

**The University of Edinburgh**

**The Moray House School of Education**

**School Postgraduate Studies Committee**

Minute of the meeting held at 2pm on 2 February 2017 in Room 5.02 Charteris Land

**Present:** Dr A Hancock (Convener), Dr E Christie, Dr H Christie, Dr R Ewins, Dr A Kennedy, Dr J MacAllister, Dr C McGregor, Ms D Murdoch, Dr A Niven, Ms R O'Neill, Dr C Rosenhan, Ms A Shan, Dr P Sheail, Dr C Sinclair, Dr J Telford and Dr C Valentin.

**In attendance:** Dr C Benson (for item 9) Dr A English, Ms A Fernon, Dr M Orr, Ms C Regan, Ms L Rowand, Dr S Sabeti and Mrs D Scott

**Apologies:** Dr F Bonacina-Pugh, Mr R Easton, Dr S Fawkner, Dr Ms N Gilbert, Dr A MacPherson, Dr A Niven, Dr S Phillips, Dr S Psycharakis, Dr R Rennie, Dr P Sangster, Ms W Timmons, and Dr D Torrance.

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

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

**2. Minute of the meeting held on 22 November 2016**

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

**3. Matters Arising**

**3.1 MSc Transformative Learning and Teaching (item 3.2 refers)**

The University validation and GTC accreditation processes were now complete. Applications would be opening very soon.

**3.2 Formal closure of programmes (item 3.3 refers)**

As recruitment for the undernoted programmes had now ceased and there were no longer any students remaining on these programmes, SPGSC agreed to recommend to the Board of Studies that they be formally closed:

Pg Certificate 3-14 Physical Education  
MSc Community Education  
MSc Management in Training and Development

**[Action: Convener/Secretary to report to Board of Studies]**

**3.3 Course Enhancement questionnaire (item 4.1 refers)**

There had been a few issues regarding the questionnaire including surveys being closed too early and staff members receiving teaching scores despite this question having been removed from the questionnaire. The School Executive and School Quality Assurance Committee had also discussed this matter and a School response would be submitted to the appropriate College/University committees.

**3.4 Extensions**

Dr Lisa Kendall, Head of Academic and Student Administration in the College Office had emailed about concerns around the new seven day extension rule and the potential impact this might have on students especially those with mental health issues. She had requested feedback, including specific case examples to pass on to Academic Services.

Members of SPGSC made the following comments:

- Not allowing extraordinary work commitments to be an acceptable reason for an extension request was potentially discriminatory and may even result in students withdrawing from their programme of study. This could be particularly true in the case of part-time students who often had demanding full-time jobs.
- Unless students who required an extension for more than seven days were to be left in limbo for a protracted period of time, the new rule had the effect of either compelling the Special Circumstances Committee (SCC) to meet far more regularly or decisions being taken on behalf of SCC by convener's action. Neither option was particularly desirable.

Members were invited to email the convener/secretary any further comments to the convener or secretary by 16 February 2017. **[Action: all]**

### 3.5 Course Amendment: Research Methods (REDU11063) (item 7.2 refers)

This proposal had been considered by the School Executive as it incorporated a proposal for a MOOC and new MOOCs required the approval of the Head of School. It would also be considered by the School Planning and Resources Committee. The proposal for the standard research methods course may return to SPGSC for approval in due course.

### 3.6 Course Amendment: MSc Language Teaching Dissertation (REDU11054): Proposal to change word count (item 7.3 refers)

This proposed amendment would be discussed at the Board of Studies on 16 February. It was noted that the Director of Professional Services had raised concerns that the reduction of length of dissertations might impact on the scheduled work for guaranteed hours staff.

### 3.7 KIS data – annual checking and confirmation exercise (item 7.4 refers)

Programme directors and course organisers had undertaken this annual check and update. The Convener would formally confirm this to the next meeting of the Board of Studies.

## 4. **Convener's business**

### 4.1 CPGSC Matters

The Convener reported on a number of matters discussed at the recent meeting of the College Postgraduate Studies Committee, namely:

- IAD had decided to try a more staggered approach in the way in which it advertised its services and resources to new students. Students received an overwhelming amount of information at the very start of their studies and it may be more effective to spread the dissemination of this information throughout the academic year;
- Validation processes for new programmes need to be started 16 months in advance of the proposed first intake. The College Office advised that it will take this length of time to fully validate and sufficiently advertise a new programme. Student involvement was encouraged in the design of new programmes and courses.

