

**Meeting of the Senatus Researcher Experience Committee
held on 6 November 2018 at 2pm
in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House**

- Present: Dr Antony Maciocia (Convener), Dean of Students, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Early Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students' Association
Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff PGR Representative
Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Daniel Dodd, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CMVM
Ben Möws, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CSE
Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education
Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Apologies: Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
James Saville, Director of Human Resources
Dr Katie Nicoll Baines, Early Career Research Representative, CMVM
Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's representative)
- Attending: Linda Criggie, Human Resources (item 7)
Dr Susan Cooper, Governance & Strategic Planning (item 4)
Diva Mukherji, Vice President Education, Students' Association

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018

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

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Old Kirk Project

The Committee noted that the project board meeting had been postponed until 16 November 2018. An update will be available for the next Committee meeting.

2.2 Student Partnership in Quality Scotland (sparqs) conference

The Committee noted that the sparqs conference will be held on 28 March 2019 and registration will open on 26 November 2018. The Students' Association staff representative will attending.

2.3 Enhancement Theme

The Committee noted a request to include postgraduate research activity in the evidence for enhancement: Improving the student experience theme. Academic Services will communicate with the College Deans and the Committee and any ideas for activity can be submitted to Nichola.Kett@ed.ac.uk

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Three minute thesis

The Committee was pleased to note that two University students had been successful in the national (Vitae) and international (Universitas 21) competitions. Owen James won the UK competition and Phoebe Kirkwood was runner-up in the Universitas 21 competition.

3.2 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Committee noted that consultation on reviewing the Concordat was being undertaken and an institutional response would be compiled. The Head of Researcher Development, IAD had provided a link which will be circulated to Committee members following this meeting.

Action: Secretary

4. Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 and use of metrics

The Committee received a verbal report from Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP). The Committee noted that a higher proportion of staff would be eligible for submission to REF and there will be an increased variety of output types. Early career researchers who are independent researchers will be included and there will be a relationship between employee full time equivalent (FTE) and the number of outputs for submission.

The Committee noted that GaSP are developing an institutional Code of Practice on selection, which will align with partner institutions for some units of assessment. GaSP, in collaboration with Research Support Office, will also develop a policy on the responsible use of metrics. The Committee noted that the Wellcome Trust expects institutions to sign up to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). GaSP also will consider the relevance of the ten principles developed by Leiden as part of the policy development. A paper on research metrics will be submitted to a future Committee meeting. The Leiden principles and DORA information will be circulated to the Committee for information.

Action: SC

As in the previous REF, the number of doctoral degrees awarded per unit of assessment will be submitted. Boards of Examiners will need to be aware that award letters will be used to record the number of doctoral degrees awarded for submission to REF and the deadline to enable graduands to be recorded will be 31 July 2020.

5. Service Excellence Programme (SEP) – update

The Committee received a verbal update from the School of Biological Sciences representative who had been temporarily assisting with the SEP postgraduate research work. The Committee noted the appointment of Sarah Harvey as a secondee to the SEP postgraduate research work stream. This work stream is currently in the design phase and a workshop was held in October covering processes for appointment of supervisors and milestones, student progression review, and thesis submission and examination. A second workshop will be held on 13 November 2018 and a people workshop will follow to look at where processes are located. The outputs of the workshops will be used to build business cases to be submitted for prioritisation in Semester 2.

The Committee noted that collaborations are not being covered however, there is some overlap with the supervisor appointment process being considered. The Committee also noted the importance of ensuring policy decisions are taken at the appropriate committee.

The Committee noted the possibility that postgraduate research business cases may not be prioritised by SEP.

A link to the workshop wiki had been circulated and comments would still be accepted until 9 November 2018.

SEP will send representatives to future REC meetings.

6. University of Edinburgh Funded PhD Scholarships

6.1 Enlightenment Scholarships

6.2 Principal's Career Development Scholarships

6.3 Development and Alumni funding for scholarships

6.4 Other scholarships

The Committee noted the papers, which were provided to stimulate discussion and discussed University funded PhD scholarships together.

The Committee noted the proposal to pause the Enlightenment Scholarships. The Committee noted that a proposal to conduct a review of the Principal's Career Development Scholarships will be submitted to the University Executive. The Committee discussed the funding models for donor scholarships and the need for transparency on the different schemes available generally. An update will be available for a future Committee meeting.

7. Postgraduate Research External Examiners

A representative from Human Resources (HR) joined the Committee for a discussion on the appointment processes for postgraduate research external examiners. The Committee noted complaints from some external examiners on University processes and that some external examiners also reported that these were different from other institutions.

The Committee discussed the employment status of external examiners. The Committee noted that an historic Central Management Group report had approved two approaches to external examiner appointment (employed for taught and self-employed for postgraduate research) but that this had been parked for implementation following concerns expressed at College level.

The Committee discussed the processes for postgraduate external examiners and noted that right to work checks are important in relation to the University's trusted visa sponsorship status. New tax rules are also relevant to employment status checks on whether self-employment is appropriate. The University had benchmarked its processes with other institutions and found that its policy was in alignment with theirs.

