

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Tuesday 26 September 2017 at 2pm
in the Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France**

- Present: Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal
Researcher Development
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
Engineering (CSE)
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research and Early
Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary
Medicine (CMVM)
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Students' Association Staff PGR
Representative
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
representative)
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Ms Gabriela Hajduk, PGR Student Representative, CSE
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education
Dr Danijela Gasevic, Usher Institute
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
Dr Debbie Roberts, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language
Sciences
Professor Sarah Howie, Edinburgh Medical School
Ms Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)
- Attending: Ms Laura Richardson, HR Information Services Support Group (for
item 4)
Dr Sara Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, Institute for
Academic Development
Ms Lesley Middlemass, Service Excellence Programme (for item 6)
Ms Lisa Dawson, Head of Operations, Student Systems
- Apologies: Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education,
Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2017

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

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2. Matters Arising

2.1 Student status

The Secretary and Administrative Representative from CAHSS gave a verbal update on two meetings which took place over summer with College Postgraduate Office and Student Systems representatives. Some enhancements to EUCLID incorporating the thesis examination workflow and additional narrative on student status post-submission were being investigated. It is envisaged this will help to clarify student status. Colleges are considering an approach for submission to Fees Strategy Group in relation to correction fees. An update will be available for a future REC meeting.

Action: Secretary

2.2 eBusiness: CROS/PIRLS final completion rates

The Committee had considered electronic business in July when it agreed circulation of the final completion rates for the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS).

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Update on Distance/Online PhD differentiation discussion

In August the Convener met with the Deputy Secretary Strategic Planning and College academic representatives. The meeting agreed that a business case being prepared by CMVM offered sufficient differentiation on the distance/online PhD offering. The business case will be submitted to Fees Strategy Group and pending approval will allow recruitment to the CMVM pilot for 2018/19.

3.2 Universitas 21 working group: Research Supervisor Support & Development

The Convener reported on this supervision project being initiated by Universitas 21 (U21) and noted that other sector groups are also focusing on supervision. A report on progress will be available to a future a REC meeting. U21 is seeking volunteers to participate in the project and any expressions of interest should be submitted to the REC Convener or REC Vice-Convener.

3.3 Times Higher Education Awards Supervisor Nomination

The Vice-Convener will be invited to give an electronic update.

3.4 Three Minute Thesis Vitae Competition

Winners of the University's competition had been entered in the UK (Vitae) and Coimbra competitions. The meeting was pleased to note that the University's candidate, Euan Doidge has won the Vitae People's Choice award.

3.5 LERU Doctoral Summer School

The University had submitted a bid to host the League of European Research Universities (LERU) summer school. Two bids had been successful and the University will host the 2019 doctoral summer school on the theme of International Collaboration. The University of Leuven will host the 2018 summer school. The meeting noted thanks to Edinburgh Global for their work on preparing the bid.

3.6 Vitae Wellbeing and Mental Health support for postgraduate researchers

The Head of Researcher Development reported on a Vitae project on postgraduate research (PGR) student wellbeing. The meeting noted that similar work has been ongoing internally. A report will be available to a future REC meeting.

For Discussion

4. Student employment: Information Services project

Ms Richardson, HR Information Services Support Group presented on a project within Information Services Group (ISG) to increase employment opportunities available for postgraduate research students. The aim is to provide practical experience in real life situations through Employ.ed. Currently ISG offers 19 internships specifically aimed at PhD students, although PhD students are also employed in other roles.

Opportunities are wider than IT based and ISG is reviewing the hours per week to compare with recent policy development on tutoring and demonstrating. It also aims to support the Enlightenment Scholarships.

ISG is working on a model for delivery to be presented to Principal's Strategy Group, Central Management Group and People Committee. It is anticipated that the Student Talent Bank will replace traditional recruitment channels and will simplify the process and provide connected systems on student employment, initially internally but with a long-term plan to include external employment.

An update will be available to a future REC meeting and more information is available from Laura.Richardson@ed.ac.uk.

5. Taking Control of Your Research Career

Dr Shinton, Head of Researcher Development, IAD presented a paper outlining a framework based on existing activity and training for Early Career Researchers (ECR). This has been discussed with Colleges and postdoc champions. CMVM is moving forward with the framework which promotes structured career reflection.

Other universities are also developing similar initiatives to support ECRs with some putting significant investment into this. Activity at Cambridge University was discussed and the Head of Researcher Development and MVM Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher Experience will explore their activity to understand lines of influence and funding model.

The meeting discussed space, including the Old Kirk project and potential interactions between postgraduate research students and ECR networks. IAD will carry out impact evaluation on courses they provide as usual but wider impact evaluation of the framework will be context dependent.

REC was supportive of the framework.

6. Presentation of PGR programme information to prospective and current students

Ms Middlemass, seconded to the Student Recruitment and Admissions strand of the Service Excellence Programme presented the paper. The paper proposed a golden copy approach to information presented to both internal and prospective students. The proposed approach would align with Competition and Markets Authority guidance.

Currently, information is held in many places and there is disparity in the level and quality of available information. The aim is to collate and present consistent information to student audiences. User insight had been sought in developing the proposed approach.