#### 4.2 Electronic Submission

Electronic submission of all coursework assignments in the College was required for second semester assessments. The Graduate School Office would be writing to students to advise of this once all semester one submissions had been submitted. Electronic marking was not obligatory as markers could choose to print out assignments. Marks and feedback should be returned to students electronically via Turnitin. The Graduate School Office's understanding was that it was still permissible to request hard copies of dissertations. [*Secretary's Note: Subsequent to this meeting, the College's Electronic Submission Project Board refused an exemption request for dissertation submission from two of the Graduate School's programmes.*]

#### 4.3 Anonymous Marking

Students within the Graduate School would also be reminded via email of the requirement to submit their coursework anonymously in line with the University's regulations as not all had been adhering to this. Names and matriculation numbers should not be included on assignments and the anonymous button must be activated on all Turnitin submission boxes.

#### 4.4 Electronic Registers

All registers had now been set up electronically and all tutors had access with the exception of a small number who were still awaiting EUCLID access. If more than one tutor taught the same class, all could be given access to the same register but the Engagement Assistants should be advised of this in advance so that access can be arranged.

#### 4.5 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

At the request of the Postgraduate Dean, Professor Neil Mulholland, members of the committee were asked to consider how this survey might be better used to improve the quality of the student experience and which questions should be considered as key. A copy of the 2015 survey was tabled. Members of the committee made the following points:

- the survey referred to programmes of study as a "courses" which potentially could confuse University of Edinburgh students;
- a number of suggestions were made for how to rephrase questions (e.g. question 27) but as the survey was produced by the Higher Education Academy the University was unable to make changes to it.

All members of SPGSC were invited to feedback comments on the survey to the Convener for forwarding to the Dean by 14 February. **[Action: All]** It was noted that Dr G Macleod had undertaken some analysis of PTES last year and therefore may be able to contribute some comments.

### 5. **Recruitment and Admissions matters**

#### 5.1 Update from College Admissions

Members of SPGSC welcomed to the committee for the first time, Ms Catriona Regan, new Communications and Marketing Manager for the School of Education and Ms Anne Fernon, Admissions Officer, Postgraduate Admissions, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science. Both briefly outlined their remit and responsibilities.

Although Ms Regan was a member of Communications and Marketing, she would be based at Old Moray House each Tuesday. Initially she would be focusing on PGT related matters and had held

meetings with a number of programme directors regarding the marketing needs of their programmes.

Ms Fernon explained the structure of the Postgraduate Admissions team within the College Postgraduate Office. It was noted that so far the team had processed 13.5k applications for 2017/18 and that applications across the College were up by 11%. Several PGT programmes within the School of Education were showing a significant increase in applications compared to this time last year. The timescale from application submission to decision should be six weeks at most. The Graduate School Office now had access to the BI Suite report which showed all applicants details on all its programmes and this would be circulated regularly.

As there were a number of admissions related matters that warranted in depth discussion the Convener proposed to establish a Short Life Working Group on Admissions chaired by the Depute Director of the Graduate School (PGT). The SLWG would:

- map the entire recruitment/application/conversion process in order to identify its weaknesses and also suggest how to improve conversion rates.
- evaluate conversion communications, Open Days and other recruitment activities;
- consider how to manage student numbers including across two intakes within one year
- consider any other relevant recruitment or admissions matters.

Ms Regan, Ms Fernon, Dr P Sheail, Dr J MacAlliste, Dr C McGregor and Ms R O'Neill agreed to join the membership of the group. Other programme directors would be welcome to join to ensure representation from a diverse range of programmes. **[Action: Programme Directors to volunteer to join SLWG. Depute Director to arrange meeting of SLWG]**. If possible the SLWG should report back to the meeting of SPGSC scheduled to take place on 4 May 2017.

