

**The University of Edinburgh**  
**The Moray House School of Education**  
**School Postgraduate Studies Committee**

Minute of the meeting held at 2pm on 17 September 2015 in Room 1.15 Thomson's Land

**Present:** Dr P Allison, Dr S Beames, Dr E Boeren, Mr P Evans, Dr R Ewins, Dr J Li, Mr D Murphy, Dr A Niven, Dr S Psycharakis, Ms R O'Neill, Ms R Rennie, Dr G Reid, Dr C Rosenhan, Dr C Sinclair, Dr T Turner and Dr C Valentin.

**In attendance** Ms L Rowand, Mrs D Scott

**Apologies** Dr J Crowther, Mr R Easton, Dr S Fawkner, Dr A Irvine, Dr A Macpherson, Ms K Woomble

**1. Welcome and apologies**

The Convener welcomed all to the meeting, and in particular welcomed Dr S Psycharakis, Depute Director of the Graduate School (PGR) who was attending SPGSC for the first time. Apologies were as noted above.

**2. Minute of the meeting held on 17 August 2015**

The minute was approved as an accurate record subject to a number of minor amendments on the attendance list.

**3. Matters Arising**

3.1 Dissertation Process: Creation of a videocast (item 3.1 refers)

This videocast was now complete and available on the Graduate School section of the intranet at: <http://www.intranet.ed.ac.uk/PostgradOffice/documents.php?ID=19>. Programme directors should advise all colleagues involved in marking and providing feedback to students that this guide is now available. The Committee thanked Andrew Horrell for producing the videocast.

3.2 Personal Tutor System: Roles and Practices (item 3.2 refers)

This item was carried forward to the next meeting. **[Action: For inclusion on agenda of next meeting]**

3.3 Mainstreaming Adjustments (item 3.3 refers)

This item was carried forward to the next meeting. **[Action: For inclusion on agenda of next meeting]**

3.4 New course proposal guidelines (item 3.5 refers)

Dr C Valentin reported that she was continuing to work on this. Once guidance was collated, it would be made available on the intranet for the use of all colleagues. **[Action: Dr C Valentin]**

3.6 Blackwell's Bookshop – Oral report by Nahad Gilbert (item 3.7 refers)

Dr Gilbert would attend a future meeting of the committee to discuss this matter. **[Action: Secretary/Convener to invite Dr Gilbert]**

3.7 University Programme and Course Handbook Policy (item 4.5 refers)

The Convener had spoken to John Ravenscroft in his role as School Director of Teaching and Learning regarding this matter. It was still to be decided how the School would ensure that it met all the requirements of the policy.

3.8 Assessment and Feedback turnaround times (item 4.7 refers)

The Convener thanked all those who had submitted requests for exemption from the 15 day turnaround time. These applications had now been approved by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The turnaround period for feedback for these courses would be 20 days. The Convener would email programme directors to confirm this. **[Action: Convener to email programme directors]**

3.9 New Course Proposal: Learning Analytics

This proposal had been forwarded to the Board of Studies, which had not approved the proposal and had highlighted a number of areas which required further consideration. A sub-committee of the Board of Studies would consider the revised paper in due course. The Board of Studies was considering introducing a system of designated readers in order to ensure that all papers were suitably scrutinised and in order to reduce the volume of reading required by individual committee members. It had also been agreed that the Board of Studies may also decline the discussion of any paper if the originator of the paper is not available to speak to it at the meeting.

**4. Convener's Business**

4.1 Improving SPGSC meetings

Dr C Valentin introduced this item and the remit and membership of the committee were tabled. Dr Valentin suggested that members consider how to add value to the committee in terms of ensuring it adhered to its remit but was also informative and relevant. As with the Board of Studies, the introduction of designated readers might ensure proper scrutiny of papers. Meetings might be more valuable if they focussed on one or two discussion items. There seemed to be a constant flow of information from central University services and the College Office and at the moment this was circulated within the Graduate School either via SPGSC meetings or by emails to the programme directors and/or SPGSC membership. It might be preferable to find a better way of doing this, perhaps by producing a periodic bulletin or newsletter. SPGSC should also actively support innovative practice in teaching and learning perhaps through discussions of new approaches taking place in different courses. However, it was also important to keep SPGSC manageable. The use of short life working groups was one way of doing this and ensured that important discussions or investigations took place. Dr Valentin would welcome any further thoughts on

It was noted that the membership list was out of date in that it included old names for roles (e.g the Academic Coordinator of Teachability had been retitled Academic Coordinator of Accessibility) and there was no longer an Academic Coordinator of E-learning. These comments should be fed back to the School Office. **[Action: Secretary]**

4.2 Interweaving Conference

The second Interweaving Conference had been held on 2 September and again had been very successful. The Convener thanked all those who had been involved in its organisation and had participated, but particularly thanked Pauline Sangster, Lorraine Denholm, Martin Johnson and Barrie Barreto.