The meeting discussed University systems which had evolved over time resulting in models which do not fit with presentation of postgraduate research information. It noted that uniformity will be difficult, and the different recruitment for postgraduate research students. Descriptions are generally by research topic rather than programme and the aim would be to categorise information to provide a consistent model.

REC suggested that workshops in each College would be beneficial and Colleges were asked to recommend appropriate contacts.

Action: College representatives to provide contacts to lesley.middlemass@ed.ac.uk

7. Annual Progression Review Monitoring System: Evaluation

The Secretary presented the paper and Head of Operations, Student Systems reported on issues, system bugs and requests for new functionality raised. The Service Excellence Programme (SEP) strand looking at this area will begin in December 2017 with cases presented to the Board for consideration in summer 2018. However, analysis of new requests could be done by Student Systems before then to provide a proposal for consideration. Student Systems can also address the student communications and guidance issues raised.

The meeting discussed the issues around the request for professional support staff to have access to advance reports at all stages. Discussion included staff engagement with systems, missing reviews, reports generated at the wrong time and access to predecessor reports (when supervisors change). The potential for a confidential comment option was raised for student comments on problems with the supervisory team.

REC **agreed** that professional support staff should have access to advance annual progression reports where these are being held up in the system and clarified that, in line with the Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, the Postgraduate Director confirms decisions on progression.

REC **agreed** that Student Systems would analyse feedback, taking account of SEP plans, to see what can be achieved in the short term, and report back to a future REC meeting.

Action: Student Systems

It was also noted that further discussion on universal system implementation and learning needs analysis may be required. University College London's annual review monitoring system was identified as a potential benchmark.

8. Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development:

8.1 Progress report on work stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support

The Vice-Convener will be invited to give an electronic update.

8.2 Progress report on work stream 2: Mentoring and Wellbeing

The Vice-Convener will be invited to give an electronic update.

8.3 Progress report on work stream 3: Personal and Professional Development Record

The task group is looking at comparator institutions' provision and what students want. It plans to submit a report to the November REC meeting.

9. Enlightenment Scholarships

Central Management Group approved a September 2018 launch for these scholarships which will be available for four years of funding. Discussion on the length of programme registration has concluded that scholars can be registered on the standard three year programme with funding for a maximum of four years or until submission. The development threads of the scholarship should be considered as conditions of the scholarship and not requirements of the programme. The implementation group will produce documentation by late October 2017 which will also be circulated to REC members.

10. Review of the Code of Practice for Supervisors & Research Students 2017/18 – update

The Secretary introduced the paper which outlined options for including some content from the Code of Practice in University policy and regulations. The meeting discussed the audience for the Code of Practice and what users need from the document. A coherent publication containing key information was considered important, however it was also important that policy elements were not lost.

REC **agreed** that the College Deans, Convener and Secretary would meet to discuss potential policy content in the Code of Practice and report back to a future REC meeting.

Action: Secretary to seek date

11. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017 – Institutional summary report

The meeting noted the institutional summary report available on the Student Surveys wiki. Colleges will be invited to submit their responses to PRES to the November Committee meeting.

The meeting noted that as of 2018, PRES will become an annual survey. Results will be publicly available as of this year and a decision on participating in 2018 will be required by December 2017.

REC **agreed** to invite Student Surveys to submit a paper, including consultation with Governance and Strategic Planning on annual participation in PRES, to the November meeting.

Action: Student Surveys Unit

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12. Task Groups:

12.1 Review of Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators – Final Report

The meeting noted the paper. REC discussed reviewing implementation and **agreed** that this should be done around December 2018. The timescale will allow sufficient time for Schools to have fully implemented the Policy and to be able to reflect on its impact.

REC also **agreed** that guidance on the Supervisor's role in relation to advising students on tutoring and demonstrating be considered as part of the review of the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.

Action: Secretary

13. Planning for Senate Committees

The meeting noted the paper which outlined opportunities for feeding into the Planning Round. REC provided the following comments on initial priorities for student experience, learning and teaching:

- Suggested including developing student and social space for taught and research students
- Suggested including supervision in “recognising and rewarding excellence in teaching and learning”

The meeting also discussed referring to career development as well as “academic support”, however the addition of something on career in the curriculum may address this point. Accessibility of online learning resources was raised as a potential addition. In relation to early career researcher priorities, the Convener and Director for Postgraduate Research and Early Career Researcher Experience, CMVM will liaise with the Vice Principal People and Culture.

14. Knowledge Strategy Committee report: 2 June 2017

The meeting noted the paper.

15. Research Policy Group report

There was nothing to report from the April 2017 meeting. The Convener will not be a standing member of this Group but will be able to attend as necessary and be able to present papers to the Group.

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16. Any other business

16.1 Conference and events

16.1.1 UKCGE Annual Conference, July 2017

The Vice-Convenor will be invited to give an electronic update.

Reserved Business

17. Higher Degree: DSc Submission

In its capacity as Higher Degrees Committee, the Committee approved an award for DSc in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

Date of next meeting: 14 November 2017, Raeburn Room, Old College

Susan Hunter
29 September 2017