

**Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development:
Progress Reports June 2018**

Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of the progress made from December 2017 to June 2018 for work stream 1 (supervisor training and support) and work stream 2 (mentoring) of the Excellence programme. These include progress to date and proposed next steps. The committee is requested (as the Programme Board) to discuss progress and approve proposed next steps where appropriate. Further information on the Programme is available here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education>

How does this align with the University / Committee's strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University Strategic Objective of Leadership in Research. It also aligns with the Committee priority of discussing options for taking forward the postgraduate research enhancement work.

Action requested

The Committee is requested to comment on, discuss progress to date and, where appropriate, approve proposed next steps for the Programme.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

The paper includes indicative timelines for proposed next steps. Actions will then be communicated by the Programme lead to all appropriate stakeholders.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

It has been agreed that the work included in this Programme can be supported at present by existing staffing resource in the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and Academic Services. If the work identifies further resource implications, early discussions will be undertaken with relevant units.

2. Risk assessment

No major risks identified

3. Equality and Diversity

This will be considered carefully by the Supervisor task group and it is expected that work from workstream 2 will contribute to enhancements across various groups.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is open

Key words

Doctoral education, supervision, mentoring

Originator of the paper

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Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme: Progress Report June 2018

Overview

In February 2017, REC approved the commencement of a comprehensive Programme of work to investigate, map and enhance the PGR student experience across the University. This Programme comprises three interrelated work streams.

1. supervisor training and support
2. mentoring and wellbeing
3. personal and professional development record

Details of these and the background to the Programme can be found here:

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/papera-excellenceprogramme.pdf>

Progress Reports from May 2017 and December 2017 can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education/progress>

Summary Table of Progress made in all areas of the Programme June 2018

Area of work	Summary of Progress	Further information
Work Stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support	Supervisor programme run through 2017/18. Programme will be embedded for 2018/19. REC Supervisor CPD framework taskgroup set up and will report January 2019. Enhanced pages for PGR supervisors on IAD webpages.	Short update in this paper
Work Stream 2: Mentorship and Wellbeing	6 month IAD/ Students' Association post – PGR peer support in place (May – Oct 2018).	Short update in this paper
Work Stream 3: Personal and Professional Development Record	Task group concluded and final report submitted to REC (December 2017)	This has been referred to Service Excellence.

Communication and Consultation

Communication

This report will be shared with College Committees and will be put on the programme webpages.

Consultation

Doctoral Training and Support Forum

IAD hosted a Doctoral Training and Support Forum in January 2018. This was open to anyone involved in doctoral training and support (academic and administrative staff). Twenty-eight people attended from across the three Colleges. It gave an overview of the Excellence programme and will focus on sharing practice and discussion in three areas (mentoring and wellbeing, supervision and tutoring and demonstrating).

School meetings

Throughout April and May 2018, the IAD doctoral team have been meeting with individual Schools. Themes of the Excellence programme (supervision and peer support) have been agenda items for these meetings.

Future

Heads of Graduate School meeting

In June 2018, the Heads of Graduate School meeting will focus on themes identified from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and will also involve communication about the REC taskgroup on supervision.

Supervisor CPD framework task group

As part of the work of this group, there will be consultation with Colleges on various aspects of supervisor training and support.

Peer support project

This project involves consultation with PGR students and Schools on peer support across the institution. This takes the form of meetings and focus groups.

Launch of revised Code of Practice

The launch of the revised Code is an opportunity to highlight developments in supervisor support and training.

REC is asked to comment on the general progress made to date and future plans

Work stream one update: Supervisor training and support

In May 2017, REC approved a set of next steps for this work stream. This table gives an overview of progress to date for each of these steps.

Agreed in May 2017	Progress to date	Next steps
Revision of IAD webpages for doctoral supervisors to begin to create a 'hub' of dedicated resources and support. This may involve a Learn resource for supervisors. ONGOING	IAD webpages revised and there are now dedicated PGR supervisor pages / email address. Resources and tools are being added. https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/research-roles/supervisors	Resources and tools to keep being added, possibly becoming a LEARN resource.
Identify further training and support needs through consultation with the PGR supervisor network/ results from CROS and PIRLS 2017 to draw up a programme of activity for 2017/18 EMBEDDED	Programme of pilot activity for PGR supervisors ran throughout 2017/18. Includes spotlight on.... Events (co-supervision/ mental health and wellbeing support for PGRs), informal discussion groups and practical approaches workshops. This programme has been evaluated and a programme will now be developed for 2018/19.	To develop a programme for 2018/19 (see evaluation of programme 2017/18 below)
Strengthen the central support for compulsory supervisor briefings through sharing of resources and accessible checklist ONGOING	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Further explore and scope development of an online training resource for research supervision. ONGOING	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being considered by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Consult with Colleges (through committees) about the 5 year rule for renewing supervisor training ONGOING	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Explore and scope options for recording compulsory supervisory briefings online ONGOING	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup	This is being taken forward by the REC supervisor CPD framework taskgroup
Continue to benchmark and map examples of good practice both externally and internally and include in this a review of relevant research literature ONGOING	Ongoing	Ongoing. To be included in workshops on supervision and in online resources.