4.3 Degree Finder sign off

It was important that all programme directors checked the information for their programme on the University's degree finder at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees/index.php?r=site/bySubject&sid=14>

This was in line with the advice for higher education providers received from the Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA). Any inaccuracies should be reported to Dee Scott. **[Action: All programme directors]**

#### 4.4 Report from the Depute Director of Graduate School (PGR)

Dr Psycharakis outlined the plans and priorities in his new role. These included improving: completion rates, the alignment of research students' topics with staff research interests, guidance for potential applicants, the transparency of teaching opportunities for PhD students within the School and the training for PhD student tutors.

#### 4.5 College Intranet

The College Office had developed a new intranet site which collated a huge amount of information. It could be accessed via: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/humanities-soc-sci/information-for-staff/chss-intranet>. There was a dedicated postgraduate section. Staff can request permission to have access to this site through the portal.

#### 4.6 Formal communication of award to students

The College Office would no longer write to graduating students regarding the award of their degree. Students now received notification of their award by logging into their MyEd account. This was the University's chosen means of communicating award decisions to students and it should not be duplicated by any further processes within the School. Students who wished a transcript could obtain a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) by submitting a request to the University's Electronic Document Service (EDS). Information on the EDS was available on the University's website at: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/electronic-document-service>. The Graduate School Office would not produce any letters which duplicated this information as not only was it unnecessary work but there was room for error in retyping students' marks. The information on the HEAR report was drawn directly from EUCLID and therefore should be correct.

The Graduate School Office was currently seeking guidance from Academic Services and the International Office regarding the letter that some Chinese students request from either the Student Support Office or the Graduate School and which they say is necessary to use to support their application to the Chinese Embassy to obtain verification of their UK degree. It was hoped that either Academic Services or the International Office would be able to obtain clarification from the Chinese Embassy regarding exactly what was required.

#### 4.7 Engagement and Monitoring attendance

Members of the committee were reminded that last year the College had established a policy of monitoring the attendance and engagement of all its students and not just those sponsored under the UK's Visa and Immigration Tier 4 arrangements (for whom there are specific legislative obligations). This approach was intended to establish parity of treatment across the student body and enable Schools to check that students were progressing through their studies as they should, allowing early intervention and support where this was not the case. Registers were therefore taken in all small group teaching sessions. Although this practice would continue largely unaltered from last year, it was noted that the College had developed a data collection tool to streamline the electronic capture of registers. This meant the information could be entered directly into the student record via a range of electronic devices, during the teaching session. Therefore the information produced would be available to student support and academic staff immediately and this would allow potential issues to be spotted quickly and followed up with minimum delay. The School of Education was not immediately adopting this new tool across all programmes but tutors in all courses on MSc Education and the Research Methods courses had been asked to trial it during semester one. Programme directors for other programmes were requested to remind all teaching staff that registers must be taken at all small group teaching and returned to the Graduate School Office within three working days.

## 5. External Examiners Reporting System (EERS)

Unfortunately Anne Marie O'Mullane had been unable to attend this meeting as planned. It was hoped she would be able to make this presentation to a future meeting of SPGSC.

## 6. Mainstreaming adjustments for students

Ruby Rennie, the School Coordinator for Accessibility, reported that information on accessibility matters could now be extracted from the School's online course monitoring system. This information was downloaded into an anonymised report. The report had contained 78 entries, most of which were positive. Positive approaches undertaken to mainstream adjustments included ensuring course outlines were available in advance on Learn/Moodle and were accurate and putting up reading lists on Learn/Moodle in advance of lectures. Difficulties with equipment, for instance microphones not working, were mentioned a handful of times. However, the School now had two Campus Room Assistants whose role included checking rooms to ensure all equipment was working correctly. Every room with a microphone installed had a clear reminder that it should be used and a telephone number to contact if assistance was required.

