



Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme

Progress Report

(February to May 2017)

Senate Researcher Experience Committee
(REC)



Quick Refresher

The Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC) is the Programme board ([approved Feb 2017](#))

Three work streams:

- 1. Supervisor Training and Support*
- 2. Mentorship and wellbeing*
- 3. Personal and professional development record*

Coordinated through IAD and Academic Services

Overview of Progress

Area of work	Summary of Progress February 2017- May 2017
Communication and Consultation	Progress made in both areas
Work Stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support	Focus on benchmarking and mapping. Initial findings and proposed next steps identified.
Work Stream 2: Mentorship and Wellbeing	Focus on benchmarking and mapping. Initial findings and proposed next steps identified for mentorship part. Report on wellbeing – end June 2017
Work Stream 3: Personal and Professional Development Record	Task group met in May. Working on setting objectives and principles for the work. Report to REC November 2017



Communication

- [Webpages](#) now live and will keep being updated
- Presented at Senate Committees Away Day
- [Teaching Matters](#) May 2017 focus on PGR
- Discussed at all IAD School meetings



Consultation

- College committees consulted through March 2017
- [PGR supervisor network](#) to launch on June 21st
- Student discussion groups
- Ongoing discussion with services and Students' Association



Work Stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support

Overview

- Benchmarking and mapping
- [Report](#) includes examples of organisations/ projects/ UK and international institutional practice
- Overview of internal provision and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2015 free text analysis



Background and Context – PGR Supervision

Some guiding principles:

- [QAA Quality Code B11](#): Research Degrees - Indicator 9
- [Salzburg Principles II 2010](#)

There are lots of existing resources and materials to draw from for enhancement and development.



Selected International and UK Organisations

- focus on research supervision

- [Universitas 21](#)
- [UKCGE](#) sponsors Times Higher Award for outstanding supervision
- [Irish National Association for the Integration of Research, Learning and Teaching \(NAIRTL\)](#) produced a guide in 2012 to build an institutional framework for supporting supervisors

Selected Examples in [report](#) of external institutions focusing on the following areas:

- Enhancing compulsory training for supervisors, including exploring the design and implementation of online courses
- Identification, design and pilots of optional training
- Creation of an online toolkit for research supervision
- Regulation and recording of training



University of Edinburgh - Supervisor Briefings

- Started over 5 years ago
- Compulsory for all new supervisors and renewed every 5 years
- Sessions run in each College (for each School)
- Half day session – focus on regulation/ policy/ milestones and case studies of challenges (opportunity for discussion and sharing of practice)
- Central checklist of content updated regularly



University of Edinburgh - optional supervisor training and support

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) runs some optional sessions eg.

- Handling international students' writing problems
- Recognition of supervisory activity as teaching: gaining accreditation from the HEA

Other relevant workshops in IAD [research staff programme](#)

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2015 analysis of free text

Positive experiences of supervision	Negative experiences of supervision
Helpful, accommodating and understanding of issues outside supervision	Too busy, inattentive, overloaded with work
Challenging, supportive and encourage participation in training	Lack of feedback or support generally
Knowledgeable and skilled	Lack of knowledge about procedure, training, facilities etc.
Regular and timely feedback	Not supportive of activity out with research
Encouraging students to explore career options	Variability across individual experiences

Some suggestions for improvement

A more robust mechanism for selection, training and accountability

A more supportive institutional environment for supervisors

Clearer guidance on expectations of supervision



Main Findings so far

1. A wealth of online material and support for supervisors in existence, both externally and internally.
2. Apparent gap in provision of optional resources and training for supervisors at Edinburgh, in comparison with some other institutions.
3. There is a move externally towards online training for supervisors and also towards mechanisms for formally recording and accrediting/ registering supervision.



Main Findings so far continued

4. Various reports have emphasised the need for institutions to facilitate informal practice sharing or communities of practice in supervision.
5. Various reports have emphasised the need for institutional recognition of excellence in supervision.



Work Stream One: Next Steps

(full details including time frames in report)

1. Revision of IAD webpages for supervisors to begin to create a 'hub' of resources
2. Consult with the PGR supervisors network to identify training and support needs
3. Strengthen central support for compulsory supervisor briefings
4. Further explore and scope development of an online training resource for research supervision
5. Consult with Colleges about 5 year rule for compulsory training



Work Stream One: Next Steps continued

6. Explore and scope options for recording compulsory supervisory briefings online
7. Work with Students' Association to identify three supervisors from the Teaching Award shortlists for institutional entry into the Times Higher Outstanding Supervisor of the Year Award
8. Continue to benchmark and map examples of good practice externally and internally and include in this a review of relevant research literature.

Next steps approved by REC May 2017



Work Stream 2: Mentorship and Wellbeing

Overview

- Benchmarking and mapping
- Completed background [report](#) on mentorship
- Report on wellbeing - end of June 2017



Main findings from Benchmarking externally

Two main models:

1. Face to face mentoring
2. Online Alumni mentoring

Advantages and considerations of both (selected examples in the [report](#))



Main findings – University of Edinburgh existing provision

Many different schemes/ initiatives/ approaches.
Eg.

- Peer mentoring
- Buddy schemes
- PG advisors or thesis committees may have pastoral role
- New online student alumni platform to be launched in 2018



Work Stream 2 (mentoring): Next Steps

(full details including time frames in [report](#))

1. Explore possibility of developing a centrally hosted webpage which communicates the benefits of mentoring, schemes and resources available to PGR students. This would link to available schemes in their School/ subject area.
2. Develop, in consultation with support services and relevant Schools/ subject areas, clear and formal guidance for anyone acting as a mentor for a PGR student in a pastoral capacity.
3. Develop central resources for evaluation of mentoring schemes which can be made available to staff involved in mentoring schemes.



Work Stream 2 (mentoring): Next Steps continued

4. Work in partnership with the Students' Association to build a clear case for supporting the further extension of peer mentoring to postgraduate research students.
5. Continue dialogue with Development and Alumni and the Careers Service regarding the new student alumni platform, to assist with establishing the requirements for PGRs.

Next steps approved by REC in May 2017



Comments or Suggestions

Comments and suggestions from anyone with an interest in this work are welcomed.

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