

The University of Edinburgh

The Moray House School of Education

School Postgraduate Studies Committee

Minute of the meeting held at 9.30am on 17 March 2016 in Room 2.03 in Charteris Land

Present: Dr S Psycharakis (Convener), Dr E Boeren, Ms S Colegrove, Ms R Cowie, Ms S Chapman, Mr R Easton, Dr R Ewins, Dr D Fry, Dr A Irvine, Dr J Li, Dr C Nash, Dr A Niven, Ms R O'Neill, Dr G Robinson, Dr C Rosenhan, Dr C Sinclair, Dr J Telford, Ms W Timmons, Dr D Torrance, Mr P Udofia and Dr C Valentin.

In attendance Ms L Rowand, Professor S Bayne, Dr J Brown, Dr K Fordyce, Dr I Fyfe and Dr D Saunders

Apologies Dr P Allison, Dr S Beames, Dr E Christie, Dr H Christie, Dr S Fawkner, Professor L Florian, Ms N Gilbert, Dr A Macpherson, Dr G Reid, Ms R Rennie, Dr P Sangster and Dr T Turner

1. Welcome and apologies

The Convener welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were as noted above.

2. Minute of the meeting held on 9 February 2016

The minute of the meeting was approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters Arising (not considered elsewhere on the agenda)

3.1 University Programme and Course Handbook Policy (item 3.2 refers)

This matter was carried forward to the next meeting. **[Action: Director of Postgraduate Studies]**

3.2 Induction Reviews (item 3.5 refers)

Feedback from the PGR cohort which had received its induction in October 2015 was generally positive. The new students had suggested a couple of changes which had been included in the induction for the January 2016 cohort. It had also been suggested that it might be helpful to offer an online meeting a couple of months before the formal induction in order to answer generic questions.

A first meeting had been held to review pre-induction and induction processes for PGT students. Further meetings were planned and PGT students would be invited to participate in these. **[Action: CV]**

3.3 Streamlining of examination boards (item 3.9 refers)

It was emphasised that programme directors were responsible for liaising with each other to identify an appropriate date for the board and pre-board for the forthcoming Board of Examiners meetings. The Graduate School Office would identify conveners and regulations experts for each board. It was noted that it would be helpful to have more regulations experts

and volunteers were invited to contact the Director or Depute Director of the Graduate School. **[Action: All]**

It was suggested that some of the groupings of programmes did not fit well especially if their preferred timings for exam board meetings varied considerably. These groupings could be reviewed following the meetings in June and October.

3.4 Personal Tutor system (item 3.10 refers)

The Senior Personal Tutor had emailed personal tutors to remind them to record meetings with their tutees on the meetings/notes tab within EUCLID.

3.5 Path (item 3.11 refers)

This item was carried forward to a future meeting,

3.6 Application and recruitment trends and conversion activities (item 4.2 refers)

A generic conversion message had not been drafted as after the example communications/newsletters had been circulated by the Senior Marketing and Communications Officer, a number of programme directors advised that they did not think a generic message was the best way forward.

Following further discussion by the committee, it was agreed that it would be helpful to have a generic message/newsletter which were pre-populated with some information. Programme teams could then develop these to suit their needs if they wished to send a tailored newsletter. **[Action: Senior Marketing and Communications Officer to develop generic templates]**

Unfortunately, there was currently no training provided at a University level for dotmailer, the tool used to produce the newsletter. However, both the Senior Marketing and Communications Officer and the Student Support Office had some experience in using it and might be able to provide some training for interested colleagues. **[Action: Secretary and Senior Marketing and Communications Officer to investigate dotmailer training options]**

The Director of Professional Services had been invited to attend this meeting or the next meeting of SPGSC.

It was noted that the vacant IT support position within the School had been advertised

3.7 Electronic submission and feedback (Item 4.3 refers)

Two programmes had been identified as pilot areas to trial for electronic only submission and this information had been passed to the College's Chief Information Officer.

3.8 Changes to assessment arrangements for course relating to visual impairment and deafness (item 6.5 refers)

The programme director and Graduate School Manager were currently liaising with Student Administration to establish if the resubmitted mark would be reflected on EUCLID. **[Action: Programme Director and Graduate School Manager]**

3.9 Course approval and amendment guidelines (item 6.9 refers)

These guidelines had now been amended and posted on the intranet with the Graduate School's pages.

3.10 SPGSC membership and remit (item 7 refers)

The revised membership and remit were now on the intranet and on the SPGSC webpages.

3.11 MSc (R) Short Life Working Group: Report (Item 8.1 refers)

The Convener of this SLWG had met with colleagues in the College Office to discuss how to progress the introduction of a revised MSc (R).

4. Convener's Business

4.1 PGR Representatives activity

Sue Chapman reported on activities being undertaken by the 11 PGR representatives. These included: redefining the role of the representatives committee, producing a handbook as a guide for representatives, recruiting Year 1 representatives, setting up seminars and workshops to tackle specific issues not currently covered elsewhere, encouraging applications for the innovation initiative grant and continuing to produce the PGR student newsletter. It was also noted that the reps had been successful in obtaining funding from EUSA to support some seminars on mental health issues.

