The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

1 year Response

Contents

Internal Periodic Review of School of Informatics (Postgraduate Research provision)

Date of review: 12 & 13 March 2020
Date of 14-week response: 1 September 2020
Date of year-on response: 26 May 2021

The School/Subject Area is responsible for reporting on progress with all recommendations, including those remitted to other areas of the University for action.

 If any recommendation has been fully addressed, please record the action taken and date completed. Any barriers to progress should be highlighted on this report.

Task owners are identified as:
COMMS – Informatics Communications team
CS – Computing Support
DDoGS – Deputy Director of Graduate School
DoGS – Head of Graduate School
DoI – Directors of Institutes
DoPS – Director of Professional Services
HoS – Head of School
HoSS – Head of Student Support
IGS – Informatics Graduate School administrative staff
ITO – Informatics Teaching Organisation administrative staff

Summary of action plan completion status

Completion Key

Red	To start
Orange	In progress
Blue	On hold
Green	Complete

Section	Status
Section 1	
1a	Complete
1b	In progress
1c	Complete
1d	On hold
1e	In progress
1f	Complete
Section 2	
2a	On hold
2b	Complete
2c	Complete
2d	In progress
2e	Complete
2f	In progress
Section 3	
3a	On hold
3b	In progress
Section 4	
4a	Complete
4b	Complete
4b.v.	To start
Section 5	
5a	Complete
5b	Complete
5c	In progress
Section 6	
6a	Complete
6b	To start
Section 7	
7a	Complete
Section 8	
8a	Complete
8a.III.	On hold

SECTION 1 - Recommendations on School structure and organisation

1.	Recommendations on School structure and organisation	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
1a.	**(Recommendation 1)** The research institutes have an important role in the School's structure; however there is a lack of consistency in processes across institutes.	[HoS,DoPS] In response to the increasing size of the School, the senior management structures have been revised during AY 2019-20 and taking effect from 2020-21. The most relevant change is in the increase in responsibilities for Institute Directors and the introduction of specific responsibilities for the Deputy Head of School.		August 2020	Jane Hillston Joy Candlish	Complete
	The review team recommends that the School's structure and organisation needs to keep pace with the increase in size.

Further expansion should take into account the physical limitations of the building and avoid further impact on the student experience. | [DoPS,CS] In recent years the physical limitations of the Informatics buildings in respect of office accommodation for PGR students has been an ongoing consideration for the School. The School is aware that there is insufficient space to expand PGR numbers beyond 2020-21 levels, and consequently the Informatics Graduate School (IGS) planned a restructuring of the usage of our PGR offices alongside plans to move to a mobile (rather than tethered) computing infrastructure for PGR students to decouple desk facilities from students' personal computing facilities. Our plan is to not only ease the desk space issue but to improve student experience through a more up-to-date computing infrastructure that allows students greater freedom to choose their place of work. | This plan was stalled by the Covid-19 pandemic but is still expected to roll out from autumn 2020. The University has provided the School with additional space in the Wilkie Building and this will be utilised to house PGR students.

From Sept 2020, due to the unavoidable consequence of having a student cohort larger than the available space/ desks, the IGS has moved to a desk sharing provision. To help facilitate CDT cohort building, year 1 CDT NLP and BMAI students will be provided with a dedicated desk, but will also move to shared provision from year 2 onwards.

All PGR students starting programme from Sept 2020 onwards have been transitioned to laptop computing facilities, or given the option of a desktop for use at home. | March 2021 | Joy Candlish

Bob Fisher

Alastair Scobbie | Complete |
| 1b | **(Recommendation 7)** The review team recommends that the external member of the progression review panel is formally recognised by the School for the important role they play in the student experience and that the external, if at all possible, should be the same person for the duration of the PhD. | [DDoGS, IGS] We plan to review the issue of consistency in approach to PGR provision across institutes. While differences in approach are to be expected, given the diversity of programmes, we recognise the importance of consistent standards across institutes and PGR programmes, and the importance of clear communication to students regarding processes for their annual reviews. For example, there are differences in expectations on students in relation to annual reviews between institutes, and some institutes have a tradition of holding open review presentations whereas others hold closed meetings of a small panel. We propose to review our processes for annual reviews across institutes and review our methods of communicating these processes to students on each programme. We will identify discrepancies and amend processes or explain the rationale behind valid programme-specific approaches where they differ from the norm. | We will augment the IGS web pages to make clear that different approaches to annual reviews are taken by different institutes.

