

# The University of Edinburgh

## Internal Periodic Review 14 week response report

**Internal Periodic Review of:** School of GeoSciences, University of Edinburgh

**Date of review:** 18 - 20 March 2025

**Date of 14 week response:** 7 Nov

**Date of year on response:** 2025

The review area (School/Deanery/College) 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.

| Rec. No. | Recommendation (copy text from report)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Responsibility of | Timescale for completion | Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Completion date |
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| 1        | <p><b>Annual Review Checkpoints – Consistency of Expectations</b></p> <p>The review team recommends that the School clarifies the expectations of annual review activity beyond the year one confirmation panel, helping ensure greater consistency of practice.</p> <p>The School should consider establishing a thesis committee/panel for each student to meet with them annually to review progress and offer the opportunity to privately discuss issues of concern.</p> | PGR provision     | 2027                     | <p>We acknowledge the review team's recommendation to clarify expectations for annual review activity beyond Year 1 and to establish regular thesis committee/panel meetings for students.</p> <p><b>Current Practice:</b><br/>During Welcome Week, students receive 1-to-1 matriculation meetings with PGR office staff where they are informed about programme administration according to the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students, the Degree Programme Specifications (DRPS), and the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations. Students are signposted to comprehensive information on the GeoSciences PGR SharePoint, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PhD progression and assessment guidelines</li> <li>• Summary of progression points</li> <li>• Resources for supervisors and advisors</li> </ul> <p>Currently, PhD students complete a confirmation panel at Year 1 (months 7-9), followed by annual reviews in EUCLID for each subsequent year. We maintain regular communication with students and supervisors regarding review timelines and provide updates through annual PGR supervisor and advisor briefing sessions.</p> <p><b>Actions Being Taken:</b><br/>To address the recommendation for greater consistency and structured oversight, we are transitioning to a 4-year PhD programme model with enhanced progression checkpoints:</p> | Ongoing         |

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|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |               |      | <p><b>Year 1:</b> Confirmation process + Annual review<br/> <b>Year 2:</b> Annual check-in + Annual review<br/> <b>Year 3:</b> Thesis completion panel + Annual review<br/> <b>Year 4:</b> Annual review</p> <p>The <b>Thesis Completion Panel at Year 3</b> will function as the formal committee meeting recommended by the review team, providing students with a structured opportunity to discuss progress and any concerns with a panel of academics beyond their immediate supervisory team.</p> <p>To ensure consistency and quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We are developing <b>customised annual review templates and documentation</b>, moving away from standard EUCLID forms to better reflect our discipline-specific needs</li> <li>• We are <b>consulting with other CSE Schools</b> to identify and adopt best practices</li> <li>• All proposals will be discussed with the <b>PGR Policy Committee</b> (comprising staff and student representatives) to ensure stakeholder input</li> <li>• We will provide <b>updated training for supervisors and advisors</b> on the new framework</li> </ul> <p><b>Timeline:</b> The new 4-year model and associated processes are currently in development, with full implementation planned for 2027.</p> <p>These changes will ensure clearer expectations at each stage of the PhD journey and provide consistent, structured opportunities for students to receive feedback and raise concerns in a supportive environment.</p> |         |
| 2 | <p><b>Managing Student-Supervisor Relationships</b></p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School works toward a culture which encourages students to report issues with their supervisors, and to subsequently protect those that do report issues. The approach should include working collaboratively with students to identify common issues and potential solutions.</p> | PGR provision | 2026 | <p>We are committed to fostering a culture where students feel safe to raise concerns about their supervisory relationships and are protected when they do so.</p> <p><b>Current Support:</b><br/> Students are currently encouraged to report any issues affecting their experience to the PGR Director or PGR Manager. Guidance on support channels is available on the PGR Office SharePoint under <a href="#">Community and Support</a></p> <p><b>Actions Being Taken:</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Ongoing |

