of this Committee, new staff and researcher line managers partly rely on local information presented at School or institute level and the University website. This paper summarises the results of a review of information available to postdocs at the University, when searching using specific search terms (shown below). This is to identify if relevant information can be easily found.

The table below gives an overview of different search terms and the search results for each audience and following this are some recommendations to make it easier for Postdoc/research staff to find information.

Postdoc Visibility via University of Edinburgh Web Search:

Search Terms	Search Results
Postdoc / postdoctoral researchers / postdocs	Links to School pages where actual 'postdocs' are listed – e.g. names of researchers Links to achievements by postdocs / opportunities for postdocs Jobs for postdocs Postdoctoral fellowships Nothing at a University level Nothing from IAD Nothing from IAD Researcher Development Programme
Researcher / Researchers	IAD PhD programme Moray House School of Education has a webpage about HR Excellence and the Concordat (which is out of date) https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/research-support/researcher-development 3 search pages in, Research (https://www.ed.ac.uk/research) webpage Nothing from IAD Researcher Development Programme
Academic Researchers	IAD main page Research webpage https://www.ed.ac.uk/research IAD PhD programme Moray House School of Education webpage (as above) SRS 'Academics' research and teaching, academic network, etc. Nothing from IAD Researcher Development Programme
Research Staff	1 st search page, 1 st listing is IAD Researcher Development Programme Academic Staff PPLS Research staff organisation in GeoSciences Contact list at Roslin IS Training for Research Staff (Mantra) 2 nd search page, Code of Practice Moray House School of Education webpage (as above) 3 rd search page, Concordat and training brochures 4 th search page, Get Connected 7 th search page, Research (https://www.ed.ac.uk/research)

Recommendations to improve postdoc visibility:

- Guidance from IS on improving results for key search terms to connect with essential information particularly the University's central Research page.
- Development of the University **Research** page to give more prominence to IAD and Research Support Office (RSO) and their role in supporting researchers and research (cf prominence of Edinburgh Innovations) with particular attention to Support for Researchers section with links to key topics (integrity, wellbeing and EDI issues).

For discussion:

- Is the lack of a consistent term for research staff contributing to ambiguity and poor signposting? *Should the term for academic research staff/postdocs be grouped under something different, e.g. 'researcher development', i.e.*
 - University of Manchester: <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/research/researcher-development/>
 - University of Bristol: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/academic/researchstaffhub/>
 - University of Glasgow: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/research/development/>
- Do postdocs and our positive research culture need higher status on the university research page?

Structures and Systems in place for Postdocs in other HEIs

Summary of support structures in other Universities focused on researcher personal and professional development.

Institution	Information	Web links
University of Cambridge	<p>Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPdA)</p> <p>Postdoc Centres - Provision of facilities and spaces for the postdoctoral community and services</p> <p>https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/first-ever-postdoc-centre-is-new-home-for-research-staff</p> <p>OPdA Volunteering Scheme - Volunteer roles at the OPdA are open to anyone, but primarily recruit volunteers who are partners of postdocs at the University – enabling them to contribute to the postdoc community and the mission of the OPdA.</p>	<p>https://www.opda.cam.ac.uk/postdoc-centres</p> <p>https://www.opda.cam.ac.uk/postdoc-community/opda-volunteering-scheme</p>
Imperial College London	<p>Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre - The Postdoc and Fellows Development Centre (PDFC) offers an extensive programme of professional skills and career development training, support and opportunities, to enable postdocs and fellows to succeed in their current position while planning their next step. Opportunities include: Courses and workshops,</p>	<p>http://www.imperial.ac.uk/postdoc-fellows-development-centre/</p>

	individual support, mock interviews, postdoc ref network, resources for fellows	
University of Bristol	Pathways - Academic Staff Development (ASD) aims to enhance and support excellence in academic practice at Bristol across leadership, professional skills, research and teaching, working with staff across all three academic pathways.	http://www.bristol.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/academic/
Cardiff University	Equipment and facilities - We invest significantly in our estate each year to provide modern and well-equipped facilities. Our campus development programme includes work being undertaken at the new Maindy Park campus. Maindy Park is being developed specifically to house our Research Institutes and Centres and to offer outstanding facilities for interdisciplinary research. Sharing Resources - As part of the GW4 partnership we are working with the University of Bath, University of Bristol and the University of Exeter to make our research equipment more visible and easier to share.	https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/our-research-environment/supporting-researchers/equipment-and-facilities
Kings College London	Centre for Research Staff Development The Centre for Research Staff Development provides support for research staff to achieve their potential, before, during, and after your time at King's, with active support from the most senior staff in the university. Research Staff at King's are postdoctoral staff, research assistants, technicians and teaching fellows. In fact, all those other than PhD students who are engaged in research and who do not yet have an independent, permanent academic or managerial position. We work with you and on behalf of you at King's in several ways. COMMUNITY - We facilitate and support an active, engaged research staff community and ensure there are opportunities for you as researchers to contribute to how King's operates. CAREERS	https://www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/Centre-for-Research-Staff-Development/index.aspx

	COURSES COMMUNICATIONS CONCORDAT	
University of Nottingham	<p>Graduate Centres</p> <p>The Graduate School's five Graduate Centres offer postgraduate students and research staff dedicated social and study spaces at each of our UK campuses. The Graduate Centres have developed local researcher communities through programmes of discipline-specific activities designed to complement the central and cross-disciplinary provision of the Graduate School.</p> <p>Graduate Centres have particular expertise in providing careers support for early career researchers, engagement with local and national organisations, and funding support for fellowship applications.</p>	https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/researchstaff/researcher-community/graduate-centres.aspx

For discussion:

- Would a Postdoc Centre (or equivalent) benefit The University of Edinburgh?

Given the shift in doctoral education with funders demanding more and more from institutions to support their funded students, there is increasing prevalence in the sector for distinct centres with a focus on postdoctoral affairs. The highly devolved nature of this institution may present the same challenges that we face with doctoral cohorts if similar demands emerge for research staff.

Any comments or links to other key staff can be emailed to n.cuthbert@ed.ac.uk

REC: 27.06.18

H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 5D

The University of Edinburgh

Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

27th June 2018

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development: Progress Reports June 2018

Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of the progress made from December 2017 to June 2018 for work stream 1 (supervisor training and support) and work stream 2 (mentoring) of the Excellence programme. These include progress to date and proposed next steps. The committee is requested (as the Programme Board) to discuss progress and approve proposed next steps where appropriate. Further information on the Programme is available here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education>

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University Strategic Objective of Leadership in Research. It also aligns with the Committee priority of discussing options for taking forward the postgraduate research enhancement work.

Action requested

The Committee is requested to comment on, discuss progress to date and, where appropriate, approve proposed next steps for the Programme.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The paper includes indicative timelines for proposed next steps. Actions will then be communicated by the Programme lead to all appropriate stakeholders.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

It has been agreed that the work included in this Programme can be supported at present by existing staffing resource in the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and Academic Services. If the work identifies further resource implications, early discussions will be undertaken with relevant units.

2. Risk assessment

No major risks identified

3. Equality and Diversity

This will be considered carefully by the Supervisor task group and it is expected that work from workstream 2 will contribute to enhancements across various groups.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is open

Key words

Doctoral education, supervision, mentoring

Originator of the paper

Dr Fiona Philippi, Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
(Programme lead)

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme: Progress Report June 2018

Overview

In February 2017, REC approved the commencement of a comprehensive Programme of work to investigate, map and enhance the PGR student experience across the University. This Programme comprises three interrelated work streams.

1. supervisor training and support
2. mentoring and wellbeing
3. personal and professional development record

Details of these and the background to the Programme can be found here:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/papera-excellenceprogramme.pdf>

Progress Reports from May 2017 and December 2017 can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education/progress>

Summary Table of Progress made in all areas of the Programme June 2018

Area of work	Summary of Progress	Further information
Work Stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support	Supervisor programme run through 2017/18. Programme will be embedded for 2018/19. REC Supervisor CPD framework taskgroup set up and will report January 2019. Enhanced pages for PGR supervisors on IAD webpages.	Short update in this paper
Work Stream 2: Mentorship and Wellbeing	6 month IAD/ Students' Association post – PGR peer support in place (May – Oct 2018).	Short update in this paper
Work Stream 3: Personal and Professional Development Record	Task group concluded and final report submitted to REC (December 2017)	This has been referred to Service Excellence.

Communication and Consultation

Communication

This report will be shared with College Committees and will be put on the programme webpages.

Consultation

Doctoral Training and Support Forum

IAD hosted a Doctoral Training and Support Forum in January 2018. This was open to anyone involved in doctoral training and support (academic and administrative staff). Twenty-eight people attended from across the three Colleges. It gave an overview of the Excellence programme and will focus on sharing practice and discussion in three areas (mentoring and wellbeing, supervision and tutoring and demonstrating).

School meetings

Throughout April and May 2018, the IAD doctoral team have been meeting with individual Schools. Themes of the Excellence programme (supervision and peer support) have been agenda items for these meetings.

Future

Heads of Graduate School meeting

In June 2018, the Heads of Graduate School meeting will focus on themes identified from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and will also involve communication about the REC taskgroup on supervision.

Supervisor CPD framework task group

As part of the work of this group, there will be consultation with Colleges on various aspects of supervisor training and support.

Peer support project

This project involves consultation with PGR students and Schools on peer support across the institution. This takes the form of meetings and focus groups.

Launch of revised Code of Practice

The launch of the revised Code is an opportunity to highlight developments in supervisor support and training.

REC is asked to comment on the general progress made to date and future plans

Work stream one update: Supervisor training and support

In May 2017, REC approved a set of next steps for this work stream. This table gives an overview of progress to date for each of these steps.