The Committee noted that work was underway in HR to gather the issues related to right to work for submission to a Home Office quality assurance group. Feedback on the outcomes will be available to a future Committee meeting.

8. UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) Supervisor Accreditation Pilot

The Committee received a verbal report from The Director of Postgraduate Research in CMVM. The UKCGE pilot will be run across 10 institutions. It is proposed that each institution will identify three supervisors, in different subject areas and at different stages of experience to get involved. The Committee approved the University's participation in the pilot. The Director of Postgraduate Research in CMVM will liaise with the other College Deans on next steps to identify suitable participants.

Action: PH

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

9.1 Work Stream one - supervision

The Committee received a verbal report from the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Team, Academic Services. The continuing professional development (CPD) for supervisors task group will be consulting on concepts developed by the group. Consultation will cover mandatory training for new and continuing supervisors, clarification on recording training and supervisors roles and responsibilities as set out in the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students. A Bristol Online survey is being built and will be circulated to Colleges and Heads of Graduate Schools. This work also ties in with Service Excellence work on recording attendance at supervisor briefings.

[Post meeting note: electronic report from the Vice-Convener] The Researcher Experience Committee (REC) supervisor Task Group met in October. This will be the final face-to-face meeting of the group, which will report to REC in the New Year (springtime). One of the main pieces of work has been to look at current expectations and practice.

9.2 Work Stream two - mentoring and wellbeing

[Post meeting note: electronic report from the Vice-Convener] As previously reported, the postgraduate research peer support project (IAD and Students' Association) came to an earlier finish than expected. It is planned to employ a PhD intern to continue the work and maintain networks.

Establishing training routes for supervisors dealing with mental health of students continues to be a priority. The Director of Student Wellbeing has agreed to come to a future REC to discuss. Meanwhile, supervisors can join personal tutor training and there is an online resource for staff:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-disability-service/staff/supporting-students/support-for-disabled-students/mental-health/online-training-supporting-students-mental-health>

Postgraduate research students are a target group for Mental Health and Wellbeing Week (12 – 16 November). More details at: <https://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/representation/campaigns/welfare/letstalk/>

9.3 Work Stream Three: Personal and Professional Development Record

[Post meeting note: electronic report from the Vice-Convener] The Service Excellence Programme (SEP) postgraduate research phase team have been made aware of the work done by the task group last year and are looking at ways to make communication channels between REC and SEP clearer and more formalised.

10. Task Groups

10.1 Practical operation of PhD with Integrated Study programmes

The Committee received a verbal report on the task group meeting held on 25 October 2018. Discussion had covered operational guidance for taught elements of PhD with Integrated Study programmes as well as submission expectations, Research Council funding and supervision in the first year of programmes. A paper will be submitted to the January REC meeting.

11. Researcher training governance

The Committee noted that a group is being set up to look at researcher training governance. The membership of the group will include the Senior Vice-Principal, Vice-Principal Planning Resources and Research Strategy, Deputy Secretary Student Experience, College Postgraduate Deans, Director of Academic Services and Director of IAD. An update will be available for a future Committee meeting.

12./

12. External Engagement

12.1 League of European Research Universities (LERU)

12.1.1 Summer school 2019

The Committee noted that the draft programme was now available and a call for nominations will be circulated before the Christmas closure period.

12.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)

The next UKCGE Scottish Forum meeting will be held on 30 November 2018.

12.3 Coimbra

The Dean of Postgraduate Studies, CAHSS reported on a recent meeting, which focused on the French doctoral college system. The February meeting will define the focus for this group.

12.4 Network of Universities from European Capitals (UNICA)

There was nothing to report.

12.5 Universitas 21

A report on the three minute thesis was covered in item 3.1 above.

12.6 University of Bath Graduate School

[Post meeting note: electronic report from the Vice-Convener] In September, the Vice-Convener had spent a day at the University of Bath with their Doctoral College staff. Their Doctoral College has been established for a little over a year and it was interesting to hear about the experience. The Vice-Convener gave a talk about the Excellence programme and IAD, which was followed by a round table discussion. The Vice-Convener also visited their new communal facilities for postgraduate research students. Some points of interest:

- the facilities they have are underused which is something to consider in relation to Old Kirk;
- they were particularly interested in how we revised the Code of Practice;
- although a much smaller university, they have also identified peer support as important for postgraduate research students and were interested in sharing information around initiatives.

13. Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee

The report will be circulated when available.

14. Research Policy Group report

The Committee received a verbal report from Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP) highlighting relevant points recently discussed by the Group.

A report from a recent House of Commons enquiry into research integrity has produced a recommendation on training researchers in statistics and research design.

Funding councils have individually developed new expectations on bullying and sexual harassment. GaSP is working with Human Resources, Legal Services and trade unions and will submit a paper on research misconduct to a future Committee meeting.

15. Any other business

15.1 Conferences and events

These were covered earlier in the meeting.

15.2 Postgraduate Dean CAHSS

The Committee expressed its thanks for participation and contribution to Professor Neil Mulholland who was demitting from office and membership of the Committee.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
12 November 2018