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|   | The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School should explore implementing a system whereby students can provide feedback on their supervisor outwith key review checkpoints.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |               |      | <p>As part of our revised annual review framework, we are implementing a <b>dual-form system</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Project/Programme Update Form</b> – for academic progress and research milestones</li> <li>2. <b>Supervisory Practice and Culture Feedback Form</b> – providing students with a <b>confidential</b> mechanism to comment on their supervisory experience and raise concerns</li> </ol> <p>Importantly, the feedback form will be <b>accessible at any time</b>, not just during formal review checkpoints, allowing students to report issues as they arise.</p> <p><b>Protecting Students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback will be handled confidentially by the PGR Office</li> <li>• Clear protocols will be established for addressing issues while protecting student anonymity where possible</li> <li>• Students will have access to independent support outside their supervisory team</li> </ul> |         |
| 3 | <p><b>Tutoring and Demonstrating – Course Organiser Training</b></p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School, in collaboration with the tutor and demonstrator student representative, reviews the provision of training sessions for course organisers in their work with tutors and demonstrators, in order to support consistency of experience. This should consider the possibility of making training mandatory.</p> | T&D team      |      | We are looking at this with the T&D team. But current budgetary constraints have led to considerations of a restructuring of the T&D support team. We are exploring options available to us.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Ongoing |
| 4 | <p><b>4 Year PhD</b></p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School uses the transition towards a 4-year PhD as an opportunity to actively review monitoring and submission processes, as well as to ensure that the activities undertaken within the PhD outwith thesis submission, such as tutoring and demonstrating, are more formally recognised as central to the PhD experience.</p>                                   | PGR provision | 2027 | <p>Please refer to points 1 and 2: We are addressing the review of monitoring and submission processes by streamlining the annual review process and introducing a thesis completion panel in Year 3. These changes have been incorporated into the paperwork for the new 4-year PhD programmes.</p> <p>We are adding a dedicated section to the annual review form where students can record training and professional development activities they have undertaken. While students currently receive information about training and development opportunities in their award letter, we are considering</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Ongoing |

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|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               |      | expanding this to include other aspects central to the PhD experience, such as student representation opportunities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                |
| 5 | <p><b>Student Support</b><br/>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School reviews the purpose of the role of advisor in order to ensure a more consistent student experience when interacting with this role.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School further raises awareness of available resources which signpost students to student support resources across the University.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School and the University's Report and Support service discuss how to maximise awareness of relevant support resources for PGR students within the School.</p> | PGR provision | 2025 | <p><b>Student Support</b><br/>We are committed to ensuring consistency in the PGR Advisor role and maximizing awareness of support resources available to our students.</p> <p><b>Clarifying the PGR Advisor Role:</b><br/>We have taken several steps to ensure a consistent student experience with PGR Advisors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated guidance for PGR Advisors on the PGR Office SharePoint, including: <a href="#">PGR Advisor information</a></li> <li>• Clearly outlined the role and responsibilities in appointment communications sent to new advisors</li> <li>• Emphasized the importance of the PGR Advisor role during annual PGR Advisor briefing sessions</li> <li>• Uploaded training materials for advisors and supervisors covering all available student support services to enable effective signposting</li> </ul> <p><b>Raising Awareness of Support Resources:</b><br/>We have implemented multiple channels to ensure students are aware of available support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support resources are summarized on the PGR Office SharePoint under <a href="#">Community and Support</a></li> <li>• Posters for support services are displayed throughout our buildings</li> <li>• Information slides are shown on School monitors</li> <li>• University support teams are invited to speak to new students during Welcome Week</li> <li>• A mandatory Wellbeing workshop is incorporated into first-year student training</li> <li>• Additional support sessions are being organized for students at later stages of their programmes</li> </ul> <p><b>Collaboration with Report and Support Service:</b><br/>We are actively working to maximize awareness of the University's Report and Support service:</p> | <p>Completed</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> |