REC is asked to consider and approve the proposed next steps for Work Stream 1

Evaluation of supervisor programme for 2018/19

Spotlight onsessions

November 2017 – Spotlight on co-supervision

This event focused on the expectations and challenges of co-supervision. This fed into the revision of the Code of Practice and also generated some resources for co-supervision, now on the IAD supervisor pages.

February 2018 – Spotlight on Mental Health and Wellbeing Support

This event was run in collaboration between IAD, Student Disability service, Student Counselling Service, the chaplaincy and the Students' Association. Feedback was positive, participants appreciated the opportunity to talk through case studies and to understand the support available. Following this, Chemistry have now been in touch with student Counselling to develop specific training (on the PT model) for supervisors. IAD will add links and resources to the supervisor pages and a wellbeing page to the PGR student pages for the start of 2018/19. Discussion about how this can fit into a training schedule is ongoing.

Plans for 2018/19 – topics suggested for spotlight sessions include: Research ethics and integrity/ Industrial placements/ Supporting international PGR students

Practical sessions workshops

Gaining Teaching Accreditation for your PhD Supervision: This session was run twice. Feedback was positive. Will run again in 2018/19.

Dealing with international PhD students' writing issues: This session ran twice and will run again in 2018/19.

Informal supervisor discussions

Over 2017/18 IAD piloted a monthly informal discussion group held in the central area and open to all PGR supervisors. Each discussion had a theme and discussion questions were developed for this. This generated a small group of interested people who attended most of the sessions. The ethics and integrity session attracted the biggest group. During the year, feedback was given that the timing of these may not optimise attendance so for the latter half of the year they were changed. Attendees were positive about the sessions and plans are to continue these through 2018/19.

Themes for 2017/18: ethics and integrity/ supporting students on fieldwork and placements/ supporting writing and giving feedback/ career development/ effective meetings

Update from REC Supervisor CPD Framework task group

Remit and membership can be found here:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/20180116agendapapers.pdf> (REC 17/18 3C)

The task group has met once so far and agreed the following overarching themes for a University of Edinburgh Framework:

- Overarching themes for a UofE framework –

- Lead to accreditation where possible– one possibility to explore is the UKPSF but should also be aligned with the RDF
- Accessible – should be clear and open to all relevant users
- Developmental – clear emphasis on career development and for use in P&DRs
- Reasonable -it should not add unnecessarily to workload of supervisors or administrators. It should not duplicate training.
- Flexible – the framework can adapt to changes in provision of training etc. and should make effective use of online training/ resources

The taskgroup is currently benchmarking against other institutions in terms of the 5year rule for training renewal/ expectations on supervisors from associated institutions/ online training for supervisors and investigating ways in which to align with the learning and teaching framework and with promotions criteria/ Exemplars of Excellence.

Work stream two update: Mentoring and Wellbeing

This table shows an overview of progress for this work stream.

Agreed in May 2017	Progress to date	Next Steps
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. ONGOING	To be considered alongside a proposed wellbeing section on the IAD PGR webpages as part of the actions from the report into wellbeing. Being taken forward by the Peer support project.	Being taken forward by the Peer support project. REC will be updated in September 2018.
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. REVISED (for context see appendix 1)	Little progress has been made on this as it is unclear as to what would be most useful for Schools/ Colleges as the structures vary across the institution. It is proposed that Colleges consider this and if appropriate draw up clearer guidelines on thesis committee expectations and structure.	TO BE DISCUSSED BY REC
Work in partnership with the Students' Association to build a clear case for supporting the further extension of peer mentoring to postgraduate research students. COMPLETED	Six month project started in May 2018 and will run until October 2018.	Will report to REC in November 2018.
Develop central resources for evaluation of mentoring schemes which can be made available to	Being taken forward by the Peer support project.	Will report to REC in November 2018.

staff involved in mentoring schemes. ONGOING		
Continue dialogue with Development and Alumni and the Careers Service regarding the new student alumni platform, to assist with establishing the requirements for PGRs. ONGOING	Dialogue continues. Launch of the platform has been delayed.	Any updates will be communicated to REC in due course.