It was also noted that Sue Chapman had recently been elected as EUSA Convener for the School of Education. As only 145 students from the School had voted in the elections, improving student engagement was an issue which she wished to focus upon in the first instance.

4.2 Dissertation writing course for PGT students

As had been the case last year, the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) would be offering a 5 week dissertation writing course to PGT students within the School of Education. There would be approximately 100 spaces available on this course and a separate class would be run for students on the SPEHS programmes whose dissertations tended to follow a different standard.

4.3 PTES (Postgraduate Taught Evaluation Survey)

The annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey ran from February to June and students in universities across the United Kingdom were invited to respond to questions about their courses and their learning experiences. The responses would be aggregated to produce an overall national report published on the Higher Education Academy website. Responses from students at each participating university were also aggregated into a confidential report for that institution. Emails would be sent to students to encourage them to participate in the survey and there would also be posters around the campus. Colleagues were asked to encourage students to participate in the survey.

4.4 Special Circumstances Committee

New members were required for this committee. The committee met four or five times a year and gave an interesting insight into the issues that students within the Graduate School face during their studies. Volunteers were requested to contact the Depute Director of Postgraduate Study. [Action: All]

4.5 MSc Scholarships

There were a number of different scholarships available to PGT students this year. Closing dates for the scholarships were in May and June. Volunteers were required to join a small group to review applications and select awardees. John Telford and Debi Fry volunteered to help with the review process. Other volunteers should contact the Depute Director of Postgraduate Study. **[Action: All]**

5. Programme and Course Matters

5.1 Revisions to course descriptor for TESOL for Young Learners (EDUA11026)

SPGSC homologated this proposal which had been approved by Convener's Action and forwarded to the Board of Studies for consideration. The revised descriptor updated the course to reflect recent changes in the field and revised the learning outcomes to be in line with University requirements.

5.2 New Course Proposal: Youth Studies

SPGSC approved this course which would be a further option for students on MSc Education subject to the removal of the specific essay title from the descriptor. The course would expand the curriculum and offer students the opportunity to undertake a critical examination of youth with a theoretical emphasis on the growing sociological discipline of youth studies. Members of SPGSC agreed that it may be of interest to students on other MSc programmes within the School. **[Action: The proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies and Planning and Resources Committee for approval]**

Members of SPGSC were interested in Padlet Wall which was used within the assessment. This was a useful tool in designing an assessment that was possibly plagiarism-proof. It was agreed that it would be useful for the course organiser to run a session on Padlet Wall. **[Action: Depute Director (PGT) and Course Organiser to liaise regarding session on Padlet Wall]**

5.3 Amendment to Degree Programme Table for MSc Learning for Sustainability

SPGSC homologated this amendment which had been approved by Convener's Action and forwarded to the Board of Studies for consideration. The amendment created more course options within the programme and offered students the option to select a 20 credit course from another postgraduate programme. This would increase flexibility across the programme and encourage students to enrich their own curriculum.

5.4 MEd Leadership and Learning

SPGSC noted and homologated the revised programme specification and mapping of research elements which had been approved by the Board of Studies. The full documentation for the proposed programme had now been forwarded to the College Office for consideration.

5.5 Ethics forms and processes

SPGSC welcomed Professor S Bayne and Dr J Brown to the meeting to discuss the introduction of a new online system for the ethical approval process. Papers were tabled on ethical review levels and on the prevent agenda and ethics procedures. These papers would be circulated to all members of the committee after the meeting and may be forwarded to others as appropriate. **[Action: Secretary]**

Ethics applications were increasing every year and the new online system, which would be rolled out completely by September 2016, should make the system more efficient and simplify record-keeping. There were different procedures in place for staff and student applications, although in both cases there were 4 ethical review levels. The committee discussed some of the cultural differences and difficulties arising from the requirement to have ethical approval. Programme directors and dissertation supervisors were welcome to contact Dr Brown, in her role as School Ethics Officer, at any point to discuss any potential applications.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to have some wording explaining the ethics review process to include in the PGT generic handbook/dissertation handbook and also in the PGR handbook. **[Action: Professor Bayne and Dr Brown].**

It was noted that the processing of PVG applications could also significantly hamper or delay research students wished to undertake. The Depute Director (PGT) and Graduate School Office were to be meeting with the Student Support Office to discuss this.

SPGSC also discussed the paper which outlined the University's position on the Prevent Agenda, namely that it would ensure that all staff and students engaged in research into potentially sensitive topics (such as extremism) were protected. In accordance with the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015) the University had a statutory duty to engage with the Prevent Agenda and to fulfil a proactive role in order to "prevent people from being drawn into terrorism." Any member of staff or student working online with sensitive material of this type must ensure that they follow prescribed protocols and should not store any documents which could be perceived as being a threat to security. In such a sensitive area, it was important to liaise with the School Ethics Officer.

5.6 SAMO Update

Members of SPGSC welcomed Dr Dave Saunders, School Academic Misconduct Officer (SAMO) to the meeting.