The approaches of each institute will be made more explicit in the guidance. | Extended to April 2021 | Mary Cryan & Lindsey Fox (Guidance)

Patrick Hudson (IGS webpages) | In progress |
| 1c. | **(Recommendation 1)** The review team recommends the School take advantage of the strong institute structure and ensure consistency of provision across the institutes. | [HoS,DoPS] In response to the increasing size of the School, the senior management structures have been revised during AY 2019-20 and taking effect from 2020-21. | The most relevant change is in the increase in responsibilities for Institute Directors and the introduction of specific responsibilities for the Deputy Head of School. | August 2020 | Jane Hillston Joy Candlish | Complete |
| 1d. | *The review team recommends that further support for professional services staff is needed, given the increasing complexity and volume of programmes and students.* | *c) [HoSS] In response to the third and fourth sub-recommendations given the University's current financial position and the need to reduce staff-related costs, the School will be unable to invest in additional professional services resource at this time.* | *We will continue to ask for additional staff resource for the IGS as the School's financial situation improves.* | *August 2020* | *Neil Heatley Joy Candlish* | *On hold*

COVID Impacted |
| 1e. | The review team recommends that the School gives consideration to the impact of increased growth on the Graduate School as part of the | d) [HoSS] We will, however, review the Graduate School structures, identifying issues that prevent it from scaling or that could be achieved more efficiently in what is now a large organisation within the School. | A review of the IGS staffing structure and role profiles is underway, however, the current recruitment freeze (as a result of COVID) will impact both on the ability and timing of desired changes. | July 2021 | Neil Heatley Joy Candlish | In progress |

	School's structure and organisation plans above and works with current staff to identify ways forward.					
1f.	Recruitment for CDTs is managed by the Graduate School, and the research institutes and centres manage their own postgraduate research recruitment. Currently there is a misalignment of deadlines for applications and therefore planning for space management is challenging. The review team recommends that the School consider alignment of recruitment processes and moving to two or three fixed intakes per year. The School and Graduate School should plan for limiting the number of intakes of students it operates in order to help balance workload in the Graduate School office. Furthermore, awareness of space resource needs to be carefully considered during the intake process.	[IGS] In response to recommendation concerning two or three fixed intakes per year it is firstly noted that in practice we already have two main intake periods (Sept and Jan). The flexibility to start at other months of the year is often necessary, e.g. if funding is time limited. However, an issue was raised that needs to be reviewed. We will examine the workload in the IGS office that is driven by multiple intakes, to determine how this can be minimized without constraining start dates.	The IGS holds two physical student inductions each academic year and tries to maximise student recruitment during the months of Sept/Oct and January each year. The reality however remains the status quo, with the 2020/21 recruitment profile (to date) as follows: | 2020/21	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21	Jul-21	Aug-21	Cohort size
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
PGR offers made and accepted	62	11	2	6	22	3	3	6	6	1	3	2	127
Agreed 2020/21 cohort size													**120** | This is because supervisors continue to be unappreciative of the impact of a monthly PGR intake on managing IGS workload, as well as research funding becoming available to support new scholarships throughout the year. As such, PGR students continue to be enrolled every month of the academic calendar. Ongoing space constraints (further complicated by COVID) and unavoidable deferrals as a result of COVID restrictions have also impacted on "cohorted" enrolment. The IGS is already working to a policy of delivering essential and priority workloads only, therefore, it is not clear where the IGS could improve the efficiencies of workload delivery without mandating a move to 3 x fixed intakes / year.	July 2021	Bob Fisher (Policy and offer timings) Lindsey Fox (Offer timings) Patrick Hudson (Space planning)	Complete / unachievable
		[DoGS,IGS] We plan to review our recruitment processes and consider how we can better align these between programmes, bearing in mind that programmes do sometimes need to recruit in ways that are specific to those programmes.	Institute PGR application deadlines were set to all be the same for 2020/21. We also staggered the CDT application deadlines to help balance out and spread the peak admissions workload over a longer, but less intense, peak period. The IGS manager also utilised the 5-10% flexible workload allocation within the CDT admin job descriptions, to require them to assist with the CDT application screening workload. We will look to the possibility of updating CDT Admin job descriptions to include application screening as a requisite responsibility going forward. We will be removing the additional requirement to also apply for School/University funded PGR scholarships, as evidence suggests that applicants get confused over programme application deadlines and scholarship deadlines. From 2021/22 onwards, all institute PGR applicants will automatically be considered for scholarships for which they are eligible. This is also consistent with the way in which CDT programmes manage their scholarship applications. This will be better for applicants, supervisors, IGS and academic selectors.	Feb 2021	Bob Fisher Lindsey Fox	Complete
		[DoGS, IGS] Although space resources are carefully taken into consideration already during the intake process and have been for some years, this year the challenge has been exacerbated by a gradual increase in space pressures combined with numerous student interruptions due to Covid-19. We anticipate that our recruitment processes from 2021-22 onwards will need to be "space aware" and will almost certainly require quotas for CDTs and Institute PGR programmes. This will be planned and communicated to relevant stakeholders across the School.	Moving to shared desk provision for all new PGR students commencing studies from Sept 2020 (unless specific exceptions have been made / are required) will help alleviate the pressure on office/desk resources going forward. CDT NLP were issued with a cohort quota of 17 for 2021/22. CDT BMAI were issued with cohort quota of 12 for 2021/22. We have not set quotas on Institute programme recruitment, partly because the number of PGR applications across the institutes has seen a slight decline for 2021/22 and also the number of School / University / EPSRC DTA scholarships has been reduced. It is anticipated that a reduction in available scholarships (plus external factors such as BREXIT and COVID) will influence the size of the annual intake without a need to set institute quotas. This may need to be revisited in future years.	Feb 2021	Bob Fisher Lindsey Fox	Complete

