

The University of Edinburgh
Internal Periodic Review – Year-On response report

Internal Periodic Review: School of Engineering PGR Programmes
Date of review: 5-6th February 2024
Date of 14-week response: 14th November 2024
Date of Year-on response: 19th September 2025

The School/Subject Area is responsible for reporting on progress with all recommendations, including those remitted to other areas of the University for action.
 If any recommendation has been fully addressed please record the action taken and date completed. Any barriers to progress should be highlighted on this report.

Priority	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	The review team recommended that the School continue work to understand the circumstances and needs of the research student population, to target support and enhance provision to improve the overall student experience.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): Two new Deputy Head of the Graduate School (DHoGS) roles have been created to help ensure that the PGR cohort is suitably provided for. With regard to Widening Participation, we are trialling a scheme within the IDCORE CDT in which applicants applying for 2025/26 entry, who self-identify as coming from a group who are typically under-represented on Engineering PGR programmes, can access a pre-application mentoring scheme. This will pair them with an existing or recently graduated member of the PGR cohort at Edinburgh, who will be able to provide helpful insights into the requirements of the application process. With regard to more general student wellbeing concerns, a staff workshop is planned to review the School's wellbeing support, both for our PGR students and our frontline staff in the Graduate Office. One Year-on Response: The biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) was run in 2025. The School of Engineering had a response rate of 32.48%, a marked increase of 7.7% compared to the previous survey in 2023. The figures for positive overall experience also saw a rise to 80.00% (2.40% increase on 2023). A rise in satisfaction was seen across all of the themes compared with the previous PRES results, with particularly significant increases in Online Learning Resources (+7.3%); Community (+8.8%); Progress & Assessment (+8.9%); and Professional Development (6.8%). Two new categories were introduced in 2025, Student Support and	Ongoing

			Careers Support, and in the School of Engineering, the percentage satisfaction of both exceeded that of the average across the College. There were just under 300 free text comments provided by the Engineering PGRs who completed the survey. Many of the comments referred to individual situations and issues, but there were a number of recurring themes raised by students, including satisfaction with the support received, in particular from both the Graduate Office and Professional Services teams. With regard to Widening Participation, an online form has been developed to enable self-identification by WP individuals applying for entry to our PGR programmes. Assistance has been provided by Jenni Sarafilovic, EDI Manager for the College of Science and Engineering, and the aim is to introduce the form for use by 2026 applicants. We also plan to offer voluntary completion of the form to our existing students. In combination, these measures will provide invaluable data about the diversity of our PGR cohort, which will assist future plans for CPD training, community building, and our application and selection processes. With regard to more general student wellbeing concerns, a workshop was held at the end of October 2024, with staff from the Graduate Office, and others involved in PGR management, to discuss the School procedures relating to wellbeing and mental health support for our postgraduate research students. The workshop was also attended by the University's Director of Student Wellbeing, Andy Shanks and Assistant Head of Student Wellbeing Services, Kate Amrit. The workshop resulted in a number of actions that will provide clearer information for students seeking support. A new mail alias PGRWellbeing.Eng@ed.ac.uk has been introduced, which is specifically for use by students requiring emotional, health and pastoral support. Such cases can now be separated from the very large volume of daily correspondence received by the Graduate Office, allowing them to be prioritised and dealt with in a timely manner. The material provided to inform students who are seeking wellbeing assistance, has also been updated. The relevant material on our online Wiki resource has been edited to make it clearer, and this information is now also highlighted through a new range of sources including the Graduate School newsletter, and the large digital information screens situated across the Engineering estate.	
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			One of the other areas discussed at the workshop was support for staff who are dealing with difficult and stressful situations in the workplace. A number of services are available, and these have been highlighted to all staff dealing with PGR management and supervision.	
2	The review team recommended the School work with students to assess student communication and develop strategies to enhance student engagement. In particular, information about courses, training, events and seminars across the School should be easily accessible, in one space.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): The Graduate Office is reviewing how other schools in the university provide information to their PGR programmes. One Year-on Response: We are continuing to review and update the information currently available to PGR students and supervisors on the Graduate School Wiki to ensure its accuracy and accessibility. Once this is completed, the move to the SharePoint platform will commence. An Engineering PhD student, Shahrzad Shariatpanahi, recently undertook a four-month summer internship with the UoE Institute of Academic Development, to prepare a scoping report on PGR communication, with the goal of long-term improvement in research cultures. The resulting <i>PGR Communications and Engagement Report 2025</i>, was published in late August, and provides an in-depth review of PGR communications and engagement at the University of Edinburgh. It identifies both what is working well and the key challenges, as well as outlining short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations. The recommendations are being assessed both by the School of Engineering and members of the wider Doctoral College. In parallel, research institute-based Microsoft Teams groups are being piloted (initially in the Institute for Bioengineering), to improve the reach of communications and day-to-day engagement of PGRs within their local research communities. The goal is to provide a single, easily accessible space for information on courses, training, events and seminars. A <i>perception-of-engagement</i> questionnaire will be issued in Q4 2025, and the findings will inform deployment strategies across all seven of the School's research institutes.	Ongoing
3	The review team recommended that the School and College work with staff and students to agree guidelines and expectations for working on campus, whilst leaving some	None Specified	14-week response (summary): In order to ensure that the School and College comply with the university's commitment to enabling, promoting and encouraging staff and student wellbeing, we wish to avoid pushing guidelines and expectations on the PGR cohort related to working on campus. The School and College already	Completed August 2025