Agreed in May 2017	Progress to date	Next steps
Revision of IAD webpages for doctoral supervisors to begin to create a 'hub' of dedicated resources and support. This may involve a Learn resource for supervisors. ONGOING	IAD webpages revised and there are now dedicated PGR supervisor pages / email address. Resources and tools are being added. https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/research-roles/supervisors	Resources and tools to keep being added, possibly becoming a LEARN resource.
Identify further training and support needs through consultation with the PGR supervisor network/ results from CROS and PIRLS 2017 to draw up a programme of activity for 2017/18 EMBEDDED	Programme of pilot activity for PGR supervisors ran throughout 2017/18. Includes spotlight on.... Events (co-supervision/ mental health and wellbeing support for PGRs), informal discussion groups and practical approaches workshops. This programme has been evaluated and a programme will now be developed for 2018/19.	To develop a programme for 2018/19 (see evaluation of programme 2017/18 below)
Strengthen the central support for compulsory supervisor briefings through sharing of resources and accessible checklist ONGOING	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Further explore and scope development of an online training resource for research supervision. ONGOING	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Consult with Colleges (through committees) about the 5 year rule for renewing supervisor training ONGOING	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Explore and scope options for recording compulsory supervisory briefings online ONGOING	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Continue to benchmark and map examples of good practice both externally and internally and include in this a review of relevant research literature ONGOING	Ongoing	Ongoing. To be included in workshops on supervision and in online resources.

REC is asked to consider and approve the proposed next steps for Work Stream 1

Evaluation of supervisor programme for 2018/19

Spotlight onsessions

November 2017 – Spotlight on co-supervision

This event focused on the expectations and challenges of co-supervision. This fed into the revision of the Code of Practice and also generated some resources for co-supervision, now on the IAD supervisor pages.

February 2018 – Spotlight on Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

This event was run in collaboration between IAD, Student Disability service, Student Counselling Service, the chaplaincy and the Students' Association. Feedback was positive, participants appreciated the opportunity to talk through case studies and to understand the support available. Following this, Chemistry have now been in touch with student Counselling to develop specific training (on the PT model) for supervisors. IAD will add links and resources to the supervisor pages and a wellbeing page to the PGR student pages for the start of 2018/19. Discussion about how this can fit into a training schedule is ongoing.

Plans for 2018/19 – topics suggested for spotlight sessions include: Research ethics and integrity/ Industrial placements/ Supporting international PGR students

Practical sessions workshops

Gaining Teaching Accreditation for your PhD Supervision: This session was run twice. Feedback was positive. Will run again in 2018/19.

Dealing with international PhD students' writing issues: This session ran twice and will run again in 2018/19.

Informal supervisor discussions

Over 2017/18 IAD piloted a monthly informal discussion group held in the central area and open to all PGR supervisors. Each discussion had a theme and discussion questions were developed for this. This generated a small group of interested people who attended most of the sessions. The ethics and integrity session attracted the biggest group. During the year, feedback was given that the timing of these may not optimise attendance so for the latter half of the year they were changed. Attendees were positive about the sessions and plans are to continue these through 2018/19.

Themes for 2017/18: ethics and integrity/ supporting students on fieldwork and placements/ supporting writing and giving feedback/ career development/ effective meetings

Update from REC Supervisor CPD Framework task group

Remit and membership can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20180116agendapapers.pdf> (REC 17/18 3C)

The task group has met once so far and agreed the following overarching themes for a University of Edinburgh Framework:

- Overarching themes for a UofE framework –

- Lead to accreditation where possible– one possibility to explore is the UKPSF but should also be aligned with the RDF
- Accessible – should be clear and open to all relevant users
- Developmental – clear emphasis on career development and for use in P&DRs
- Reasonable -it should not add unnecessarily to workload of supervisors or administrators. It should not duplicate training.
- Flexible – the framework can adapt to changes in provision of training etc. and should make effective use of online training/ resources

The taskgroup is currently benchmarking against other institutions in terms of the 5year rule for training renewal/ expectations on supervisors from associated institutions/ online training for supervisors and investigating ways in which to align with the learning and teaching framework and with promotions criteria/ Exemplars of Excellence.

Work stream two update: Mentoring and Wellbeing

This table shows an overview of progress for this work stream.

Agreed in May 2017	Progress to date	Next Steps
Explore possibility of developing a centrally hosted webpage which communicates the benefits of mentoring, schemes and resources available to PGR students. This would link to available schemes in their School/ subject area. ONGOING	To be considered alongside a proposed wellbeing section on the IAD PGR webpages as part of the actions from the report into wellbeing. Being taken forward by the Peer support project.	Being taken forward by the Peer support project. REC will be updated in September 2018.
Develop, in consultation with support services and relevant Schools/ subject areas, clear and formal guidance for anyone acting as a mentor for a PGR student in a pastoral capacity. REVISED (for context see appendix 1)	Little progress has been made on this as it is unclear as to what would be most useful for Schools/ Colleges as the structures vary across the institution. It is proposed that Colleges consider this and if appropriate draw up clearer guidelines on thesis committee expectations and structure.	TO BE DISCUSSED BY REC
Work in partnership with the Students' Association to build a clear case for supporting the further extension of peer mentoring to postgraduate research students. COMPLETED	Six month project started in May 2018 and will run until October 2018.	Will report to REC in November 2018.
Develop central resources for evaluation of mentoring schemes which can be made available to	Being taken forward by the Peer support project.	Will report to REC in November 2018.

staff involved in mentoring schemes. ONGOING		
Continue dialogue with Development and Alumni and the Careers Service regarding the new student alumni platform, to assist with establishing the requirements for PGRs. ONGOING	Dialogue continues. Launch of the platform has been delayed.	Any updates will be communicated to REC in due course.

REC is asked to discuss and approve the proposed next steps for work stream 2

Appendix One: report from the IAD Doctoral Support Forum: on PGR well-being

Supporting PGR Wellbeing Parallel Sessions Notes

Do PGR students need mentors?

Both groups agreed that PGR students do need a mentor of some sort. This is due to the fact that studying for a PhD can be an extremely isolating experience and it is important for students to feel as though they are part of a community and have a sense of belonging. Some attendees also felt that it was important for PhD student to hear about the experiences of those further on in their PhDs. It was also agreed that PhD students should have access to better career support from alumni and the careers service.

How does your School/Institute support PGR wellbeing?

A number of examples were raised:

Thesis Committees

Biology – Task based networking opportunities are arranged

Engineering – Academic Advisers

Vet School – Trips to Furbush

Divinity – informal mentoring scheme organised by the PG student committee who organise events. Members of staff also volunteer to provide pastoral support to PhD students. Students are notified of this at the beginning when they commence their studies.

Informatics – PhD Personal Tutors, CDT, Career sessions, Informatics families

Health in Social Science – Buddy System, Ted Talks – students choose a ‘Ted Talks’ talk and hold a discussion around the topic.

Medicine – Hold regular talks for staff and PhD students – open invite, usually well attended.

Geosciences – Research career afternoons – open invitation to all PG students

What developments would you like to see to help support PGR wellbeing?

Raise further awareness of mental health issues – signposting and training

Multiple sources of support should be available to PGR students – more than just one person acting as a mentor

Career support

Clear visibility of sources of support – Counselling, Disability, Careers etc. as many PGR students are unaware that this support is available to them.

Creation of a Mentoring Connections type scheme for PGR students would be welcome.

Cross-school opportunities should be encouraged

Thesis committees should be implemented across the University

Some clarity on the operation of thesis committees would be welcome as there is a great deal of variation in the operation of committees across CMVM.

Appendix Two: Update on the PGR peer support project

Written by Nathalie Vladis – Academic Developer (PGR peer support), IAD and Students' Association

Senate Researcher Experience Committee Update – PGR peer support project

Despite the large number of resources dedicated to supporting peer support initiatives for undergraduate students, very little is known about this topic in postgraduate research (PGR) communities.

This six months project aims at exploring the postgraduate research peer-support landscape, identifying opportunities to a) re-use undergraduate schemes b) initiate new PGR centred schemes or c) supporting existing student-led initiatives. Lastly, based on the information above, we hope to gain a better understanding of the demand regarding PGR peer-support which will allow us to make recommendations on how to address it.

During the first month of this project, I consulted with staff and PGR students from different Schools but also with support and community services such as the Advice Place and Chaplaincy.

INITIAL FINDINGS

Through these conversations we identified four groups of PGR students:

- Students belonging to a doctoral training programme (such as the CDTs in Data Science and Pervasive Parallelisms), where social events and peer-learning workshops are facilitated by staff and students tend to be satisfied by their sense of community.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme that are satisfied by the variety of peer-support, peer-learning and community-building opportunities provided by their Schools.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme wanting to run/currently running a successful peer-support and community building structure, often find that they are not very well supported in securing funding, organising events or increasing visibility.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme that do not have access to any peer-support or peer-learning PGR communities and do not know how to organise their own.

Having identified these four categories, we have started to hold focus meetings with staff facilitating peer-support communities to learn about practices they found successful and with PGR students wanting to run/currently running initiatives to understand what type of support they need.

