**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Friday 4 March 2016 at 2pm
in the Board Room, Evolution House, Edinburgh College of Art**

Present: Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal
             Researcher Development
             Dr James Mittra, College of Humanities & Social Science (CHSS)
             Dr Matthew Bailey, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
             Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
             Engineering (CSCE)
             Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, EUSA PGR Staff Representative
             Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Acting Head of Researcher
             Development, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
             Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
             representative)
             Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CHSS)
             Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
             Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service
             Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)
             Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,
             Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)
             Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Attending: Professor Jeff Haywood, Vice-Principal Digital Education (item 5)
             Mr Michael Murray, Director of Professional Services, School of
             Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences (PPLS) (item 4)
             Ms Judy McCulloch, Teaching Projects Co-ordinator, PPLS (item 5)

Apologies: Professor Richard Coyne, Dean of Postgraduate Studies CHSS
             Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, CMVM,
             Mr William Clayton, Postgraduate Convener, EUSA
             Professor Konstantin Kamenev, School of Engineering
             Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources
             Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering
             Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science
             Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student

1.   Minutes of the previous meeting

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

2.   Matters Arising

2.1   Regulations review report

The revised Postgraduate Degree Regulations and Postgraduate
Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees will be submitted to the
April Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) meeting
for approval.

The review panel has asked REC to consider study period regulations, including interruptions and extensions to study, and MSc by Research regulations for the 2017/18 review. A paper will be presented to a future meeting.

Action: Academic Services

The review panel also considered that degree programme tables for PhD programmes should be available for all PhD programmes.

2.2 What is an Edinburgh PhD – 7 April 2016

The meeting noted the date for this meeting and agreed to include degree programme tables for PhD programmes in this discussion.

2.3 ExEDE – Excellence in European Doctoral Education

The group considering institutional oversight of assessment had met and proposed use of the Danish system. Consultation with students and supervisors will be undertaken before a paper is submitted to CSPC.

2.4 Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS)

Benchmarking with Russell Group showed similar activity in promoting the surveys. Many institutions are considering future participation in both surveys, which may affect the usefulness and relevance of the data.

IAD will provide a discussion paper to the next REC meeting on options in relation to research staff surveys.

Action: Vice-Convener

2.5 Emerging Academic Fellowships

The meeting noted the paper which had been endorsed by the People Committee. Further recommendations will be made to People Committee when the proposals are progressed.

2.6 Space Enhancement Management Group meeting feedback

The group met last week and have asked REC to provide a paper on Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) analysis and making recommendations in relation to space. Colleges are asked to examine space in PRES results and feed back their analysis and suggested recommendations to the REC Secretary in the first instance.

Action: College Deans to Secretary

3.   **Convener's Communications**

3.1   **REC attendance at CSPC**

The CSCE Dean of Students is a member of CSPC and will attend the next meeting. Papers on dual awards and ExEDE will be submitted to that meeting. The degree and assessment regulations will be submitted to the April CSPC meeting. It was proposed that the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees are submitted to the March CSPC meeting.

Action: Academic Services

3.2   **PGR Board of Examiners – 17 February feedback**

The Convener had chaired this event and feedback had been positive. The cross-College aspect was welcomed by attendees. Feedback will inform how this is developed in future.

3.3   **Special circumstances**

The meeting noted that the policy for taught programmes is being updated. Academic Services will submit a proposal on how special circumstances are handled for postgraduate research programmes to a future REC meeting.

Action: Academic Services

3.4   **Coimbra Group**

The doctoral studies working group has confirmed its priorities for work streams as:
- What is a PhD
- Supervision training and support (learning from the UK)
- Three minute thesis

3.5   **ELIR – Enhancement Led Institutional Review**

The final technical and outcome reports have been published on the Quality Assurance Agency website.

In relation to postgraduate research, areas of development identified include:
- PGR experience
- Tutors and demonstrators
- Student representation at School Level

The Convener is in discussion with EUSA regarding PGR student representation.

FOR DISCUSSION

4.   **PPLS PG Tutoring Policy**

Colleagues from PPLS provided a presentation on training and support for postgraduate tutors in the School.

Number of hours worked is dependent upon funders, HMRC and Tier 4 visa requirements. A cross College review of guaranteed hours was undertaken in HSS, however it was recognised that an inter-College review would also be useful, particularly as students may sign up to tutor in other Schools.

Recruitment is light-touch, but the entry level expectation is that tutors are 2nd year postgraduate research students. Tutors are paid for tutoring undertaken as well as for attending training meetings. A PCDS-style scholarship to meet the challenges of recruitment was trailed in Philosophy, however the model had shown issues with career development and the blurred borderlines between student/staff status.