	flexibility to account for individual needs and circumstances.		strongly recommend regular on-campus attendance to PGR students, and these efforts will be redoubled to highlight the benefits of in-person engagement on work efficacy and wellbeing. One Year-on Response: A <i>New Ways of Working</i> policy has been initiated within the School of Engineering. New Ways of Working (NWoW) is being used across the University to refer to flexible work arrangements and associated office setups (including hybrid schedules, bookable desks, and access to collaborative areas and quiet spaces), with the aim of reflecting how people work today. As part of this process, the Buildings Manager, and Director of Professional Services, in collaboration with Heads of Research Institutes and the Head of Graduate School, have developed a draft set of NWoW principles and a workplace etiquette document for use by all academic staff and early career researchers (including PGR). An Equality Impact Assessment has also been carried out for the policy, to ensure the needs of all our researchers have been considered. As a result of the RAAC crisis, School of Engineering academic staff and researchers were relocated from office space in the James Clerk Maxwell Building (JCMB), while remedial work was carried out. During July / August 2025, following completion of this work, there has been a return to the JCMB spaces, and the New Ways of Working principles are being applied across the shared office spaces. The principles are also intended to be implemented in the New Engineering Building due for completion in the summer of 2026, as well as being rolled out across the other research institutes that make up the School of Engineering. Feedback from early adopters of the principles has been mixed, and this will be used to continue to develop the policy, as we gain a deeper understanding of how people work and make use of their available space. Up-to-date information is available to all staff and PGR on the School's EngIntranet Wiki. To provide more community space for PGR students who choose to work on the KB campus, the School has renovated and furnished a dedicated space for PGR within the estate. The room in the Hudson Beare Building has a range of facilities suitable for self and group study and activities, socialising and relaxing. Other improvements are currently being introduced across the King's Buildings campus, in line with commitments made in the College of Science and Engineering's (CSE) EDI Action Plan. CSE	
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			have introduced the <i>PGR Student Community Building Grants</i>, to facilitate and support activities that encourage active citizenship, and build community, belonging and connection across the schools in the college. The grants provide financial contributions of up to £500 to student-led interdisciplinary projects, events and initiatives. Eight grants were awarded in the 2024/25 process. A further action has focused on improving accessibility and inclusivity across the estate. A new Carer and Child Room has been created on the ground floor of the Murray Library, which is designed to make the campus more inclusive for those with caring responsibilities. In addition, a Sensory Map for the multi-use Nucleus Building is now available. This is designed to support individuals with sensory sensitivities, including those on the autism spectrum or with sensory processing differences. Information about these and other inclusive spaces on the King's Buildings Campus are available to staff and students on the College EDI webpages.	
4	The review team recommended that the School and College engage with students to plan for hybrid working within the campus environment.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): As covered in the response to Recommendation #3, the CPRC Strategic Priorities for 2024/25 include plans to improve PGR working environment, which incorporates hybrid working. One Year-on Response: see the response to Recommendation #3. The NWoW principles look to address plans for hybrid working.	Completed August 2025
5	The review team recommended that the School dedicate a portion of funding for scholarships for Widening Participation students.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): The School is in discussions with the Martingale Foundation, who were founded to support PG students from the UK from underrepresented backgrounds, with fully funded scholarships and a support programme to overcome non-financial barriers. They are planning to expand into Engineering and Data Science, and have approached the School of Engineering as a potential partner. We are also investigating the best way to identify students from under-represented and/or non-traditional groups before or during the selection process (see the response to Recommendation #1), in order to provide them with additional support, and ring-fenced scholarship(s), where appropriate. One Year-on Response: The School of Engineering recently made an offer of supervisory support to a PhD student from a partner institution of the King's Commonwealth Fellowship Programme	Completed September 2025