We learned that:

- There appears to be a high demand for a PhD student mentoring scheme focused around field-work.
- Other peer-support schemes implemented in UG communities do not seem compatible with PGR needs & lifestyle.
- To become successful, a PGR peer-support event needs to be small, recurrent, and student-led but staff supported.
- The types of help PGR students would need to run successful peer-support initiatives involve learning how to:
 - secure and manage funding
 - plan and promote events
 - facilitate conversations and signpost

With all that information in consideration, future work will focus on:

- Collaborating with Schools and organisations (such as the Advice Place and Chaplaincy), interested in developing a mentoring scheme around field-work.
- Supporting pilots at the Schools of Informatics, Social and Political Sciences and the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences and potentially others.
- Organising small tea & coffee sessions with different Schools to introduce or reinforce a culture of 'social time with peers' outside of research and to understand demand for peer-support.
- Building a centralised resource that will include:
 - information about popular PGR peer-support groups and their past events that could inspire other PGRs to start their own
 - toolkits and contacts to help support existing groups but also provide a springboard for new initiatives

20 April 2018

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

Executive Summary

The paper provides a near-final draft of the revised Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students. Academic Services has undertaken another stage of drafting, and as a result made a range of relatively modest changes both to the ordering, text and minor changes to the substance in some areas. Academic Services has also reviewed the content for consistency with the updated degree and assessment regulations and policies on Special Circumstances, Withdrawal and Exclusion from Study and new Authorised Interruption of Studies policy. Additional content has been provided by the Careers Service (see section 6.3.2) on career development.

As supervisor roles and responsibilities are presented differently from the previous Code of Practice, with fewer attributed to specific supervisory roles and emphasis on discussing supervisor responsibilities at the first supervisor team meeting, it will be important to communicate why this change is being made. As the way supervisor teams are constituted varies across the institution, the aim for the new Code of Practice is to reflect the diversity of existing arrangements. Further work on defining supervisor roles will be taken forward by the task group on supervisor CPD and any future developments will be reflected in subsequent iterations of the Code of Practice.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the committee's priority to review the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

Action requested

REC is invited approve the Code of Practice content for publication, subject to Academic Services undertaking a final proofing stage and making any non-substantive changes as are required.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The communication strategy below was agreed by the Committee at its April meeting. In addition, Academic Services will contribute to a Teaching Matters blog, and postgraduate research student and supervisor newsletters produced by the Institute for Academic Development.

Channel	Communicator
College postgraduate committees	College REC representatives
College postgraduate administrative forums	College REC representatives/Academic Services via College postgraduate admin contacts

Postgraduate Research Supervisors Network	REC Vice-Convener, IAD, Academic Services
Annual policy update	Academic Services

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Resources for updating the Code of Practice are expected to be met from existing Academic Services resources.

2. Risk assessment

A risk assessment is not included in the paper as the revised document does not contain any new policy information. The guidance on supervisory roles and responsibilities may indicate changes to practice in some areas, but this advice is intended to reflect good practice and therefore mitigate risks to the student experience by ensuring clarity on responsibilities is communicated.

3. Equality and Diversity

As the Code does not change policy and is not mandatory an equality impact assessment is not required. However, Academic Services has reviewed the content and cannot see any reasons why the introduction of the new Code will disadvantage any equality groups. Alternative formats will be made available if required.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

20 June 2018

Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students

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Introduction

The University aims to give research students an exceptional and distinctive experience that prepares them to make significant contributions to knowledge during and beyond their period of study. This Code provides guidance and practical advice for research students to assist them in maximising their potential. For supervisors it also provides guidance and practice advice to support them in undertaking their crucial roles.

Since the University has a diverse research community with a variety of practices, this Code highlights common features which should be read along with School and programme-specific information.

Most aspects of the Code are relevant to distance programmes, however where different arrangements apply these will be highlighted in the relevant programme handbooks. The Code focuses primarily on students and supervisors of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programmes and many aspects are also relevant to MSc by Research programmes. However some MSc by Research programmes may have different arrangements for supervision and assessment and these will be highlighted in the relevant programme handbook. Where students are studying on jointly delivered research degree programmes (for example for via Doctoral Training Centres), some of the arrangements for supervision, assessment and support may differ from those described in the Code.

The Code is not part of the University's formal regulatory framework and should be read in conjunction with the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, and other relevant University policies and regulations, many of which are referenced in the Code.

1 Roles and responsibilities

At the University of Edinburgh, each student is supervised by a team of at least two supervisors; a Principal (or "Lead") Supervisor, and either a Co-Supervisor or Assistant Supervisor, who are appointed by the College. The nature of the research project and the best interests of the student will determine the makeup of the supervisory team and the key responsibilities of each member of the supervision team, must be agreed by the team at the beginning of the student's programme.

However the responsibilities are distributed, all supervisors are expected to take an active role in supervision and all have a responsibility towards the student. All supervisors are expected to attend College or School supervisor briefings at least every five years.

1.1 Students' responsibilities

All students are expected to comply with the University's policies, regulations and procedures which along with their programme handbook, other programme information and the terms and conditions of admission, form the contract between the student and University during their studies.

[University Student Contract](#)

Research students have particular responsibilities for:

The research project

- Fulfilling the requirements of their degree programme (PhD, MPhil, MSc by Research or taught professional doctorate) including any requirements for annual progression review.
- Taking advantage of the facilities and supervision offered in the University.
- Working as a professional, independent researcher accountable for the development of their own research.
- Maintaining ethical standards in the design, conduct and reporting of research.
- Working diligently and effectively throughout their studies.
- Following the rules of any other university, Associated Institution, company or other organisation that they are studying with as part of their programme.

The thesis

- Submitting a thesis, or portfolio representing the student's research and findings. The programme handbook will give details on what is expected to be submitted for assessment. Throughout this document the term "thesis" is used to represent the assessment submission.
- Producing, on time, a thesis that meets the criteria set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.
- Taking full responsibility for the quality of the thesis submitted for assessment (while the supervisor may advise on whether they think work is ready for submission, their opinion has no influence on the final outcome of assessment by the thesis examiners).

Supervision

- Making themselves available at times agreed and maintaining regular contact with their supervisors.
- Producing a record of each key supervision meeting and forwarding it to their supervisor for agreement.
- Discussing any proposed employment with their supervisor to ensure it does not impede the successful completion of the students' programme of study.

Training and development

- Taking advantage of available research skills training.
- Reflection on their broader transferable skills and professional development, and engaging with appropriate training opportunities.

Resolving problems

- Actively seeking advice and help from the sources identified in this Code if problems arise.
- Notifying their supervisors of any special circumstances affecting their studies or assessment.

1.2 Supervisor responsibilities

1.2.1 Principal/Lead Supervisor

Role

The Principal Supervisor, sometimes referred to as Lead Supervisor in a Co-Supervisory team (see 1.3 below), has the main responsibility for supervision arrangements and guidance for the student throughout their programme of study. (“Principal Supervisor” is used to indicate both Principal and Lead Supervisor in the Code).

This includes taking overall responsibility for:

- The administrative aspects of supervision, for example submitting concession requests and ensuring minimum contact requirements are met;
- Ensuring appropriate approval for any co-supervision arrangements is obtained from College;
- Ensuring the student’s progress is reviewed for each year of study;
- The welfare of the student;
- Ensuring the student’s intellectual property is respected;
- Leading on initial and ongoing discussions with the supervisory team to negotiate and agree on roles and responsibilities for each team member;
- Ensuring the student is aware of the responsibilities of individual supervisory team members;
- Communication within the supervisory team.

1.2.2 Co-Supervisor

Role

A co-supervision model may be chosen by the School when it is clear that the student’s work involves interdisciplinary research. When this model is chosen, the Co-Supervisor will play a major role in supervising the research project. The division of responsibilities between the Principal or Lead Supervisor and the Co-Supervisor must be agreed upon at the outset of the co-supervisory arrangement.

1.2.3 Assistant Supervisor

Role

The Assistant Supervisor’s role involves fewer responsibilities than the Principal Supervisor, but in some cases may include closer day-to-day involvement in the student’s research. Assistant Supervisors

may also provide complementary expertise, such as specialised knowledge of a particular technique, or depending on the work context, day-to-day supervision in some cases.

1.2.4 Supervisors in Associated Institutions

The University recognises as “Associated Institutions” a range of non-commercial and non-degree-awarding organisations with which it collaborates on teaching, research and services to the community. Staff working in Associated Institutions acting as supervisors for the University’s students have the same responsibilities as University of Edinburgh supervisors, and the same requirement to attend the University’s supervisor briefing sessions.

If the Principal Supervisor is from an Associated Institution, then the University Supervisor and School Postgraduate Director are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Associated Institution Principal Supervisor has read the University’s regulations and policies.
- Ensuring student progress is monitored in line with the University’s regulations and policies (joint responsibility with the Postgraduate Director and College Committee)

1.2.5 Responsibilities of the supervisory team

The supervisory team should meet as soon as possible once supervisory arrangements are confirmed. At the first meeting, the team should discuss the following responsibilities and decide how to ensure that all of these are covered. This should be discussed again at the student’s annual progression review and at other times as necessary.

- Introducing the student to the subject area, its facilities and procedures, and to other research students and relevant staff in the School. For distance PhD students these introductions may be virtual.
- Advising the student on the key milestones of the degree, drawing up a research plan and timetable for completion of the thesis.
- Advising the student on research ethics and integrity, including obtaining ethical approval.
- Advising the student on facilities required for the research and supporting the student in accessing these.
- Advising the student on how to prepare for annual progression review and the viva voce examination.
- Agreeing the minimum number of supervision meetings and the means of recording meetings.
- Organising regular meetings to discuss all matters relating to the student’s research, including feedback on written work.
- Advising on the student’s professional development needs at the start of the programme and reviewing these throughout the student’s studies.
- Encouraging students to develop transferable skills and to attend appropriate training courses where possible.
- Advising the student on where to find appropriate sources of additional support and signposting University student support services details included in section 6.3.
- Ensuring the student is aware of relevant health and safety policies and procedures.

- Encouraging the student to become an active member of the research community, for example by advising on attendance at relevant conferences and supporting the student in seeking funding for such events.