MSc TESOL intended to produce a newsletter for applicants as had been the case last year. However, as many applicants used agents, their personal emails were often not available. Ms Fernon advised that Alison Biddows of the International Office may be able to help with this as she oversaw agreements with agents. Newsletters such as this could be useful in building relationships with applicants. They might include profiles of current students or recent graduates, interesting events taking place within the School, future developments planned for the programme etc.

## 5.2 PG recruitment: Planning forecast

Initial projected figures for recruitment for 17/18 – 20/21 for inclusion in the School Plan had been circulated at the start of January. The Convener had discussed these with programme directors and a final version subsequently circulated and included in the papers for SPGSC. It was noted that the figure for MSc Language Teaching had been incorrect on the latest version of this document and that this programme had a target of 31 for each year. Programmes were permitted to recruit above the projected figures although significant increases could result in staffing issues. SPGSC was concerned that the quality of teaching and learning would be diluted if programmes were compelled to take increased numbers of students without appropriate staff resources being simultaneously available.

## 6. **PGR Matters**

The Depute Director (PGR) had been unable to attend this meeting of SPGSC but had asked for the following to be noted:

- The Interweaving Conference would take place on 6 September 2017. Organisation of the conference would be student led;
- As several of the Graduate School's students would not have been able to travel to the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference this year due to US travel restrictions, the

Head of School had decided that instead the School would fund a small number of places at the European Educational Research Association (EERA) conference which was taking place in August in Copenhagen. SPGSC supported this decision.

- Scholarships – the panel had met to consider the School’s ESRC applications. The standard was very high and consequently a request had been made to increase the number of nominees from three to four. Applications for PCDS, College Award and EGRS closed on 1 February.

## 7. Course Matters

### 7.1 Anthropology of Education and Learning

This paper proposed a new course called The Anthropology of Education and Learning which would be part of the newly revised MSc Education. The streamlining of existing courses on MSc Education meant that there was capacity to include this new course. It would be a compulsory component of the Comparative Education and International Development pathway. Approval of the course would bring the pathway into line with others within the programme in terms of the number of pathway courses required of students. The course addressed several gaps in the School’s provision and would also help build links with other Schools and departments, most notably Social Anthropology and the School of Social and Political Studies and the Global Development Academy. The course would be open to other students within the School and the MSc TESOL programme team had stated that they would be open to their students choosing it as an option.

Subject to a number of minor amendments to the paperwork, SPGSC approved this course proposal. **[Action: The proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies and Planning and Resources Committee for approval]**

### 7.2 Assistive Technology

This proposal would be considered at a future meeting of SPGSC.

### 7.3 Creation of four new courses for MSc Inclusive Education

This paper proposed the closure of two 20-credit courses in the MSc Inclusive Education programme, namely Specific Learning Difficulties: Co-occurring Specific Difficulties (EDUA11237) and Bilingualism and Other Additional Support Needs (EDUA11251). These would be replaced by four 10 credit courses:

Specific Learning Difficulties: Co-occurring Specific Difficulties will be replaced by:

- Autistic Spectrum, Specific Language Impairment and Dyslexia: an introduction
- ADHD, Dyspraxia and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties: an introduction

Bilingualism and Other Additional Support Needs will be replaced by:

- Bilingual Learners and Dyslexia
- Bilingual Learners and Additional Support Needs

This paper explained that this change would make the PG Certificate in Inclusive Education more attractive and affordable for UK teachers. Teachers taking the PG Certificate would also be eligible to apply for a Professional Career Loans (<http://bit.ly/1muwFJR>) which was available to students on programmes of 2 years or less. Approval of the proposed change may also eventually enable professional body accreditation of the programmes.