			(KCFP). The programme, inspired by His Majesty King Charles III, was developed in response to the urgent economic, social and environmental development challenges affecting Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Our offer has been accepted by a female PG researcher from the University of Fiji, and the School will now fund her co-supervision, including a three-month research visit to Edinburgh. The latest update from the Martingale Foundation informed us that they had been unsuccessful in securing the funding to allow them to start the engineering strand of their programme. This means that they will be unable to provide for an Autumn 2026 intake of students. We will continue to engage with the foundation in the hope that funding can be secured for subsequent intakes, starting with the academic year 2027/28. In the future, the data provided by the self-identification process for WP and EDI individuals highlighted in the response to Recommendation #1, will help to determine where it might be appropriate/necessary to ring fence scholarships and/or funding. Obviously, the extent of such dedicating funds, will be largely dependent on the current financial situation at the University of Edinburgh.	
6	The review team recommended that the School leverage the alumni resource for networking, careers and training needs.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): We are exploring the set-up of an advisory committee made up of external collaborators from industry, tasked with promoting exchange of best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion between industry and academia. Regarding additional training, Edinburgh Innovations currently provides training to academics, to help them identify opportunities and build partnerships that will allow the translation of their research to meet commercial needs. We are looking at adapting this material to support PGR students, as well as developing workshops and networking events with industry. We are also working with the University's Careers Service to develop a more integrated provision of careers advice, allowing students to consider their post-graduation options earlier, and hence make better use of the advice and facilities available within the University during the period of their studies. One Year-on Response:	Ongoing

			In February 2025, a new Career Development Workshop was run for the newest PGR intake. The workshop got students to consider their post-graduation options at this early stage in their studies, so that they might make better use of the advice and facilities available within the University during their time in the School. The event was a great success with a trial group of 30 students covering topics including <i>Why did you choose to study for a PhD? / Where do our PGR alumni go after graduation? / How do you plan for the future?</i> as well as a session on <i>Developing a Career Action Plan</i>. Speakers (including alumni from our PGR programmes) from industry, start-ups, academia, and professional services spoke to the cohort about the options and opportunities that could follow graduation. It is planned to run the workshop annually for incoming first year PGR students. Edinburgh Innovations (EI) currently offers a series of eight online training modules to University of Edinburgh staff, entitled Engage. The modules are accessible through P&M and focus on how staff can develop relationships and collaborations with external organisations and industry. The modules also cover the process of translating research outcomes into practical applications. EI has agreed to adapt the training material in order to make it relevant and available to Engineering PGR students. To facilitate this, five of our current PGR students, with an interest in developing their engagement skills and translating their research, have volunteered to review a selection of the modules. They have been provided direct access to four modules - <i>How do I engage with external partners? / How do I build relationships and networks? / How do I start a Translational Journey with my research? / How do I commercialise my idea?</i> A meeting is planned for October to receive the students' feedback and decide on next steps. The intention is to reinforce successful implementation of PGR specific online training, with in-person workshops run by EI and the School, and including invited alumni guest speakers. We continue to plan for an industrial advisory committee for our PGR programmes. The terms of reference for the advisory role have been prepared, and these are to be circulated to a selected list of alumni working in industry. The first meeting of the advisory committee is scheduled to coincide with the upcoming School of Engineering PGR Annual Conference, taking place in April 2026.	
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7	The review team recommended that the School revisit and consider T&D policies regarding contract limitations, taking student finances into consideration.	None Specified	14-week response: PGR students can apply for contracts once they have completed the mandatory T&D training in their first semester of study in line with current University and School policy. Requests from students to undertake T&D duties in their final months of study are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but the main priority of all students needs to be timely completion and submission of their PhD thesis. One Year-on Response: The current financial situation at UoE, and the requirement to reduce Other Operating Costs (OOC), has meant the School has had to reduce its annual T&D spend by one third. As a result, there will be less hours available to our PGR students and, unfortunately contract limitations are likely to become the norm in order to ensure a fair distribution of working hours across the whole cohort.	Completed January 2025
8	The review team recommended that the School continue to develop their in-house system to allow supervisors to track student T&D hours.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): A new T&D Steering group has been set up to deliver a clear, prioritised set of requirements to enable the delivery of a new T&D system in academic year 2025/26. This will involve the purchasing of a new in-house system that will include a much better tracking of hours. One Year-on Response: Following the establishment of a T&D Steering group, a business analysis project sponsored by the School of Engineering's Director of Learning and Teaching has been carried out to review the different options available for the School to replace the existing SharePoint workflow system (whose use will cease on April 2026). The project team have used the existing T&D process and SharePoint workflow, in order to highlight the requirements for the process <i>as-is</i> and <i>to-be</i>, a key deliverable for this project. Multiple workshops have taken place to review and capture these requirements for the new T&D process and system. To identify options and best practice for the School of Engineering, additional workshops have been conducted with other schools who have similar processes (including Informatics and Mathematics), and have developed, or are currently developing, in-house T&D systems. The project team met with account managers from Eploy to explore an external option for the School's T&D process, while also working to potentially provide a preliminary Build option with the School's IT team. In addition, other options such as using People & Money have been explored. Based on the analysis conducted, it was determined that the best option was to engage with the School of Informatics and become	Ongoing