1.3 The College Committee

Each College has a specific committee with responsibility for postgraduate research matters. The committee's name may vary by College, but it will have overall responsibility for postgraduate research supervision, annual progression review decisions, authorising periods of leave or changes to study periods. In practice, Colleges may delegate some of these decision-making responsibilities to Schools (for example the Postgraduate Director). The College Committee also acts as the Board of Examiners for postgraduate research degree awards. Throughout this document the term "College Committee" is used to refer to all these roles.

2 Student-Supervisor relationship

The student-supervisor relationship is vital to all research degrees. Therefore close contact between supervisors and students is essential.

Respect, trust, confidence and fairness are essential elements of the student-supervisor relationship. Most interpersonal problems between students and supervisors can be avoided if students, supervisors, and other members of the University community contribute responsibly and professionally to their working relationship by being respectful, courteous, punctual and conscientious.

The University's Dignity and Respect policy promotes a positive working and studying culture which every student and member of staff contributes to and in which they can fulfil their potential.

[Dignity and Respect Policy](#)

2.1 Contact and key meetings

Students rely on contact with their supervisors for guidance and intellectual input to their research. Supervision meetings provide time for discussing all matters relating to the student's research, including feedback on written work. Meetings and regular contact may take place face-to-face or online. The key meetings referred to in this section are formal supervision meetings to discuss planning and progress and where decisions are taken in relation to the students research and development. Annual progression review meetings are recorded through the online annual review form.

If the Principal Supervisor is absent for more than six consecutive weeks, the College will ensure alternative supervision arrangements are in place.

[Agreeing the purpose and frequency of supervisory meetings](#)

Students must maintain contact with their supervisor as required and at least twice in every three month period. It is important that both student and supervisory team agree, at the start of the programme, how often meetings will be held and the purpose of meetings. It is important that students can easily contact their supervisors for advice, so supervisors may also be available for

additional non-scheduled meetings. Students can initiate meetings but supervisors need to ensure that the minimum contact requirements are met.

The amount of contact between student and supervisors will vary depending on the length of the programme, how the research is being done and how much support the student needs. For example, there may be more meetings in the first few months when the research project is being defined. Part-time students should be prepared for frequent meetings at the start of their research to help with planning.

Sometimes supervision will be at distance, for example if the student is working away from Edinburgh or is on a recognised distance learning programme. The supervisory team and the student will need to make sure arrangements are in place to support distance supervision, for example internet access and consider any time differences at the student's location.

Keeping records of supervisory meetings

Recording supervisory meetings helps the student and supervisory team keep track of actions and decisions. Therefore, students should provide their Principal Supervisor with a written note including:

- the date and purpose of the meeting,
- any problems identified, and
- action points.

2.2 What happens if the supervisory relationship breaks down

If the supervisory relationship seems to have broken down, students or supervisors can contact their Postgraduate Adviser or School Postgraduate Director. If the problem isn't able to be resolved, then the College Committee should be approached through its Secretary or Chair. If there are problems with the supervisory relationship then University staff will respect confidentiality and limit disclosures to as few colleagues as necessary to resolve the problem.

If there appears to be a breakdown in the student-supervisor relationship and problems are not able to be resolved locally, both the supervisor and the student must consider mediation. Mediation is a voluntary process, however the University will always try to resolve conflict in a positive way. That means that the parties who are in conflict should give informed consideration to mediation as a way of resolving the conflict. Schools can request mediation from the College which can contact the University's accredited mediator in Human Resources for advice.

Support for students experiencing problems with the supervisory relationship is available from the [Students' Association's Advice Place](#).

3 Annual progression review

Keeping on track with research can be challenging for students. Annual progression review meetings provide an opportunity to monitor and support students in maximising their chance of successfully completing on time. For students to benefit fully from annual progression reviews it's important that supervisors provide constructive criticism about the student's work. Students studying at a distance

may choose to attend annual progression review meetings in person; if this is not possible, they may take place online.

Annual progression reviews provide a formal record of how the research project and thesis are going and recognition of student achievements. They also offer a structured opportunity to discuss students' professional development and career aims, and identify any training needs.

3.1 Annual progression review process

Timescale

The first review takes place within nine to 12 months of matriculation. By then students will have independently produced an identifiable body of work that can be assessed.

Progress is then assessed annually until thesis submission (or more frequently if recommended by the Postgraduate Director for an individual student - see below). The timescales are the same for full and part-time students.

Process

Students must complete their annual review form online via the MyEd portal.

- The process begins when the student is notified by a system-generated email that their report is ready to complete. Once the student has completed their part, the supervisors complete their sections.
- The student prepares a presentation or report, including a forward plan of their work, before the meeting, with help from the supervisor if needed.
- The student attends a review meeting where they may need to give an oral presentation.
- At the review meeting, an assessment panel, which includes the supervisory team and at least one other person appointed by the School (the reviewer), reviews the student's presentation or report.
- After each review meeting, students get feedback from the assessment panel. The student, supervisors, reviewer and School Postgraduate Director then sign-off the online report before a progression recommendation is submitted to the College for its approval (the student is not involved in the progression decision).
- If the assessment panel identifies concerns about a student's progress following any review, then it can recommend several different ways forward (see below).

What is reviewed

Programme handbooks will give information on annual progression review arrangements but some of the things that reviews may include are:

- A timetable for progress agreed by the student and supervisory team.
- A record of whether deadlines have been met.
- The results of any taught elements of the programme.
- The student's report on any programme of skills training they have undertaken to support their research and any transferable skills development they have undertaken.

[*Reviewing supervision arrangements*](#)

Sometimes a student's research changes direction and may move away from the supervisors' expertise. The annual progression review lets supervisors consider their own competence to deal with any new research area. If different expertise is needed to support the student, the School can recommend a change in supervisors to the College Committee.

[Guidance and regulations](#)

Guidance for students on completing their annual progression review is available on Student Systems' website.

[Guidance on postgraduate research annual progression review form](#)

Guidance for supervisors on the annual progression review system and their role is available on Student Systems' website:

[Principal and lead supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

[Additional supervisor role summary and annual progression review guidance](#)

The regulations on annual progression review, including the recommendations that can be made following a review, are in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

3.2 Problems with progress

Postgraduate research study is challenging and sometimes students may experience problems making progress. To help support students, it is important for supervisors to be open about any difficulties they foresee with successful completion. There are various options available to support students experiencing problems with progress and University student support services may be able to help with non-academic problems.

A supervisor who thinks that progress has been consistently unsatisfactory should discuss the problem with the student and follow this up with a written record of the discussion for the student. Unsatisfactory progress will also be noted in annual reports, and flagged for remedial action.

If, following annual progression review, a student is not making satisfactory progress, then the supervisors and the Postgraduate Director may recommend deferment of a decision (part-time students' first year review only), that a further (repeat) review takes place within three months, re-registration for a different postgraduate research or taught degree, or exclusion from study – this option is rare. (The full list of progression review recommendations is in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees). Supervisors will provide students with a written explanation of their assessment in these cases.

The annual progression review may occasionally record serious problems, requests for extensions to the period of study or recommend exclusion from study. In these circumstances, the College may invite the student to be interviewed and the chair of the College Committee, or Postgraduate Dean, may carry out this assessment with advice from the College Office.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research](#)

[University Procedure for withdrawal and exclusion from study](#)

4 Thesis preparation and assessment

4.1 The thesis

Students must submit a thesis or portfolio representing the student's research and findings. Some submissions will be in alternative formats to the traditional thesis. The Postgraduate Degree Regulations and programme handbook specify any further requirements for designs, composition, artworks or performances and their display, presentation and documentation.

4.2 Thesis preparation

Writing up and submitting the thesis in line with the timescales set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations or programme handbook should be the priority in a student's final year. In preparation for thesis submission, student and supervisor should agree a timetable for completing the thesis.

The maximum thesis length is set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. No minimum length is stipulated however Schools and Colleges may have additional guidance on expectations which supervisors will be able to advise on.

Thesis regulations including notice of intention to submit, format, previously published material and the signed declaration are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

Additional guidance on the lay summary, completing the signed declaration, including publications in the thesis and the format of the thesis, binding requirements and electronic formats is available on the University website.

[Academic policies and regulations for research students](#)

More information on typical milestones and support in preparing the thesis is available on the Institute for Academic Development website:

[Writing up your PhD](#)

The thesis

The criteria for the award of research degrees are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations. In addition, the thesis should:

- Be the student's own work, except where indicated throughout the thesis and summarised clearly on the declarations page of the thesis.
- Make an original and significant contribution to knowledge in the field of study.
- Contain material suitable for wider dissemination.
- Show adequate knowledge of the field of study and of the relevant literature.
- Demonstrate critical judgement of the candidate's own work and that of other scholars in the field.

The thesis should be written to:

- Be satisfactory in its literary presentation.
- Provide a coherent structure with full and adequate references.
- Make clear the intentions of the work, its background, methods and conclusions.

- Be understandable to a scholar in the same field.
- Be presented in a clear, consistent and accessible format.

Additional information

More information on thesis binding, the signed declaration, including publications in a thesis and producing a lay summary is available on the University website.

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

The University's [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

4.3 Thesis submission

Students should complete a Notice of Intention to Submit form, along with a thesis abstract and access to thesis form at least two months prior to submission. Pre-submission forms are submitted to the School or College Office. Once the thesis is ready for submission, the student presents it at the School or College Office. Supervisors and Graduate Schools will be able to advise students where to submit their thesis. Thesis submission forms are also available online:

[Doctoral thesis submission](#)

4.4 Thesis assessment

Assessment regulations, including examiner roles and responsibilities, conduct of assessment, thesis regulations and assessment decisions are set out in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.

The University's [Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

All research degrees (apart from MSc by Research) are assessed in two stages; the initial report by the examiners followed by an oral exam or viva voca, often referred to as the "viva".

