

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
held on 27 June 2018 at 2pm
in the Cuillin Room, Charles Stewart House, Chambers Street**

- Present: Dr Paddy Hadoke, (Convener) Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Early Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Ms Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff PGR Representative
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
Ms Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Apologies: Mr Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students' Association
Mr James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's representative)
- Attending: Professor Sian Bayne, Assistant Principal Digital Education (for item 4)
Ms Denise Nesbitt, HR Deputy Director, Learning & Development (for items 5 and 6)
Dr Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 April 2018

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

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Enlightenment Scholarships

The Dean of Students, CSE updated the Committee on recent discussions with the Senior Vice-Principal. A paper proposing a future model will be submitted to the Senior Vice-Principal and the outcome will be reported to the Committee in 2018/19.

2.2 PGR Space – Old Kirk Project

Members were advised that there have been no further developments since the April Committee update and the new postgraduate research centre is still expected to open in January 2020.

3./

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Service Excellence Programme – postgraduate research activity update

A short written update had been provided which advised that the scoping for the next phase, in which postgraduate research (PGR) will feature, will be done during the summer. Colleges have been invited to identify PGR representatives to input to the Service Excellence Programme work on Work and Study Abroad. The Committee agreed it was important for the Service Excellence Programme (SEP) to engage with the PGR community and an SEP representative will be invited to the next meeting to provide an update on activity.

[Post-meeting note: the College of Science and Engineering had an initial meeting with SEP colleagues on 29 June to discuss PGR input to the Work and Study Abroad system. The other Colleges will be contacted by SEP colleagues to arrange similar input.]

Action: Secretary to invite SEP to September REC meeting

3.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) Scottish Forum

The Convener attended this event and more information on UKCGE activity should be available for the next Committee meeting.

4. Distance PhD Progress Update

The Assistant Principal Digital Education provided the annual report to the Committee on progress with Distance PhD activity. It was confirmed that the University strategy for Distance PhDs is enabling Schools wishing to provide distance PhD programmes rather than driving growth. However it is important that no active barriers to providing Distance PhDs are in place as it is anticipated that demand for this type of provision will grow.

Current numbers of Distance PhD students are low, with around seven students in total recruited in CAHSS and CMVM. The CMVM pilot is recruiting from online Masters programmes and the College is anticipating proposals from Clinical Education and the Vet School. Once these proposals are received a report will be available for this Committee.

Action: Convener

The Committee was invited to input on the following key areas of work identified for further attention.

Scholarship funding: the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions is preparing a paper for Fees Strategy Group on scholarships and the Assistant Principal will work with her to keep Distance PhDs on the priority list.

Online Masters courses: little is currently available but this may become more important if there is growth in numbers of Distance PhDs. Governance and Strategic Planning are currently looking at cost model options for participation in Masters online course based on current availability. IAD online training provision is supplementary and another approach may be needed for some training provision. Further discussion will be taken forward by IAD with the Assistant Principal.

Support community: as numbers are low this is currently on an ad hoc basis and learning from pilots will inform future development needs.

The Committee was supportive of the Assistant Principal continuing to drive these key areas.

Discussion covered the possibility of a virtual representation of the Old Kirk postgraduate centre. This has been discussed by the project board and REC representatives on the board will raise this at the next board meeting in October and report back to the Committee.

Action: Convener, Vice-Convener

The Old Kirk project focus group data is held by Estates and the Convener will contact them to confirm whether this available for sharing.

Action: Convener

It was confirmed that the expectation is that Distance PhD vivas are held in Edinburgh. As expected growth is not being seen, it is less likely that resources will be available for infrastructure development, however this may change once distance learning at scale progresses. It was noted that support for Distance PhD students also benefits on-campus students who are away on fieldwork or spend part of their programme in another institution.

The Assistant Principal will continue monitoring Distance PhD progress and plans to hold a student focus group on their experience and report to a future REC.

Action: SB

5. Update: Progress on Taking Control of Your Career

The Committee noted the paper which provided an update on progress with implementing the postdoctoral research staff development framework. Progress has been limited and the Committee was invited to provide a steer on ways of increasing engagement with the framework.

Discussion identified that buy-in from academic staff was key to progress with implementing the framework. It is anticipated that successful implementation would help with building a postdoc community within the University. Much of the

current activity to support postdocs is happening through the goodwill of support services.

The Committee identified annual reviews as a potential route to link the framework and that the framework also supports Athena SWAN activity. The Committee heard that funding bodies are becoming more focused on how institutions are supporting postdocs when considering proposals.

The Committee discussed the terminology issue in titles of postdoc staff which varies across the University.

The Committee agreed that the Head of Researcher Development would revise the existing framework, noting that this can be tailored for local requirements, and circulate to the Committee.

Action: SS

The Committee agreed that the College Deans would raise early career researcher issues identified in discussion at their scheduled meeting with the Principal. The Head of Researcher Development will prepare some supporting information for this meeting.