Members of the committee considered the rationale behind this proposal compelling and strongly supported it and the desire to make the programmes more accessible to UK teachers. SPGSC

approved this proposal for four new courses on MSc Inclusive Education. **[Action: The proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies and Planning and Resources Committee for approval]**

#### 7.4 Philosophy of Education: Course Amendment

The paper proposed three changes to the assessment arrangements for the philosophy of education course. The word count of the blog task would be revised (1000 words to 500 words); the word count of the essay would also be revised (2500 words to 2000 words) and an additional assessed group presentation be introduced. These changes were proposed in response to feedback from students at the staff student liaison committee and during the last session of the course this year. SPGSC had some reservations about having three separate assessments for a 20 credit course, however it was hoped that the students would find the assignments diverse and interesting and that assessment marking requirements would not be overly onerous for staff. **[Action: The proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies for approval]**

### 8. Programme Matters

#### 8.1 Proposed changes to Pg Certificate in Academic Practice

This proposal to deliver a revised PG Certificate in Academic Practice was discussed in detail at the programme review held in May 2016. The proposal to introduce a new compulsory course, and to revise the existing range of options, would help with the efficiency of the programme, as well as with the completion rates of the participants. The current programme had been running since 2011 and was in need of a refresh and an update. It was accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) until March 2017 and reaccreditation would be sought. The PGCAP team had worked hard to ensure that equality issues, including accessibility and inclusivity, had been built into the design and delivery of the new programme. This had included taking stock of the delivery methods, and the range of teaching and assessment methods used across the programme. In respect of the latter, SPGSC noted and commended the wide range of assessment methods across the programme and was very impressed by how innovative many of these were.

SPGSC considered and approved each of the new course descriptors namely:

- Foundations of Academic Practice (40 credits)
- Working with Students in Large Groups (10 credits)
- Working With Postgraduate Students (10 credits)
- Digital Education (10 credits)
- Leadership in Higher Education (10 credits)
- Researching your Teaching (10 credits)
- Clinical Education and Academic Practice (10 credits)

It was noted that all course within the programme were assessed on a pass/fail basis. Clarification was sought as to whether or not this exception to the University's assessment regulations was in place and recorded in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study. **[Action: Depute Director (PGT)]**

Part of the proposal was to change the name of the programme to PG Certificate in Academic Practice (Higher Education) to simplify the administration of the new Programme and to draw a clear distinction with the old Programme. SPGSC advised that the College Office should be consulted as to whether or not this was possible without the programme being re-approved at College level. **[Action: Dr Christie to check with Ms K Urquart, College Administrative Officer (Governance)]**

Subject to clarification of whether or not the programme's name would be changed, SPGSC approved the changes to the Pg Certificate in Academic Practice. **[Action: The proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies for approval]**

## 8.2. Proposed changes to MSc Social Justice and Community Action

This programme of study was currently in its third year and had two cohorts of students on programme. Recruitment had currently been frozen and there had been no intake to the programme in January 2017. The paper proposed three substantive changes which would be introduced in time for a new intake, probably in January 2018. The changes proposed were:

- Learning for Democracy (EDUA11327) would become a core course, swapping with Policy Analysis for Social Justice (EDUA11326) which would become an optional course;
- Community action and Social justice EDUA11325 would be replaced as a core course by the new distance learning course in Community Engagement. *[Secretary's Note: It was not clear at the meeting if this course was indeed a distance learning course. It was confirmed after the meeting that this was correct.]*
- Introduction to Learning for sustainability EDUA11316 introduced as a new distance learning option from available within MHSE. Core courses from MSc Social Justice and Community Action available to MSc Learning for sustainability students.

SPGSC approved these proposed changes. In particular it welcomed the sharing of courses with other programmes of study. It was noted that course descriptors for the new and proposed courses would be required prior to the proposal's consideration at the Board of Studies. **[Action: Depute Director (PGT) to meet with programme director to discuss course descriptor requirements. On completion of this the proposal be forwarded to the Board of Studies for approval].**

The proposal would also be require approval by SPRC. The Convener would seek advice as to the documentation requirements for its consideration at SPRC on 15 February. **[Action: Convener]**

## 8.3 Proposal for Distance PhD

This proposal was at an early stage and the intention in bringing it to SPGSC was to establish if there was an appetite to move in this direction. As the School delivered a successful online MSc in Digital Education, it would in many respects be a logical growth from that programme and a logical progression for some of its graduates. The College Office had confirmed that a proposal for a Distance PhD in the School of Education would need to follow the full programme approval process. Further discussion within the School was required, although in principle both the Head of School and Convener were supportive of the idea. It was agreed that the Depute Director (PGR) should meet with Dr Ewins and Dr Sinclair to discuss the proposal further. It was noted that there was a Distance PhD operating in the School of Health and Social Science and that this could be a model on which to base an Education version. Approval by the School Planning and Resources Committee would be required at an early stage. **[Action: Depute Director and Dr Ewins and Dr Sinclair to discuss further]**

## 9. **Supporting international students with their academic writing skills**

Dr A English had requested that the committee discussed current practice in supporting international students with their academic writing skills. Dr C Benson, of English Language Education (ELE), Centre for Open Learning also attended for this item and contributed to the discussion as ELE currently provided English language support to some of the Graduate School's international students.