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|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |               |      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A colleague from Report and Support will speak to all new students during Welcome Week in September 2025</li> <li>• Links to the service have been added to prominent areas of the PGR Office SharePoint</li> <li>• We are exploring additional methods to raise awareness of the service within the student community</li> </ul> <p><b>Future Development:</b><br/>We are exploring options to identify financial resources that would enable dedicated support specifically for the School's PGR community. Under the current financial climate this might be delayed.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |         |
| 6 | <p><b>Training and Support for Supervisors</b><br/>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School considers what training provision is required to be undertaken by supervisors in relation to areas such as EDI, and how the reach of that training is maximised across the School.</p> <p>The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School explores alternative ways for supervisors to share and reflect on their practice, for example via the sharing of case studies showcasing good practice.</p> | PGR provision | 2026 | <p><b>Training and Support for Supervisors</b><br/>We recognize the importance of equipping supervisors with the skills and knowledge necessary to support our diverse PGR community effectively, and of creating opportunities for supervisors to learn from one another.</p> <p><b>EDI Training Requirements:</b><br/>Engagement with EDI is now a <b>School-wide mandate</b> and is included in all staff annual reviews. The School's EDI Committee has advocated for and implemented anti-racist training for staff. In addition, we have developed EDI training for student cohorts to promote an inclusive research culture.</p> <p><b>Supervisor Training Provision:</b><br/>The PGR Office organizes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Annual briefing sessions</b> for PGR Supervisors and Advisors</li> <li>• <b>Extended annual Supervisor training workshop</b> with updated content</li> </ul> <p>We are expanding the training workshop by inviting colleagues from the Deanery of Postgraduate Research and the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) to facilitate sessions that showcase best supervisory practice and promote reflective discussion.</p> <p><b>Sharing and Reflecting on Practice:</b><br/>To foster a culture of continuous improvement and peer learning:</p> | Ongoing |

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|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |               |      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institute Deputies will dedicate time in each Institute meeting</b> to discuss supervisory practices, challenges, and shared learnings</li> <li>• The expanded Supervisor training workshop will incorporate <b>case studies and examples of good practice</b> to encourage reflection and knowledge sharing across the School</li> </ul> <p><b>Maximising Reach:</b><br/>By embedding EDI in staff reviews, making supervisor training a regular fixture, and integrating discussion of supervisory practice into Institute meetings, we ensure that training and development reach all supervisors across the School consistently.<br/>These measures will enhance the quality and consistency of supervision while fostering a supportive, inclusive environment for both supervisors and students.</p> |           |
|   | <b>Suggestions</b>                                                                                                                                                                                        |               |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |           |
| 1 | The review team <b>suggests</b> that the School take into consideration the clash between the PhD Conference and confirmation panel meetings and identify whether there is any scope to move these dates. | PGR provision | 2025 | The timing of the PGR Conference has been revised, and it will now take place in late April rather than at the end of May.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Completed |
| 2 | The review team <b>suggests</b> that steps are taken to ensure that student representatives receive sufficient training in order to confirm awareness of their key responsibilities within the role.      | PGR provision | 2025 | The PGR team has revised the representative role job description and allocated a small budget for each institute to support activities between students based in the 3 main buildings of the GeoSciences Estate. We are also exploring the development of tailored training for the representatives, to be delivered by the PGR provision along with the participation of former representatives.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Ongoing   |
| 3 | The review team <b>suggests</b> that the School undertakes a review of student representation across relevant School and College-level committees.                                                        | PGR provision | 2025 | See point 2 above                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Ongoing   |
| 4 | The review team <b>suggests</b> that the School should seek to raise awareness of its student representatives, and which committees they are members of, amongst the School's wider student population.   | PGR provision | 2025 | As part of the call for student representatives sent to students by the PGR Office has prepared posters and issued a call for representatives, Deputy PGR Directors and Deputy Heads of Institutes were asked to actively support and promote this call to action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ongoing   |

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|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |      | When Student representatives are appointed we will circulate details of student reps along with responsibilities to the student population, so that students know who they are, on what occasions they can contact them, and what feedback they should expect from them. We will also update the relevant are of the PGR office Sharepoint <a href="#">PGR Student Representatives</a> |         |
| 5                     | The review team <b>suggests</b> that School staff continue to work proactively with students around mechanisms to enhance the sense of student community across all buildings. | PGR provision                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2025 | As the School is split across multiple campuses, this remains an ongoing challenge. We are working with the GradSchool, student PGR social committee, and the representatives to address this issue collaboratively.                                                                                                                                                                   | Ongoing |
|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |         |
|                       | Please report on steps taken to feedback to student on the review outcomes                                                                                                     | The IPR panel review was shared with the PGR community. Required actions deriving from the review were discussed in PGR Committee meetings and the PGR Away Day. We are also planning to provide regular updates to future PGR Committee meetings and update student reps during SSLC meetings this academic year. |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |         |
| Year on response only | Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |         |