Currently, peer observation of teaching is not structured but new tutors will be observed by continuing tutors. It was noted that tutors particularly appreciated the School welcome event for tutors, which provides a forum to meet with other tutors.

Clarity of line management for tutors was helpful; students' tutoring activity should be line management by someone other than their supervisor.

REC thanked PPLS for their presentation and noted that work at University level is ongoing in relation to supporting tutors and demonstrators. College Deans will ask College committees to discuss the possibility of adopting the PPLS model.

Action: College Deans/representatives

5.   **Task Group: Flexible PhD**

The Vice-Principal Digital Education presented the report, which examined what needs to be done to normalise distance PhD study at the University.

The task group found that the current regulations provide for the range of PhD study from always in Edinburgh to never in Edinburgh, and therefore no regulatory changes were required. However, supporting documentation is written with the assumption of attendance in Edinburgh. Minimal changes could address this, for example in the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

The task group also found that there is currently a deficit in provision of online training availability and addressing this would represent the largest commitment of resources.

The task group also recognised the risk of isolation for distance PhD students and ways of providing a cohort to these types of student need to be considered. Access to tutoring would also require a mechanism for students to take up opportunities; online tutoring training is already available.

Fees for distance PhD students must be decided by Fees Strategy Group (FSG). HSS has had a paper approved with differential fees, however further debate on this will be for Colleges and FSG.

The task group also recommends a soft launch for distance PhD study and that the individual student, case by case model is adopted. REC may wish to give future consideration to an industrial model, for example with other international institutions, but this is not contained within the report's recommendations.

Implementation of all the report's 16 recommendations is essential for normalisation of distance PhD study at the University. Suggested responsibility for each recommendation is included and Information Service Group has plans in place for some of these.

The committee thanked the Vice-Principal and task group members for their work and report. REC **agreed** the report and recommendations. The REC Convener will take this to Learning and Teaching Policy Group for consideration.

Action: Convener

6.   **Postgraduate research student start dates**

This item had been previously discussed at REC. However, there are some system implications, particularly in relation to September and January start dates.

Student Systems will be invited to attend a future REC meeting to discuss the issues.

Action: Secretary

7.   **Code of Practice for Management of Research Staff**

The meeting noted the paper which outlined dissemination plans for the updated Code. REC is invited to comment and IAD will share the document with EUSA.

The meeting also suggested Research Policy Group has an interest in this and IAD will prepare a paper for that group.

Action: REC comments to Vice-Convener

8.   **Postgraduate Research Experience Project: PREP**

The Convener reported that useful meetings have been held with Heads of College. Results of the University Planning Round are awaited.

9.   **Associated Institutions**

The meeting noted the paper and **endorsed** the work being taken forward by Academic Services. REC asked that Schools are involved in the consultation on the list of Associated Institutions.

A paper on implementation and communication will be submitted to a future REC meeting.

Action: Academic Services

FOR INFORMATION

10. **Visiting Students/Non-Graduating Student policy**

The Director of Academic Services reported that this policy has been updated to remove fee information. This is there result of changes to the tuition fee structure approved by Fees Strategy Group.

11. **Knowledge Strategy Committee report**

The meeting noted the paper.

12. **Strategic Plan Consultation**

The meeting noted the consultation on the draft Strategic Plan and REC members were invited to comment by 21 March. A paper will be submitted to a future REC meeting on measures of success for postgraduate research.

Action: Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy

13. **Enhancement Themes update**

The Head of Enhancement Team reported on the recent successful Gearing Up event. REC members are invited to submit proposals for the June conference on things we are doing to support students.

Action: REC members to NK

14. **Conference and event attendance/forthcoming events**

14.1   **Russell Special Interest Group**

The Vice-Convener attends this group with is useful for practice-sharing. Members are invited to suggest items to get feedback on.

Action: REC members to Vice-Convener

14.2 Researchers 14

The Vice-Convener attended the recent meeting, which discussed the review of the Concordat. Research Council representatives also attend this meeting.

14.3 UKCGE: Meeting the needs of distance doctoral students

The meeting noted this event in April in Glasgow, which had been flagged as useful by the Flexible PhD Task Group.

14.4 Council for Doctoral Education

The Convener has been invited to speak to this group on governance and institutional structure.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 PhD Horizons

The meeting noted this conference will be held on 2 June in High School Yards.

16. Date of next meeting

12 April 2016, Boardroom, Vets School, Easter Bush

Susan Hunter
14 March 2016