It was noted that a number of cases considered by the Special Circumstances Committee this year had flagged that schedules of adjustment had not always been in place for students early in the academic year. There were a number of reasons why this might be the case. For instance, the Student Disability Service (SDS) was constantly dealing with an increasing demand for its input and consequently at times there may be a backlog of schedules to be produced. Students themselves may delay the production of schedules because of initial reluctance to approach the SDS. Once the schedule has been produced, students may be unwilling to check with the course organiser that it has been received and is being applied. The process for cascading adjustment schedules to course organisers/tutors was also not always clear. Programme directors were requested to remind course organisers/tutors of the importance of implementing such schedules. **[Action: Programme directors]**

Ms Rennie would give a fuller report on mainstreaming adjustments at a later meeting. It was hoped to hold a staff development event to share good practice on mainstreaming adjustments later in academic year.

## 7. Admissions update

Ms Kirsty Woomble had been unable to attend this meeting of SPGSC but had produced an interim report on the number of students enrolled for session 2015/16. It was projected that the Graduate School would have about 440 new students in 2015/16 but this number would fluctuate quite considerably in the next week or thereabouts.

## 8. Programme Matters

### 8.1 MSc Education: Change to Degree Programme Table

Convener's action had been taken by both the Convener of SPGSC and the Convener of the Board of Studies to approve this paper ahead of the start of the academic year. SPGSC noted that the Degree Programme Table for MSc Education had been amended to enable students to select up to 40 optional credits at level 11 from elsewhere within the University subject to the agreement of the Programme Director. **[Action: Proposal homologated by SPGSC]**

## 9. Dissertations Process 2015 and 2016

Marking was almost complete for many dissertations. All marks and feedback should be uploaded to Learn by the first marker but should also be submitted to the Graduate School Office for central recording. It had been agreed that the dissertation submission date for 2016 would be Monday 22

August 2016. A small number of programmes would continue to have later dissertation submission dates and their arrangements would continue as in previous years.

**10. College Postgraduate Administration Review**

In Spring 2015, the College of Humanities and Social Science had engaged an external consultant, Hugh Jones, to undertake a review of the College's postgraduate administration. The main report contained a number of recommendations. It was already clear that some of these recommendations would be adopted by the College, others would be investigated further and a few would be rejected. The report had been included in the papers for this meeting really to forewarn the committee of some of the changes that might arise as a result of the review. SPGSC members commented on a number of the report's findings. It was noted that the report and its appendices should not be circulated beyond the committee and therefore should be categorised as closed business and not published on the School website with the other papers for this meeting.

**11. Examination Boards Autumn 2015**

It was noted that some Boards of Examiners scheduled to take place in October 2015 were still without regulations experts. The Depute Director (PGT) and the Graduate School Office were working on filling these gaps. It would be helpful to have more regulations experts available within the Graduate School. It was an important role and it was important that it was undertaken properly.

**12. AOCB**

12.1 Class representatives

Dr Beames reminded the committee that every course and/or programme required student representatives. The number of course and programme representatives required was not prescribed, so there was flexibility for programme directors to come to their own arrangements regarding the ways in which students reported on course and programme provision. In addition all PGT programmes and all UG programmes/year groups (e.g. 4th year BEd.) required a representative (or two, if larger) to gather 'big picture' views (e.g. admissions, between course coherence, etc...). The University and EUSA had introduced an online 'class rep' training course which all representatives would be required to take. EUSA had requested that the names of all representatives be forwarded by 2 October 2015.

It was noted that PGT and PGR representatives were also required for SPGSC. **[Action: Convener, Director of Quality and Graduate School Depute Directors]**

12.2 Quality and Enhancement matters

Dr Beames advised that the new email address for contacting him regarding School quality matters was [Education.Quality@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Education.Quality@ed.ac.uk).

He was hoping to attend programme and course meetings to learn more about innovations within teaching and learning in the School and to share these via a wiki or another mechanism.

12.3 Learn Guidelines

A set of guidelines for the design of Learn pages had been produced by Will Sullivan, who had been an intern in the School over the summer. The purpose of these guidelines was not to produce a rigid structure but to improve the student experience of LEARN by ensuring that course organisers design consistent LEARN pages. These guidelines were tabled at the meeting and it was agreed they should be circulated with the minute and programme directors requested to cascade them to all course organisers. **[Action: Secretary]**

The Accessibility Coordinator advised that course organisers who wished advice on the accessibility of their course on LEARN could contact the Disability Information Office, Viki Galt ([wiki.galt@ed.ac.uk](mailto:wiki.galt@ed.ac.uk)) who would review and report on the site.

**13. External Examiner appointments**

13.1 Nomination for appointment of External Examiner for MSc Performance Psychology

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

Ms Lesley Rowand  
Secretary, School Postgraduate Studies Committee