Examiners' report

Examiners are asked to assess the thesis on the grounds set out in the regulations and as part of their report to consider:

- Is the thesis an original work that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in or understanding of the field of study?
- Does the thesis contain material worthy of publication?
- Does the thesis demonstrate adequate knowledge of the field of study and relevant literature?
- Does the thesis show the exercise of critical judgement with regard to both the student's work and that of other scholars in the same general field?
- Is the presentation and style of the thesis satisfactory?

The viva

The viva, is normally held within three months of thesis submission, however the exact date will depend on:

- When the Notice of Intention to Submit (NITS form) is submitted by the student.

- When the thesis is submitted by the student.
- How long it takes to select and appoint examiners.
- How long the examiners require to examine the thesis.
- When everyone involved is available to meet for the oral examination, including any visa restrictions on the student's availability.

The thesis examiners and the student attend the viva. The Internal Examiner is responsible for ensuring the arrangements for the exam are made and for chairing the exam. (Sometimes a non-examining chair will be appointed and the student will be notified by the Internal Examiner if this is the case. The role of the non-examining chair is included in the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees.) The examiners may use the viva to establish a student's knowledge of the field of their research, to establish the extent of any collaboration and to confirm that the work is the student's own.

The viva is usually held in Edinburgh, but where necessary the College Committee may approve a remote exam by video link. Guidance on remote PhD oral exams is available online:

University guidance on [PhD by Research oral examinations by video link](#)

4.5 Thesis corrections

After assessment, the examiners may ask students to make minor corrections to the thesis. These may be editorial corrections or to address minor weaknesses before the award is confirmed. Corrections will need to be submitted within three months (or four if a further oral exam is recommended). The internal examiner will certify the corrections and the external examiner may also ask to see corrections before the degree is awarded.

4.6 Thesis resubmission

Following assessment, the examiners may ask students to carry out further work on the thesis and to resubmit it for the same or a different degree. Supervisors will guide students through the necessary steps to meet the examiners' requirements and continue to provide supervision as needed.

Students will get a clear written statement from the examiners, approved by the College Committee, of what revisions are required.

The examiners will assess the resubmitted thesis against the written statement on re-examination, and will not introduce any new criticisms of previously examined material.

The same process is followed for resubmitting a thesis as for the original submission – for example, presentation at the School or College Office.

5 Absences and concessions

Sometimes students who are based for the most part in Edinburgh may need to have time away from the University or from their studies. This section gives advice on ways the University can support students through a variety of situations that may impact on their study.

5.1 Leave of absence

Students studying on-campus sometimes need to conduct part of their research away from Edinburgh. This is referred to as a leave of absence. Students who want a leave of absence of 30 calendar days or more should talk to their Principal Supervisor, who will be able to advise on obtaining permission.

A leave of absence should:

- Benefit the research programme.
- Not be detrimental to the research and the student's development and participation in the University's academic community.
- Not conflict with any other requirement of the student's programme of study.
- Not conflict with any obligations for the student to be available for on-campus activity.
- Have a working timetable agreed by supervisors and student.
- Be accompanied by an agreed method for submitting written work and receiving feedback, and for supervisory meetings, established by the supervisors and student.
- Be consistent with any funder requirements.

Further information on how leave of absence is approved, and student support arrangements during leave, is available from the College Office. Leave of absence doesn't apply to students on recognised distance learning programmes.

Leave of absence for international students

Tier 4 students are normally expected to carry out all of their study on campus. However, in some cases they may need to study at another location; for example, a work placement or period of study abroad at another institution as part of their programme. In these cases, students should apply for a leave of absence. The University will continue to sponsor student visas during the leave of absence, providing it can maintain Tier 4 sponsor duties, and student Tier 4 visas will remain valid. Advice is available from visahelp@ed.ac.uk.

5.2 Interruptions of study

Authorised interruption of study, usually referred to as "interruption", is available for students who are unable to study for a while. This may be because of health or family problems for example, and students should notify their supervisor as soon as the need for an interruption arises. Following discussion with their supervisor, students are responsible for completing and submitting a form to request the interruption. Interruptions will be authorised when there is good reason and examples of what is considered good reason are given in the University policy on authorised interruptions of study.

Information on how to request an interruption, important considerations and where to find further advice are available in the Authorised Interruption of Study Policy.

[University policy on Authorised Interruption of Study \[link to be added\]](#)

[Authorised Interruption of Study Form \[link to be added\]](#)

5.3 Extensions of study

The University expects that the thesis will be submitted for assessment within the period stated in the programme handbook. Extensions to this period are available in exceptional circumstances and must be agreed by the Postgraduate Director and approved by the College Committee. For example, if unforeseen difficulties have held up the research or completion of the thesis. A strong case is required and must be supported by the Principal Supervisor.

To request an extension:

- The Principal Supervisor submits the request.
- The request includes a statement outlining the academic reasons for the extension, and
- A plan of work towards submitting the thesis, with milestones and specific dates agreed with the Principal Supervisor.

Important things to consider when requesting an extension:

- It must be made before the end of the student's maximum submission date (for example, within four years for a full-time PhD).
- It may have an impact on a student's visa - advice is available from Edinburgh Global.
- It may have an impact on student funding.
- It may have an impact on council tax (for example discounts and exemptions).
- There are restrictions to the amount of time that can be requested for extension – these are set out in the Postgraduate Degree Regulations.
- Additional fees may be incurred if an extension of study request is approved – see the University's [tuition fees policy](#).

For further information and advice:

For Tier 4 students – [Edinburgh Global](#)

[The Advice Place](#) – free, impartial advice for students

University [Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#)

5.4 Special circumstances affecting a student's studies and assessment

Special circumstances are exceptional circumstances beyond a student's control that significantly impact on their research performance, attendance or assessment submissions.

Students should discuss any circumstances affecting their ability to engage with their studies with their Principal Supervisor first.

Support for students with special circumstances that are disrupting their studies can be offered through authorised interruption or extension of study (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). However, there may be times when personal circumstances affect a student's ability to participate in an assessment, for example annual progression review or viva. If these are affected, it may be possible to reschedule or change the format of the meeting or exam.

The College Committee may also take into account any special circumstances when considering recommendations from an annual progression review or oral exam. Therefore, it is important that students notify their Principal Supervisor, Postgraduate Director or Postgraduate Adviser in writing

of any special circumstance before the relevant assessment (for example annual progression review or viva) or the College Committee meeting.

Examples of circumstances that might have a significant impact include:

- Significant short-term physical illness or injury;
- Significant short-term mental ill-health;
- A long-term or chronic physical health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;
- A long-term or chronic mental health condition, which has recently worsened temporarily or permanently;
- Bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship;
- A long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage;
- Exceptional (i.e. non-routine) caring responsibilities;
- Experience of sexual harassment or assault;
- Experience of other types of harassment;
- Victim of a crime which is likely to have significant emotional impact;
- Military conflict, natural disaster, or extreme weather conditions.

Examples of circumstances that are unlikely to be accepted include:

- A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health) which has not worsened recently, or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment;
- A minor short-term illness or injury (e.g. a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on assessment;
- Occasional low mood, stress or anxiety;
- Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable;
- Holidays;
- Financial issues;
- Pressure of academic work (unless this contributes to ill-health);
- Poor time-management;
- Lack of awareness of dates or times of assessment submission or examination;
- Failure, loss or theft of data, a computer or other equipment;
- Commitments to paid or voluntary employment;
- Death of a pet.

For taught courses taken by postgraduate research students, the University's Special Circumstances Policy applies.

[University's Special Circumstances Policy](#)

5.5 Withdrawal from studies

Withdrawal from studies is a voluntary decision by the student. Any student may withdraw permanently from the University at any point in the year. However, before applying to withdraw, students are strongly advised to consult their Principal Supervisor and to consider the implications of withdrawal. More information is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

5.6 Exclusion from studies

While it is very rare for students to be excluded from study, there are some circumstances in which the University may need to consider this option. These might include unsatisfactory academic progress following an annual progression review, or lapse of time if a student hasn't submitted a thesis by the end of their maximum period of study, or for non-attendance or non-engagement if a student has not met any engagement requirements set out in the programme handbook. More information is available in:

The University's [Procedure for Withdrawal and Exclusion from Studies](#)

5.7 Vacation leave

Students can take up to six weeks' vacation time in a year, with agreement from their supervisor. There is no need to apply for an interruption of study when taking vacation leave.

5.8 Student maternity and parental leave

Students who are pregnant, about to become a parent or guardian, or adopt a child during their study should let their supervisor know so they can provide academic advice. Flexible arrangements, such as time off, modifications to attendance or interruption of study, can be put in place to support students who are to become parents and more information is available in the University student maternity policy.

[The University's Student Maternity and Family Leave Policy](#)

6 Other support and information

6.1 Resolving problems

Supervisors are the first point of contact for students if any problems arise and will either be able to offer advice themselves or direct the student to other sources of advice.

There may be times when students feel unable to confide in their supervisors. If so, they can get in touch with the Postgraduate Adviser if their subject area has one, or the School's Postgraduate Director. Contact details of key School staff are available in the programme handbook. If the problem cannot be resolved by them, the student may then consult with the Secretary or Chair of the College Committee.

Supervisors can also seek help in resolving problems by the same routes.

6.2 Programme handbooks

The School Office will provide students with their programme handbook. Programme handbooks are an important source of information for students. They are part of the University's academic governance framework and include programme-specific information on:

- Supervision arrangements,

- Thesis requirements,
- Research skills training,
- Professional development,
- Teaching opportunities and
- Research culture.

Handbooks also include information on programme organisation, assessment and feedback, key contacts and locations, student support services, opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experiences, attendance requirements, student representation structure, data protection and health and safety information.