Action: SS, Convener, NM, AM

6. Supporting Postdocs at the University of Edinburgh

The Committee noted the paper which proposed further activity to explore possibilities for increasing the visibility of existing support for postdocs. Discussion focused on the University website and models for postdoc support. The Committee also identified that as funding bodies have an increased interest in support for postdocs this is a key external driver for increasing visibility of support for postdocs.

The Committee discussed the possibility of developing a central web repository to link and signpost existing support activity for postdocs. It was agreed that the Head of Researcher Development would investigate further and identify ownership of existing content and the resources needed to progress this.

Action: SS

The Committee discussed examples of postdoc support in other Russell Group institutions. The Committee was supportive of further benchmarking work being undertaken by the Head of Researcher Development. The Committee was invited to suggest questions for the benchmarking exercise to enable a meaningful report. The Head of Researcher Development will provide a report to REC early in 2019.

Action: SS

7. Excellence in Doctoral Research & Career Development: progress reports June 2018

The Vice-Convenor updated the Committee on the latest discussions from the task group on the Supervisor continuing professional development (CPD) Framework and IAD pilots of additional optional supervisor events which include informal discussions and practical workshops. The task group is reviewing options for providing training. Recommendations will be provided in the report to the Committee's January 2019 meeting. The task group is also benchmarking how other institutions manage external supervisors and the Vice-Convenor will share information on this at the next Committee meeting.

Action: Vice-Convenor

The peer support project is running jointly with IAD and the Students' Association. The project officer is looking at what currently exists, what undergraduate provision might fit for postgraduate research and is supporting pilots in a couple of Schools. The project will provide a toolkit for postgraduate research peer support and case studies of what does and does not work. The outputs will be disseminated to the Committee and project contacts.

The Committee was asked for a steer on a proposed action change in relation to the mentoring and peer support work stream. As structures vary widely across the University, the programme found that development of formal guidance for those working in a pastoral mentoring capacity will not be possible at an institutional level. Instead it is proposed that this will be better developed at College level and that Colleges should consider what structures and guidance are required. The Committee supported this approach.

8. Heads of Graduate Schools Postgraduate Research Experience Survey themes discussion outcomes

This event held on 26 June 2018 was well attended with representatives from across the University. Impressions were that the event was successful with some interesting discussions on postgraduate research space and sharing practice on building postgraduate research communities. It was noted that this audience is one that is not directly exposed to the Committee's business.

9. Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Students

The Committee noted the paper which provided the draft for approval. The Committee noted the change in emphasis of supervisor roles and responsibilities in the draft and confirmed that this reflected current practice.

The Committee approved the draft for production and thanked the Secretary for her work in rewriting the Code.

10./

10. Task group remits and membership

The Committee noted the paper. The Committee discussed whether academic input was needed in both task groups.

As the group on student status of PhD students after submission of the thesis would focus on operational elements, it was agreed that academic input would be sought if any emerging recommendations related to areas other than policy and system enhancements.

The Committee recommended that academic input is included in the membership of the task group on the practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes. Academic Services will review the membership.

Action: Academic Services

[Post meeting note: it is intended to include academic membership from the Schools that currently have PhDs with Integrated Study.]

11. Regulations

11.1 Supervisor attendance at oral examination

11.2 PhD by Research Publications

Items 11.1 and 11.2 were discussed together. It was agreed that Academic Services will carry out benchmarking on both topics and provide a report for further consideration at a future Committee meeting.

Action: Academic Services

12. Maternity Policy for University of Edinburgh Scholarships

The Committee noted the paper and endorsed the approach to align maternity policy with Research Councils' policy.

13. Annual review of effectiveness of Senate Committees

The Committee noted the paper outlining the approach to the review which will take place over summer. Comments on any of the questions could be submitted to Academic Services.

14. External Engagement

14.1 League of European Research Universities – LERU

An additional University of Edinburgh student has been accepted for the 2018 Doctoral Summer School in Belgium.

The 2019 Doctoral Summer School will be hosted by the University on the theme of International Collaboration. Expressions of interest from speakers and suggestions for partners are invited. The Head of Researcher Development will provide some promotional information to CMVM.

Action: SS

14.2 UNICA – Network of Universities in European Capitals

The next meeting of the network of universities in European capitals will be held in the UK and feedback will be available to a future REC meeting.

15. Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee: 23 March 2018 meeting

The Committee noted the paper.

16. Research Policy Group report

The next meeting will be held in August. Research Excellence Framework (REF) guidance and assessment criteria will be produced over summer with information to come to the September Committee meeting.

17. Any other business

17.1 Conferences and events

17.1.1 UKCGE Conference – July 2018

The Vice-Convenor will be presenting at this conference and Committee members are also attending. An update will be available for the next meeting.

17.1.2 Vitae Conference – September 2018

University representatives will attend this conference and an update will be available for a future Committee meeting.

17.2 UKRI

A recent Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) meeting had discussed a recommendation from the National Audit office in relation to timescales for submission of student data to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Information on how UKRI are using data is available for sharing.

Action: CP to forward to Secretary for circulation