It was noted that the Graduate School Office had recently begun submitting PhD theses to Turnitin at the point of presentation for examination. These submissions are not uploaded to the student repository. This should be done before the thesis was sent to the external examiner. However, it was suggested that it may be good practice to use Turnitin at an earlier stage or stages. For instance, some written work could be submitted to Turnitin at the time of the Year 1 progression board. These submissions would also not be uploaded to the student repository. Although members of SPGSC did not wish to assume a position of mistrusting or suspecting students of academic misconduct, it was recognised that the use of Turnitin could be helpful to PGR students and could flag where referencing was inadequate. This would avoid difficulties at a later stage. SPGSC therefore agreed that PGR students should have a sample of work submitted to Turnitin at the following points: research proposal, Year 1 progression board, viva submission prior to distribution to external examiner, post correction stage following viva. **[Action: Postgraduate Depute Director (PGR) and SAMO to seek advice from CAMO on these suggestions; SAMO to report on College advice at the next SPGSC meeting]**

SPGSC agreed to the recommendation that the course organiser be responsible for responding to any Turnitin requests received from another institution for student work in order to investigate possible plagiarism. **[Action: Programme directors to cascade to programme teams and course organisers]**

SPGSC discussed how best to promote good academic practice and how to prevent either intentional or unintentional academic misconduct whenever possible. Semester 1 assessments

may be particularly vulnerable as not all students may yet have grasped exactly what constituted cheating or plagiarism. The University's emphasis on giving quick feedback on formative assessments could be helpful in identifying those students for whom this was not clear.

Unfortunately, there was now an online industry providing ready written original assignments for payment and it was likely that a small proportion of students took advantage of this. Students were targeted by companies offering such services. The use of examinations or presentations or innovative non-traditional forms of assessments could alleviate this problem and make it very difficult for students to submit work that was not their own.

5.7 Generic Research Courses Timetabling for 2016-17

This paper summarised proposed times for the generic research courses in 2016-17. Programme directors were requested to contact the Research Courses team as soon as possible and by 10 June at the latest if there were any potential issues with the proposed timings. **[Action: All programme directors]**

6. **Accessibility Matters**

Members of SPGSC did wish to discuss these papers with the School Academic Coordinator for Accessibility as they considered there were a number of important issues contained within them but unfortunately she had been unable to attend the last two meetings due to sickness and teaching commitments. **[Action: Secretary to check if School Academic Coordinator for Accessibility able to attend next meeting of SPGSC]**

7. **Short Life Working Groups**

7.1 Report of the Short Life Working Group on English entry requirements and application closing dates for the Graduate School of Education and Sport

SPGSC thanked the members of the working group for this detailed and considered report.

It was noted that the Graduate School of Education and Sport had far greater variability in its programmes' English language entry requirements than other Graduate Schools within the College. This was laid out in table 3 of the paper. The rationale for these differences was not always clear and it would be helpful to have a more consistent approach. The current lack of consistency was confusing for applicants, burdensome for College PG Admissions staff and potentially prevented students from taking courses operating under programmes with different entry requirements. The paper proposed a simplification of English language entry requirements, and that there be just two different requirements used within the School, namely IELTS 7 with 6.5 on all skills for the language programmes and MSc Education/Educational Research and IELTS 7 with 6 on all skills for all other programmes within the School. Members of the committee expressed differing views on this proposal. Some believed it would enhance the cohort and make teaching and learning easier for all; others were concerned that it would exclude a significant number of students and result in a fall in recruitment.

Following discussion, it was agreed to go forward with 3 different entry levels in place of the current four. As a result, the three Outdoor Education programmes, MSc Inclusive Education and MSc Social Justice and Community Action would join MSc Digital Education with a requirement of 7 with 6 on all skills. Based on the argument of programme directors from SPEHS that elements of their programmes were more akin to Masters programmes in the College of Science and Engineering, which tended to have lower language entry requirements, as well as due to concerns that recruitment might be affected by an increased

IELTS requirement, it was decided to retain the current entry requirement of IELTS 6.5 with 6 on all skills. **[Action: Convener of Working Group to discuss further with programme directors and bring revised proposal to next meeting of SPGSC]**

SPGSC also discussed the proposal to introduce a closing date at the end of July for applications for all programmes with a September start. Applicants usually expected to see a closing date and the lack of a clear closing date might even deter some applicants who would assume it had already passed. However, the website should also contain a statement saying that in exceptional circumstances late applications may be accepted. This was especially important in the case of part-time programmes for which applications were traditionally quite late. **[Action: Secretary to liaise with College Office to have closing date implemented]**

8. AOCB

There were no items to discuss under AOCB

CLOSED BUSINESS

9. External Examiner appointments

9.1 Nomination for appointment of External Examiner for MSc Inclusive Education

The committee approved the appointment of Dr Chloe Marshall, University College London as external examiner for the above programme. **[Action: Secretary to forward to College Office for approval]**

Ms Lesley Rowand
Secretary, School Postgraduate Studies Committee