6.3 Student support services

The University, Colleges, Schools and Students' Association provide a comprehensive range of support services to enable students to make the most of their time as part of the University community. Many student support units offer online as well as face to face services, although the range accessible to distance students may differ from those for on-campus students.

6.3.1 Students' Association

Research students are automatically members of Edinburgh University Students' Association. The Students' Association provides a range of services, including advice and representation, peer learning and support, events and entertainment. Over 300 student-run societies are supported by the Students' Association. For more details, see the association's website, at eusa.ed.ac.uk/postgrad or visit one of the Students' Association buildings at Teviot Row House, Potterrow, Pleasance, or King's Buildings House.

The Advice Place

The Advice Place is home to the Students' Association's professional advice team. They offer free, impartial and confidential information for students on everything and anything including funding, accommodation, student welfare, and academic matters. For full details on the range of advice on offer, visit:

[The Advice Place](#)

Student Representation

At the beginning of each academic year, Schools elect Postgraduate Student Representatives ('Reps') who are trained and supported by the Students' Association and work closely with their Postgraduate Director. Postgraduate research students elect a University-wide Postgraduate Research Rep. Research students are encouraged to engage with student representation processes and elections so that Postgraduate Research Reps can work with them to improve their University experience and the Students' Association can adequately represent postgraduate research students.

6.3.2 Career development

Research graduates enter many different careers both within and out of higher education. To ensure students make satisfying, well-informed career decisions the University encourages research students to explore their career options, and to consider their career priorities throughout their study.

Considering career development from the start of the programme will ensure students both develop as researchers and prepare for professional success, whatever employment sector they enter. Throughout their studies, students should take advantage of the many opportunities they will have to gain experience, develop skills, access relevant training, engage with employers, and build professional networks to prepare for their future career. Students are encouraged to reflect on and record their experiences so they can consider areas of strength and interest, which will help them to identify suitable professional development opportunities and to make a successful career transition.

Research students can get support from the Careers Service to explore career options, consider what is important to them in a career, and to implement career decisions through job search and application support. The Careers Service runs career management workshops for research students, organises employer networking events and careers fairs, and offers individual career development consultations. The service also has online career management resources for research students.

[Careers Services: Information for postgraduate students](#)

6.3.3 English language tuition

English Language Education (ELE) provides classes, workshops, and materials for international students who would benefit from English language support whilst studying for their degree. Supervisors can refer a student who needs help with English to ELE directly, even if the student has not taken the Test of English at Matriculation (TEAM). The student will then be offered English language tuition, or independent study materials and advice.

[English Language Education](#)

6.3.4 Library collections and services

A wide range of library services, collections and study spaces are provided to support both taught and research elements of students' work. Collections include print and digital books and journals, rare books and special collections, artworks, images, museum items and archives. Digital and print library resources are available for students based in Edinburgh. In addition to electronic resources, printed library materials are digitised where possible for students undertaking online or distance learning.

[Library services](#)

[Library resources for online distance learning students](#)

Academic Support Librarians

There is an Academic Support Librarian allocated to each School. Their role is to:

- Provide advice and assistance on using library services and collections,
- Demonstrate the use of information resources by arranging subject-specific information skills sessions,
- Help students' with research by arranging one-to-one advice sessions, and
- Advise on research data management.

[Academic Support Librarians](#)

6.3.5 Computing resources

Email

All students are provided with a University email account and this is used as the official means of communication for a variety of essential information. See:

[University policy on the use of email for contacting students](#)

Computing facilities

Schools will ensure that students have access to specialised computing facilities where required, and receive appropriate training. Training will cover how to access and use computing facilities relevant to particular degree programmes and research projects.

The Research Data Service offers tools, support and training to students working with research data. Solutions for research data management and all of their data-related requirements.

[Research Data Service](#)

Research Support in the Information Services Group (ISG) offers everything students need to know about managing and publishing their research.

[Research support](#)

The Centre for Research Collections (CRC) is the only place in the UK where researchers can access material from across collection types; from medieval manuscripts to contemporary art. This unique combination of collections makes the CRC an invaluable resource for teaching within the University.

Centre for Research Collections

Information Services (IS) provides a wide range of advice on all aspects of computing and IT.

[IS information for students](#)

[IS information for researchers and teaching staff](#)

6.3.6 Student Disability Service

The Student Disability Service provides information and advice to disabled students and staff (including supervisors and professional services staff). As well as providing a range of support services, the Student Disability Service:

- Provides a range of student support assistants who can proofread texts, assist in the library and act as notetakers.
- Supports students to apply for statutory or University funding, if they are entitled to Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) or equivalent funding for international and EU students.
- Determines a range of reasonable adjustments based on assessment of student needs.
- Advises supervisors and professional services staff on supporting disabled students and specific support adjustments to study, examination and assessment procedures.

Students with impairments (including dyslexia, long term mental health problems, students on the autistic spectrum, as well as physical and sensory impairments) that will impact on study should contact the Student Disability Service as soon as possible.

[Student Disability Service](#)

Regulations on “Reasonable Adjustments” to assessments for disabled students are included in the University’s assessment regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

6.4 Wellbeing resources

Postgraduate research study can be stressful at times. To support students to manage their wellbeing, the University provides a variety of services.

6.4.1 Student Counselling Service

The Student Counselling Service offers one-to-one counselling, workshops and consultation, and training for staff. The service aims to help students work through their difficulty, understand themselves better and find ways of managing their situation.

[Student Counselling Service](#)

6.4.2 Health and wellbeing

Details of a range of services provided for students by the University and throughout Edinburgh for physical and mental wellbeing are available on the University's Student website.

[Health and wellbeing](#)

6.5 Training and support for students

The University provides information, support and training for research, digital and transferable skills. These skills are vital for development as an independent researcher and important for life and career after the degree.

Research, digital and transferable skills are often developed as an integral part of supervision and engagement with the research community. Some students may also be able to access credit-bearing research methods courses.

Digital, transferable and professional skills development training is provided by Colleges, Schools, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD), the Careers Service, the Students' Association and Information Services Group. Students whose programmes of studies are delivered in partnership with other universities (for example via Doctoral Training Centres) may also have access to training opportunities delivered through those partnerships. Students also have access to online and University Library skills development resources, and digital skills development resources through Lynda.com. (Lynda.com is an online skills development service and the University has a licence for both students and staff to use it.)

[University Lynda.com information pages](#)

Annual progression reviews take account of what training and development opportunities students have undertaken and offer an opportunity to discuss future needs.

Students are encouraged to take the initiative in their own development and record their portfolio of skills, including:

- Attendance on regular training and development opportunities in accordance with their personal development needs and the demands of their research.
- Use of online training to develop research, digital and transferable skills.
- Use of the library and online resources.
- Engagement with the research community including presenting at seminars, tutoring and demonstrating, producing publications and attending conferences.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) website also provides some useful information on doctoral skills development, including a training needs assessment.

[IAD Doctoral researchers website](#)

6.6 Training and support for supervisors

The University provides training and events to support supervisors in maintaining expertise needed to perform their supervisory role.

Supervisor briefing sessions are organised regularly at Colleges and Schools. There are compulsory briefings for new supervisors including information on University regulations and procedures and support for their role. Supervisors are expected to renew their training every five years.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) also runs regular Postgraduate Research Supervisor Network events which focus on specific elements of supervision. The IAD also hosts informal, drop-in supervisor coffee discussion sessions to which all supervisors are welcome. Network events and informal discussions are advertised in the supervisor newsletter and on the IAD website.

Contact the Institute for Academic Development for more information on briefings, events and supervisor support. Email: iad.phdsupervisors@ed.ac.uk

[IAD postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

6.7 Students working during study

Work benefits both student and employer, but good self-management is needed to make sure students meet their research commitments. It is also important for students to maintain a good work-life balance.

The University will employ full-time postgraduate research students for no more than an average of 9 hours per week across the academic year (this is University policy), and recommends that students also apply this limit to work with other employers. Students should discuss any proposed employment with their Principal Supervisor.

If students get funding for their research, they must also check whether there are any restrictions or conditions on the amount of work they are allowed to do. Most funders allow some part-time work, particularly in areas relevant to the students' research, and encourage a common sense approach to other paid work.

For students on Tier 4 visas, there are additional limits on employment set by the UK Home Office. More information on visa implications for students is available on the University website:

[Part-time work during studies](#)

More information on combining part-time work with study is available on the Careers Service website:

[Part-time and vacation work](#)

The University's Policy for tutors and demonstrators is also available online:

[Tutors and demonstrators](#)

6.8 Fees and funding

6.8.1 Paying fees and fee status

Student fees and tuition costs are paid to the University Finance Department and more information on paying fees is available on their website. Tuition fee status and discount information is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website.

[Student Academic Fees – Finance Department](#)

[Tuition fees – Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

6.8.2 Scholarships and funding

Information about scholarships and financial support for research students is available on the Scholarships and Student Funding website.

[Funding for UK/EU students](#)

[Funding for international students](#)

[Scholarships and Student Funding](#)

UK Research and Innovation is the organisation which brings together the seven UK Research Councils (UKRC). Their website includes links to UKRC research funding information.

[UK Research and Innovation](#)

6.9 Degree and assessment regulations and other University policies

Postgraduate research degrees are governed by the University's Postgraduate Degree Regulations. These regulations cover issues such as study and submission periods, leave of absence, interruptions, extensions and withdrawal from study. Supervision regulations and the grounds for award of doctoral degrees are also here, as well as additional programme specific regulations.

The Postgraduate Degree regulations are in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study (DRPS) website.

[DRPS](#)

Research degrees are assessed under the University's Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees. These regulations cover the conduct of assessment, including annual progression reviews, thesis assessment and viva, thesis regulations and assessment decisions.