Dr English outlined her concerns namely that there was an inequity in the support given to students on programmes within the Graduate School. These concerns were shared by other colleagues teaching on postgraduate programmes within the School. ELE ran a pre-session English for Academic Purposes course July-September, for which students pay; most students on this course had conditional offers on arrival. For the last four weeks of this course, students followed specialist courses; 68 TESOL and 7 Language Teaching students took one of these specialist courses (English

for Language teaching and Applied Linguistics). Students taking other MHSE Masters took a different specialist course, English for Humanities and Social Sciences.

ELE also ran an in-sessional academic writing course in weeks 2-6 of the first semester, which was open to students on all MHSE Masters programmes. In 2016 there were 120 places on this course. This year that number of places was sufficient for approximately 40% of the international students starting within the Graduate School. A number of students took both the pre-sessional and the in-sessional courses. Dr English believed that this course was very beneficial to the students and that it was clear which students had been on the course, and which had not. She suggested that the course should be available to all international students and that the current situation created an arbitrary division. Some students who may have passed the programme might potentially fail because they had not been able to take this course.

ELE had a remit to support all Schools within the University and with its current staff resources would not be able to deliver this course to all PGT international students within the School of Education. Consequently, ELE sought out those students who were most in need of support with their language skills not only at the start of the academic year but throughout the year. Generally these students were identified by speaking directly to programme directors. They might also be referred by their personal tutors. Earlier identification, allowing students in need of support to be identified in time for the Semester 1 writing course, might be possible if ELE had students' IELTS reading and writing scores in early September, but programme directors did not usually have this information. **[Action: Convener and secretary to investigate with Mrs A Fernon if this information could be obtained from College Postgraduate Admissions]**

ELE had also run a course on dissertation writing which had been piloted for MSc TESOL and MSc Education students in 2015 and which ran again in 2016 and would run again in 2017 and was delivered in May/June. By then it was easier for programme directors and personal tutors to refer students as performance in other courses had clarified who was more in need of this additional support. There were likely to be 130 places on this course.

Furthermore, this year, ELE did offer writing drop-in tutorials to students who had been unable to attend the in-sessional English language course; and the course materials were made available on Learn. In general ELE online materials for its open courses were available at <http://www.ed.ac.uk/english-language-teaching/students/current-students/elsis> to all students who wished to enhance their academic language skills.

Members of SPGSC contributed the following comments:

- English language support was only one aspect of teaching. Different approaches to teaching could also be helpful in improving international students' learning and their learning experience;
- Students were sometimes unaware at the start of the academic year that they would benefit from this additional language support and may not readily enrol the available courses;
- The School also had a significant number of ODL students whose first language was not English and if additional language support was to be given to all students, then these students should be also be included;
- It may be more appropriate for the School to support an enhancement of ELE's role and resources across the University rather than approach this as a School of Education issue;
- As the School was part of a University with an international focus it was essential that appropriate measures were in place to support international students.
- The higher entry requirements introduced in the last few years across the Graduate School had definitely resulted in cohorts with an improved level of English language skills from the outset. Offering more language support might be counterproductive. All Masters entrants regardless of their first language should be competent in English and, if it was not already the case, quickly

become competent in academic discourse. Entry requirements were set at a level to ensure this although it was true that some international students did lack confidence in their language skills at the start of the programme. The existing additional support was therefore helpful.

SPGSC agreed that this matter could be discussed further outwith the committee. Dr English was welcome to discuss it further with Dr Benson and other colleagues in ELE. Other members of SPGSC may wish to be involved in these discussions and should contact Dr English accordingly.

**10. AOCB**

There was no other business.

Lesley Rowand  
February 2017