			co-developers in the system they are currently developing. The School is also working on a standardised Annual Review process for T&Ds. Different options have already been discussed at both the Graduate School and the School's Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC), and a more definite paper on the T&D Annual Review process will be presented to the SLTC in the coming months.	
9	The review team recommended that the School engage with existing outreach activities to enhance Widening Participation in PGR recruitment.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): We are investigating setting up the <i>Public Engagement Scholars</i> initiative, similar to a programme that has run for some time within the School of Chemistry. The proposal would have a cohort of (most likely 9-12) PhD students working alongside our Student Recruitment and Outreach Officer, Katie Grant to plan, develop and deliver outreach activities to the local community. One Year-on Response: The current financial situation at UoE, and the requirement to reduce Other Operating Costs (OOC), has meant the School is not in a position to fund the proposed <i>Public Engagement Scholars</i> initiative. We are hopeful that the initiative can be revisited in the coming years. Katie Grant continues to work with the PGR cohort on outreach activities, but these are also more limited now due to reduced budgets.	Completed January 2025
10	The review team recommended that the School review amount of support to attend conferences.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): The current amount each PGR student receives for research costs (bench fees) is £2,000. The School plans to review the figure in the coming months, but there are currently University-wide constraints on expenditure. One Year-on Response: The School of Engineering increased the Research Training Support Grant (RTSG) for all School funded students from £2,000 to £5,000 in January 2025. Support for conference attendance is among the purposes of this grant.	Completed January 2025
11	The review team recommended that the School and College continue to liaise with staff, students, EUSA, Estates, and Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) to improve the availability and quality of catering, leisure and sports facilities on the KB campus.	None Specified	14-week response (summary): With the CSE PGR Dean and Head of CSE, we will continue to make improvements where we can and to engage with EUSA and the University management, and advocate for improvements in KB catering, leisure and sports facilities, through the Doctoral College and other available fora. One Year-on Response: Some improvements to facilities access on the King's Buildings campus are referred to in the responses to Recommendations #3. There has also been some success in ensuring that catering and facilities remain available on the KB	Completed May 2025

			campus outside of the undergraduate semesters. While we will continue to engage with EUSA and the University, further decisions about the availability and quality of catering, leisure and sports facilities on the KB campus are likely to be out of our hands and determined by the current financial pressures across the institution.	
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	Information about the entire IPR process and all the relevant documentation (including the School's reflective report, the panel's Final report (with recommendations), and a copy of the 14-week and this year-on response) are included on the Graduate School Wiki pages, where they are accessible by all staff and PGR students within the School. Click on the link: Internal Periodic Review 2024		