Some research degrees may contain taught elements and these will be assessed under the University's Taught Assessment Regulations.

[Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees](#)

[Taught Assessment Regulations](#)

The University's student contract encompasses the policies and regulations that support the partnership between students and staff. Students should familiarise themselves with these documents, particularly those that are most likely to be relevant to postgraduate research study.

[The student contract](#)

6.10 Student appeals

The University has an appeals process to allow students to request a review of a decision in relation to progression, degree award, student conduct, fitness to practice or exclusion. Information on the Student Appeal Regulations, arrangements and timescales for submitting an appeal and where to get advice is available on the University website.

Supervisor role in appeals

A supervisor's pastoral role continues after an appeal is lodged, even though the appeal might question the quality of supervision. After taking appropriate advice, supervisors will decide whether to assist the student in making their appeal case.

[Appeals](#)

6.11 Complaints

Students are encouraged to resolve any problems locally as early as possible, however if this is not possible a formal procedure is also available. The University's complaints procedure is designed to ensure that complaints are properly investigated and given careful and fair consideration. More information is available on the University Student website.

[Complaints](#)

6.12 Student conduct

Advice on expected conduct is also available on the University Student website. This includes rules and regulations, policies, procedures and codes of practice documents for all postgraduate students.

[Student conduct](#)

6.12.1 Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism and cheating, is covered by the Code of Student Conduct. More information is available on the University website.

[Academic misconduct](#)

6.13 Links to useful resources

Alphabetical list of links to University regulations, policies, guidance and other useful information.

[The Advice Place](#) – Edinburgh University Students' Association's professional advice service

[Assessment Regulations](#)

[Authorised interruption of study or extension of study – Postgraduate Research](#)

[Careers Service](#) – information for PhD students

[Centre for Research Collections](#)

[Complaint Procedure](#)

[Computing Regulations](#)

[Conduct, Student Code](#)

[Contacting Students by Email Policy](#)

[Data Protection – University policy](#)

[Data Protection - Use of Personal Data by Students](#)

[Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study \(DRPS\)](#)

[Digital Skills Programme](#)

[Dignity & Respect Policy](#)

[Disclosure of Information about Students - Guidelines](#)

[Equality and Diversity Policy](#)

[Edinburgh University Students' Association Postgraduate Activities](#)

[Glossary of Terms](#) – defines terms used in the Degree Regulations

[Graduations](#)

[Health and Safety – University policy and codes of practice](#)

[Health and wellbeing](#)

[Including Publications in Postgraduate Research Theses, Guidance](#)

[Lay summary guidance](#)

[Library Regulations](#)

[Mental Health, Student Strategy](#)

[New students' website](#)

[No Smoking - University Policy](#)

[Peer proofreading – The Advice Place scheme](#)

[Plagiarism guidelines](#)

[Postgraduate Research \(PGR\) Annual Progression Review Form software help \(PGR Supervisors\)](#)

[Postgraduate research supervisor network](#)

[Research support](#)

[Research Data Service](#)

[Research ethics and integrity resources](#)

[Social Media, University Guidelines](#)

[Student website - University](#) (including Health and Wellbeing, Academic Life, Careers, Money and Fees information)

[Student Appeal Regulations](#)

[Student Information Pages](#) (Scholarships and Student Funding, Student Information Points, Timetabling)

[Video linked viva examinations, Guidance](#)

References

[The Quality Code](#), Chapter B11: Research Degrees, QAA

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Degree Regulations 2018/19

University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees 2018/19

DRAFT

REC: 27.06.18

H/02/26/02

REC 17/18 5F

The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

27 June 2018

Task Group Remits and Membership

Executive Summary

At the April 2018 meeting, the Committee asked Academic Services to set up two short life task groups on the topics of student status and PhD with Integrated Study. The paper provides a draft remit, membership and timescale for each task group.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The task groups align with the committees priorities on student status and PhD with Integrated Study and the University's strategic plan objectives of excellence in learning and research.

Action requested

Researcher Experience Committee (REC) is invited to consider the remits, membership and timescales for approval.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Academic Services will implement setting up task group meetings and communication with members.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Staff time in participating in task groups is expected to be met from within existing resources. Supporting task groups is part of Academic Services core business.

2. Risk assessment

No risks are identified in relation to setting up task groups. However there may be risk related to the student experience and compliance associated with lack of clarity regarding the practical set-up and operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes.

3. Equality and Diversity

Task groups will consider equality and diversity implications in relation to any emerging recommendations.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Key words

PhD student status, PhD with integrated study

Originator of the paper

Susan Hunter, Academic Services

31 May 2018

Task Group Remits and Membership

At its April 2018 meeting, the Committee asked Academic Services to set up two short life task groups on the topics of student status and PhD with Integrated Study. The paper provides a draft remit, membership and timescale for each task group. Academic Services will support both groups. The Committee is invited to consider for approval the remits, membership and timescales below.

Student Status of PhD students after the submission of the thesis

Remit: To clarify the formal status of PhD students after they have submitted their thesis for assessment and the implications for the following: statutory reporting; how the student's status is recorded on EUCLID; immigration status; access to University services; any implications for scholarships / studentships. To report to REC identifying recommends for any action in relation to policy and system enhancements.

Membership: Convener – Director of Academic Services, one administrative representative from each College, Academic Services, Student Administration and Systems representatives (including student funding, statutory returns, and immigration compliance).

Timescales: To meet once or twice during summer / autumn 2018 and to report to the Committee by the end of 2018

Relationship with other strands of work: before the group starts work, Academic Services will clarify its relationship with the proposed Service Excellence Programme work on the postgraduate research student lifecycle.

The practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes

Remit: To develop practical guidance regarding the set-up and operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes, covering the following issues: how to set out mandatory taught / training components in Degree Programme Tables and to reflect students' attainment of them in EUCLID; approaches to redeeming student failure on mandatory taught / training components (for example, resits or credit on aggregate); approaches to monitoring students' progression in relation to mandatory taught elements; approaches to exit awards.

Membership: Convener – Dean of Postgraduate Studies (College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences), administrative representatives from the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, from three Schools that currently have PhDs with Integrated Study, Academic Services.

Timescales: During summer 2018, Academic Services will explore with Schools the appropriateness of the guidance presented to the Committee in April 2018. During autumn 2018, the group will discuss the findings from that consultation, and refine the guidance accordingly, with a view to presenting proposals to the Committee by the end of 2018.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
31 May 2018

Maternity pay for Research Postgraduate Students

Executive Summary

This paper seeks Researcher Experience Committee's (REC) endorsement of the approach to paying maternity pay to research postgraduate students. This policy brings the University of Edinburgh approach into line with that of the Research Councils. The policy was approved by Central Management Group in November 2017, subject to endorsement by Researcher Experience Committee and Research Policy Group.

How does this align with the University/Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The University's Strategic Plan 2016 commits to providing a supportive environment for staff and students, and in particular support our early career researchers.

Action requested

The Committee is invited to endorse the policy.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

- This paper will also be going to Research Policy Group for endorsement on 14 June.
- Once endorsed, the approach will be published by Scholarships and Student Funding Services and on School and other websites as well as in promotional literature.

Resource/ Risk/Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

It has not been possible to establish the numbers of university funded postgraduate research (PGR) students who take maternity leave. Feedback does, however, indicate that the incidence of maternity leave amongst PGR students is low/rare. Adopting the Research Council (RC) policy would extend the PGR stipend payment period by 6 months. Completion periods for PhDs would not be impacted by the adoption of RC policy approach but the potential for completion for pregnant PGR students would presumably be enhanced.

2. Risk assessment

Providing maternity pay for PGR students may mitigate the risk that students fail to return to their studies.

3. Equality and Diversity

Clear maternity policies for students and staff support their personal decisions and inclusion across the university community. This approach may improve the rate of completion for female students and removes potential indirect discrimination from those with the protected characteristic of maternity and pregnancy.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is **open**.

Originator of the paper

Pauline Jones, Governance and Strategic Planning June 2018

Proposed maternity policy for University of Edinburgh research postgraduate scholarships

1. In October 2017, Fee Strategy Group considered the need for a consistent approach to maternity pay for research postgraduate students in receipt of scholarships funded by the University. The University currently has a consistent Student Family and Maternity Leave Policy. However, the policy limits its reference to scholarships to those students who are in receipt of external funding; reflecting the very specific requirements of the Research Councils.
2. It is clear that we currently have limited transparency of our varied approach to maternity pay for PGR students. Taking into account considerations including research environment, perception of the University, PhD completion, as well as financial impact, Fee Strategy Group recommended that the University adopts the RCUK approach to maternity pay for University funded PGR scholarships.
3. CMG approved the adoption of the RCUK approach to maternity pay for University funded PRG recipients, subject to anticipated endorsement by Research Policy Group and Researcher Experience Committee.

Current position

4. The University has a Student Family and Maternity Leave Policy. However, the policy limits its reference to scholarships to those students who are in receipt of external funding; reflecting the very specific requirements of the Research Councils: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/studentmaternitypolicy.pdf>

“18. Postgraduate taught and research students who are in receipt of funding from external bodies should contact them for advice on funding related issues. The University will not be liable if an external funding body does not cover Maternity costs. Where a student is also an employee of the University, they should contact HR for advice on any entitlement to Maternity pay.”