REC is asked to discuss and approve the proposed next steps for work stream 2

Appendix One: report from the IAD Doctoral Support Forum: on PGR well-being

Supporting PGR Wellbeing Parallel Sessions Notes

Do PGR students need mentors?

Both groups agreed that PGR students do need a mentor of some sort. This is due to the fact that studying for a PhD can be an extremely isolating experience and it is important for students to feel as though they are part of a community and have a sense of belonging. Some attendees also felt that it was important for PhD student to hear about the experiences of those further on in their PhDs. It was also agreed that PhD students should have access to better career support from alumni and the careers service.

How does your School/Institute support PGR wellbeing?

A number of examples were raised:

Thesis Committees

Biology – Task based networking opportunities are arranged

Engineering – Academic Advisers

Vet School – Trips to Fribush

Divinity – informal mentoring scheme organised by the PG student committee who organise events. Members of staff also volunteer to provide pastoral support to PhD students. Students are notified of this at the beginning when they commence their studies.

Informatics – PhD Personal Tutors, CDT, Career sessions, Informatics families

Health in Social Science – Buddy System, Ted Talks – students choose a ‘Ted Talks’ talk and hold a discussion around the topic.

Medicine – Hold regular talks for staff and PhD students – open invite, usually well attended.

Geosciences – Research career afternoons – open invitation to all PG students

What developments would you like to see to help support PGR wellbeing?

Raise further awareness of mental health issues – signposting and training

Multiple sources of support should be available to PGR students – more than just one person acting as a mentor

Career support

Clear visibility of sources of support – Counselling, Disability, Careers etc. as many PGR students are unaware that this support is available to them.

Creation of a Mentoring Connections type scheme for PGR students would be welcome.

Cross-school opportunities should be encouraged

Thesis committees should be implemented across the University

Some clarity on the operation of thesis committees would be welcome as there is a great deal of variation in the operation of committees across CMVM.

Appendix Two: Update on the PGR peer support project

Written by Nathalie Vladis – Academic Developer (PGR peer support), IAD and Students' Association

Senate Researcher Experience Committee Update – PGR peer support project

Despite the large number of resources dedicated to supporting peer support initiatives for undergraduate students, very little is known about this topic in postgraduate research (PGR) communities.

This six months project aims at exploring the postgraduate research peer-support landscape, identifying opportunities to a) re-use undergraduate schemes b) initiate new PGR centred schemes or c) supporting existing student-led initiatives. Lastly, based on the information above, we hope to gain a better understanding of the demand regarding PGR peer-support which will allow us to make recommendations on how to address it.

During the first month of this project, I consulted with staff and PGR students from different Schools but also with support and community services such as the Advice Place and Chaplaincy.

INITIAL FINDINGS

Through these conversations we identified four groups of PGR students:

- Students belonging to a doctoral training programme (such as the CDTs in Data Science and Pervasive Parallelisms), where social events and peer-learning workshops are facilitated by staff and students tend to be satisfied by their sense of community.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme that are satisfied by the variety of peer-support, peer-learning and community-building opportunities provided by their Schools.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme wanting to run/currently running a successful peer-support and community building structure, often find that they are not very well supported in securing funding, organising events or increasing visibility.
- Students independent of any structured doctoral programme that do not have access to any peer-support or peer-learning PGR communities and do not know how to organise their own.

Having identified these four categories, we have started to hold focus meetings with staff facilitating peer-support communities to learn about practices they found successful and with PGR students wanting to run/currently running initiatives to understand what type of support they need.

We learned that:

- There appears to be a high demand for a PhD student mentoring scheme focused around field-work.
- Other peer-support schemes implemented in UG communities do not seem compatible with PGR needs & lifestyle.
- To become successful, a PGR peer-support event needs to be small, recurrent, and student-led but staff supported.
- The types of help PGR students would need to run successful peer-support initiatives involve learning how to:
 - secure and manage funding
 - plan and promote events
 - facilitate conversations and signpost

With all that information in consideration, future work will focus on:

- Collaborating with Schools and organisations (such as the Advice Place and Chaplaincy), interested in developing a mentoring scheme around field-work.
- Supporting pilots at the Schools of Informatics, Social and Political Sciences and the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences and potentially others.
- Organising small tea & coffee sessions with different Schools to introduce or reinforce a culture of 'social time with peers' outside of research and to understand demand for peer-support.
- Building a centralised resource that will include:
 - information about popular PGR peer-support groups and their past events that could inspire other PGRs to start their own
 - toolkits and contacts to help support existing groups but also provide a springboard for new initiatives