SECTION 2 - Recommendations on student experience

2.	Recommendations on student experience	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
2a.	**(Recommendation 2)** *The review team heard evidence from students that they have inconsistent experience of supervision.*	*[DoGS] As long as resources allow, the School will continue to offer the "Don't Cross the Line" course, encouraging academic staff to attend until there are enough delivery opportunities to make it compulsory for all supervisors.*	*There is a cost involved in delivering the training (external provider) and this is a currently a barrier to delivering the session across all members of the academic community. It was also the opinion of the IGS management group that those who were considered in need of the training would be unlikely to attend until it became mandatory.* *DoGS and HoS to discuss at a later date, to discuss implementing a policy on mandatory attendance.*	*Sept 2021*	*Bob Fisher*	*ON HOLD* *COVID impacted.*
2b	Consistency of milestones and expectations around progression is required, not least to help professional services staff support the student journey.	[DoGS,DDoGS] The School will introduce content, and refer students to further resources, on cultural diversity into the PGR induction programme.	IGS induction updated and delivered.	Sept 2020	Bob Fisher Mary Cryan	Complete
2c	The review team were concerned to hear evidence of unacceptable comments made by some academic staff to students for example 'this institute offers success, money and women'. The review team recommends that supervisor training is enhanced. Induction of new supervisors is important, but ongoing supervisor training is needed in addition to the normal five-year cycle, particularly in areas such as diversity and respect. Cultural issues need to be addressed around gender, equality and diversity. It would also support the School's remit item on supporting postgraduate research student mental and wellbeing if mental health training is included as part of a suite of supervisor training enhancements.	[DoGS] Completion of the "Challenging Unconscious Bias" and "Equality & Diversity Essentials" courses is already mandatory for all academic staff. The School will aim for 90% compliance, and make it a condition of recruitment of new PhD students.	PGR supervisors must now confirm completion of training requirements before an offer of admission will be made. If incomplete, supervisors are asked to complete the training within one week or the offer of admission will be rejected. (Policy approved by HoS and DoPS) IGS has created a tracker of completed training, including date of last completion of the IAD Supervisor update and will be proactive in sending reminders going forward.	Jan 2021	Bob Fisher Lindsey Fox	Complete
2d	Transparency on how issues are dealt with within the School must be increased and inappropriate behaviour must be dealt with. The School must ensure safe mechanisms for reporting inappropriate behaviour are in place and communicated clearly to students and staff.	[DDoGS] We will review best practice in the College and the IAD for training the academic supervisors to deal with student mental health issues. We will promote the uptake of the Learn course "*Supporting Students with Mental Health Problems: Charlie Waller Memorial Trust*". We will continue to encourage PGR supervisors to attend the staff training sessions on managing student issues (delivered to School's by Student Disability Service)	We will write "Getting Started Guidance for PGR Supervisors" and circulate it to new PGR supervisors taking up employment in the School. We will update the IGS staff PGR webpage guidance to include links to Charlie Waller materials and the IAD LEARN course.	Extended to August 2021	Mary Cryan Lindsey Fox	In progress
2e	The School should explore alternative mechanisms so that students have greater confidence in the system and will not worry about retribution.	[DDoGS] We will be transparent in explaining what appropriate behaviour in the research environment is. We will improve our support for resolving problems, and for supporting students wanting to make formal complaints, so that they can come forward with greater confidence.	IGS induction updated to include Dignity & Respect and Research Integrity information, as well as how to get help with reporting concerns/complaints. We will continue to display the University's Dignity & Respect material within the School building, including PGR offices. The PGR Personal Tutors are taking a more proactive approach to their roles, offering scheduled weekly drop in sessions, as well as individual appointments. Students are now sent a monthly reminder email by IGS, reminding them of this support service and how they can seek resolution if they have a complaint. Subsequently, we have seen increase in the number of students taking up the opportunity to meet with the tutors.	Jan 2021	Mary Cryan	Complete