5. The Research Councils have a clear policy in relation to maternity pay for those students on RCUK Studentships; providing 6 months paid and 6 months unpaid leave. <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/publications/traininggrantguidance-pdf/#page10>
6. Discussion with Academic Services indicates that the recent review of the policy (June 2017) did not consider the issue of University funded scholarships. This reflects both devolved scholarship decisions across the University and the fact that non-contractual scholarships are out with the requirements for maternity pay enshrined in employment legislation. It was, however, noted that students are regularly referred to Research Council policies on a wide range of issues and might imply that we would intend to take a similar approach on maternity pay.
7. As indicated in the student maternity policy, if a student is also a guaranteed hours employee then they are eligible for maternity pay under the University's maternity policy <http://www.docs.csg.ed.ac.uk/HumanResources/Policies/Maternity-Policy-.pdf>

Where a guaranteed hours employee does not earn sufficient to qualify for Statutory Maternity pay, they are expected to qualify for University maternity pay providing up to 16 weeks on full pay (calculated on their average Guaranteed Hours payment) provided they return to employment for 3 months.

Existing practice

8. Information gathered from CSE, MVM and Scholarships teams confirms that there is a variety of practice across the University.
9. MVM report that they tend to provide up to 6 months paid stipend for College-funded scholarships and Principal Career Development Scholarships whilst on maternity leave.
10. CSE have collected information from 6 schools. Five schools (Biological Sciences, Engineering, Physics and Informatics) indicate that they do not have a policy/respond on a case by case basis. The schools do not normally provide any additional funding for students but refer students to the University's policy and, when relevant, to Edinburgh Global. Mathematics has not had a maternity situation arise but anticipates applying the equivalent of RCUK terms to school funded students. Geosciences would be willing to meet the school share of funding for those on PCDS funding.
11. Scholarships team have confirmed that, on the rare occasion that cases are raised in relation to those funded through university-level awards, discretion has been used to match the Research Council approach.
12. A quick review of practice across other institutions reveals that Exeter and Manchester <http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=6540> have adopted Research Council policy in this area. In contrast, Newcastle, LSE, Kings College all suggest that students should contact their funders as funding may be suspended. Glasgow policy suggests that stipends may be suspended but with their College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine operating an equivalent of the RCUK approach. <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/mvls/graduateschool/currentstudents/phdstudentmaternityparentalandadoptionpayandleavepolicy/>

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The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

23 May 2018

Annual review of effectiveness of Senate Committees

Executive Summary

This paper explains that the 2017 version of the Scottish Code for Good Higher Education Governance requires the University to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of Senate and its Committees, and an externally-facilitated review of Senate and its Committees every five years. The externally-facilitated review will take place in 2018/19.

As part of the annual review (the report of which will feed into the externally-facilitated review in 2018/19), members of the four Senate Committees will be asked to fill in a questionnaire over the summer 2018. The questionnaire will seek to gauge the effectiveness of the composition, support, engagement and impact of the Senate Committees.

Draft questions for the questionnaire are included in the paper.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

This paper aligns with the University strategic objective of leadership in learning.

Action requested

To note the forthcoming reviews of Senate and its Committees.

Committee members are asked to reflect individually on the draft questions set out in the paper, and they will be asked to respond to these questions via an online questionnaire over the summer.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The outcome of the questionnaire will be reported to Senate at its meeting in October 2018 and the report of the annual review will feed in to the externally-facilitated review conducted in 2018/19.

The report from the externally-facilitated review will be communicated to Senate Committees.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

If the annual review identifies any potential changes to the operation of Senate's Committees, Academic Services will review the resource implications of implementing them.

2. Risk assessment

The paper will assist the University in ensuring that its academic governance arrangements are effective and will enable the University to manage a range of risks associated with its academic provision.

3. Equality and Diversity

One of the core principles of Senate and its Committees is to ensure that a diverse range of staff is represented on academic decision-making bodies. It is hoped that the questions asked in the questionnaire to all Senate Committee members will identify whether there are any equality and diversity issues in the make-up of the Committees and the way they conduct their business.

4. Freedom of information

Open

Key words

Governance, committees

Originator of the paper

Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services
Theresa Sheppard, Academic Policy Officer

Review of effectiveness of Senate Committees

Requirement to review the effectiveness of Senate and its committees

The 2017 version of the Scottish Code of Good Higher Education Governance states that institutions are expected to review the effectiveness of their Senate and its committees annually and to hold an externally-facilitated review every five years:

“49. The governing body is expected to review its own effectiveness each year and to undertake an externally facilitated evaluation of its own effectiveness and that of its committees, including size and composition of membership, at least every five years. As part of these processes or separately, the effectiveness of the academic board (also known as Senate, Senatus Academicus or academic council) is expected to be reviewed similarly. These reviews should be reported upon appropriately within the Institution and outside. Externally facilitated reviews should be held following any period of exceptional change or upheaval (allowing suitable time to see the effects of changes made), the usual timetable for externally facilitated review being brought forward if necessary in these circumstances.”

In line with the requirements of the Code, during Spring/Summer 2018, Academic Services is conducting an annual review of Senate and its Committees. The outcomes of this review will be reported to Senate in October 2018.

The University is planning to undertake an externally-facilitated review of Senate and its Committees during 2018-19.

Questionnaire regarding the effectiveness of the Committee

Members of the Senate Committees will be invited to fill in an online questionnaire over the summer 2018 and the draft questions for this exercise are set out below for comment.

Governance Structures

- Are you clear about the Committee's remit and how the committee fits within the academic governance framework of the University?
- Do you feel that the Committee manages its business effectively?
- Is the Committee flexible enough to adapt to changes in priorities?
- Are you happy with your Committee's use of task groups? Is there anything that could be improved?

Roles and Responsibility of Committee and Committee Members

- Are you clear on your role and responsibilities as a Committee member?
- If there is a lack of clarity, do you think there is anything that could improve this?

Composition

- Do you think that the current composition of the Committee enables it to fulfil its remit?
- Is the size of the Committee appropriate in order for it to operate effectively?

Support of the Committees

- Do you feel that the Committee is supported effectively? Are there any things we could improve?
- Are you happy with the volume and layout of the papers/information you receive to make decisions?

Participation of Members

- If you were a new member in 2017/18, were you happy with the induction you were given to the Committee and its business?
- Do you think Committee members participate fully with the Committee?
- Does anything limit your levels of participation with the Committee?

Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

- Does the Committee engage and communicate effectively with stakeholders? For example, is the Senate Committees' Newsletter an effective vehicle?

Making an Impact

- Do you feel that the Committee makes the desired impact based on its remit and priorities?

Equality and Diversity

- Is the composition of Committee members suitably representative of the diverse University population?
- Are you satisfied that equality and diversity considerations are adequately addressed when discussing Committee business?

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The University of Edinburgh

Senate Researcher Experience Committee

27 June 2018

Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee

Executive Summary

To update Senate on certain matters considered by the Knowledge Strategy Committee at its meeting on 23 March 2018.

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

Not applicable.

Action requested

Senate is invited to note the report.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Not applicable.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

2. Risk assessment

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

3. Equality and Diversity

Where applicable, as covered in the report.

4. Freedom of information

This paper is open.

Key words

Knowledge Strategy Committee

Originator of the paper

Dr Lewis Allan, Head of Court Services, May 2018

REPORT FROM THE KNOWLEDGE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**23 March 2018****1 City Deal Overview**

The Assistant Principal Industry Engagement briefed the Committee on the University's participation in the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Region Deal and its key role in the ambition to become the Data Capital of Europe. The following points were raised in discussion:

- 300 possible projects in collaboration with public, private and third sector partners have been identified, these should be prioritised and a suitable governance framework established;
- Importance of engagement with secondary schools on data education – a pilot programme with Midlothian Schools will be launched;
- Incorporating the City Deal into 'normal' University activity over time and considering possible links with the City Deal for all new projects reviewed by the Committee; and,
- Ensuring existing data privacy and safeguarding policies are suitable and can be scaled appropriately for City Deal activity – collaborative work with the Scottish Government on data safe havens is underway.

2 Draft Information Services Group Plan 2018-21

The Chief Information Officer summarised the draft Information Services Group plan and investment recommendations for the period 2018-21, noting that this will continue the 10 year strategic programmes set out in 2016 and 2017. The following comments were made in discussion:

- The importance of seeking feedback from Heads of Colleges and Schools on the plans;
- The network replacement programme is a high priority;
- Improvements to the student experience that would benefit existing students should be prioritised;
- Important to engage academic staff if the 'every academic a digital educator' aspiration is to be achieved;
- 24/7 opening of the Library has been very successful and the Library is heavily used – further improvements to enhance the number of study spaces are planned and would be welcomed.

3 General Data Protection Regulation Update

The Data Protection Officer provided an overview of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), its likely implications for the University and work underway to ensure compliance. Members discussed: circulating the online data protection module to the Committee when completed; identifying GDPR local champions across the University – with those appointed typically already involved in data protection work in their area; producing frequently asked questions, case studies and other materials for University staff; and collaboration with the Data Stewards. The Committee welcomed progress to date and requested that an update be submitted to a future meeting.

4 Information Security Update

The Chief Information Security Officer presented an update on information security activity across the University. It was noted that, although there has been no information security event of the scale of the worldwide 'WannaCry' attacks in mid-2017, malicious activity is continuing. Improving information security awareness and compliance was discussed, with a new Information Security Policy and Framework introduced in January. Access to University networks and systems by staff who have left the University was discussed, with a risk based approach expected to be taken.

5 Network Replacement Procurement Update

The Director of IT Infrastructure provided an update on the current status of the network replacement procurement project. Remedial work will be undertaken as required in the interim before the main network replacement activity is undertaken from January 2019 to January 2020. Scheduling of the network replacement in each building will be determined through consultation with stakeholders, with the work not expected to be intrusive or noisy. The decision of the Schools of Informatics and Engineering to join the University network and interest from the University's Accommodation, Catering and Events subsidiary in joining the network was welcomed, with the historical reasons for the current position discussed. These changes would impact on cost and will require appropriate scrutiny and approval.