			We have updated the student support webpages to provide more detailed and specific signposting to internal and external support services.			
2f	The prohibiting of staff from PGR supervision should be more transparent.	[DoGS] We will be transparent in explaining what appropriate behaviour in the research environment is.	We proposed a policy on the maximum number of students that can normally be supervised (with exceptions being permitted by supervisors DoGS/HoS) to the School's Strategy Committee. This was not supported as a way of managing inadequate supervision / supervision behaviours. The Head of School proposed an alternative policy detailing the positive behaviours that are expected from PGR supervisors. This will be progressed in due course.	June 2021	Bob Fisher	In progress

SECTION 3 - Enhancing the learning and research environment

3.	Recommendations on Enhancing the learning and research environment	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
3a	**(Recommendation 3)** The review team commends the Building Manager and Senior Team for engaging with Estates Department to ensure building work to address issues in terms of heat and air quality. The review team recommends that efforts to move forward rapidly with this are supported by the College.	[DoPS] The building work that was planned for the summer to improve the air quality in the internal rooms within the Forum was delayed by the Covid-19 lockdown and, unfortunately, the scope of this work will now been reduced due to the University's financial position.	Estates are currently reviewing the required works to maximise what can be achieved within the available funds that have been committed by the College. Under the Covid-19 distancing rules, there are currently fewer people in each room, which helps manage temperatures and air quality. Undertaking large scale capital works were impacted by COVID, but building work is now currently being planned / undertaken to add cooling systems into some of the most impacted offices in the Forum.	COVID Impacted	Joy Candlish	In progress
3b	The review team heard evidence from students that other clear and more transparent communications to students were needed. The review team recommends a "you said we did" approach, transparent communication on important issues (for example, air quality issues in the building) and involving students in planning (to take advantage of engaged and enthusiastic students).	[DDoGS, COMMS] We will improve and expand our mechanisms for communicating between IGS and the PGR student community.	The D-IGS and DD-IGS now write to students on a quarterly basis via an IGS Newsletter. SSLC and Townhall meetings continue to be organised.	Extended to Jan 2021	Mary Cryan	Complete (and ongoing)
		The IGS web page for sharing feedback based on "you said we did" will be updated regularly, as and when actions have been completed.	The IGS "You said, We did" webpages have been updated and we will continue to update this as required and appropriate. The IGS intranet pages are currently undergoing a review and re-design to help students find and digest information more readily.	Ongoing End June 2021	Lindsey Fox	Complete (and ongoing)

SECTION 4 - Recommendations on Supporting Postgraduate Research Mental Health and Wellbeing

4.	Recommendations on Supporting Postgraduate Research Mental Health and Wellbeing	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
4a 8a.	**(Recommendation 4)** The review team recommends that student pastoral support is strengthened particularly for low-level issues, with better awareness of available support structures amongst staff and students. **(Recommendation 8)** The review team recommends that the School ensures that both students and staff are made better aware of the Postgraduate Research Personal Tutors, that awareness is assessed after a suitable period, and that Postgraduate Research Personal Tutor resource is increased to a level appropriate to the number of research students in the School.	[IGS,DHoGS] The Graduate School will work to increase student awareness of PGR Personal Tutors and their role in providing pastoral support to PGR students. We will promote more widely the contacts for the tutors, and their office hours (e.g. at Induction and at Town Hall meetings, as well as web pages). We will set up an email rota to periodically remind the students about the Tutors. CDT programmes already have their own Pastoral Support contacts with discussion meetings and drop-in hours.	We have increased the number of the PGR Personal Tutors. The PGR Personal Tutors are taking a more proactive approach to their roles, offering scheduled weekly drop in sessions, as well as individual appointments. Students are now sent a monthly reminder email by IGS, reminding them of this support service and how they can seek resolution if they have a complaint. Subsequently, we have seen increase in the number of students taking up the opportunity to meet with the tutors.	Sept 2020	Mary Cryan Personal Tutors Patrick Hudson	Complete

4b	(Recommendation 4) The review team recommends that the School provides appropriate funding and opportunities for students to take the lead in organising to self-support and build resilience, particularly around coping with failure.	[DDoGS] The School will consider how best to deploy resources for on-course support of students including empowering them to take the lead in organising self-support.	We have updated our Induction "Getting Started guidance" to highlight and promote attendance at IAD courses, which include: • Managing your Work and your Goals • Seven Secrets of a Highly Successful Research Student • Beating Writers Block • Ease the Load - Feel Good About Your Busy Life • Imposter Syndrome and How to Deal with It • The Inner Game - Exploring Stress, Balance, Resilience and Self-Belief • Staying Well (while social distancing) • Staying Well during your PhD • Working productively at a distance - working with your supervisor and time management These sessions are also highlighted during the PGR Induction sessions. We are reminding on-course students to attend scheduled IAD events via email reminders throughout the year. We will prioritise the use of IAD funds to support student led initiatives specifically promoting and supporting student wellbeing.	Oct 2020	Mary Cryan / PGR personal tutors IGS admin Mary Cryan / Lindsey Fox	Complete
		[DDoGS] Circulate to student's information on how to recognise signs and symptoms of mental health issues.	The IGS have updated the "Getting Started guidance" to highlight and promote University Student Support Services, including the counselling service, disability service and EUSA Advice Place (plus others). This is also communicated at PGR Induction / Welcome sessions. IGS have funded two of their admin staff to receive training in Mental Health First Aid (along with other School staff) and this service is advertised via the PGR induction and monthly email communications. The IGS admins advertise their service to students via their email signatures, which includes "I am a Scotland's Mental Health First Aider" signature banner. I am a Scotland's Mental Health First Aider #MHSCOT WORKPLACE WELLBEING IGS participate in EUSA and National Mental Health Awareness weeks through the delivering of MH focused training and social events and we will continue to do this. Using IAD funds, IGS have facilitated 10 PGR students to attend the Scottish Mental Health First Aid training. We will work with the "PGR Mental Health Ambassadors" to provide peer-to-peer support and deliver in house initiatives to support student wellbeing.	Oct 2020	Mary Cryan Patrick Hudson Patrick Hudson	Complete
		[DoGS] Circulate to staff information on how to recognise signs and symptoms of mental health issues.	DoGS consulted with the School's Strategy Committee and subsequently, College HR representatives were invited to attend the School's General Meeting in Feb 2021. They gave a presentation on how to recognise the signs and symptoms of clinical stress.	May 2021	Bob Fisher	Complete
		Enhance and promote student-facing IGS web pages linking to mental health support resources, including promoting the Student Counselling Service.	Webpages updated.	Jan 2021	Lindsey Fox	Complete
		Institutes to introduce a staff role with responsibility for PGR oversight.	The CDT Executive teams already have a dedicated role for Student Pastoral Support and this works well. We would aim to mirror this role within the Institutes. The DoGS is to meet with HoS to propose an additional PGR admin role within the Institutes. If approved, this would require confirming the specific role and responsibilities. If approved, we would aim to trial the success of the new role for a period of 2 years.	Extended to August 2021.	Bob Fisher	To start

SECTION 5 – Provision of teaching support and management of teaching opportunities

5.	Provision of teaching support and management of teaching opportunities	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
5a.	**(Recommendation 5)** Final course moderation practices were not clear. The review team recommends that each course is clearly moderated by the Course Organiser in line with University and College guidance.	[ITO] Course Organisers/TAs already moderate coursework submissions. The School's Teaching organisation will review the way in which each course applies moderation to ensure processes are in line with University and College guidance.	ITO Manager reminded Course Organisers of the University policy on moderation, highlighting the required practice. Via a Microsoft forms survey, Course Organisers were asked to report on their current practice and provide a moderation statement for each of their courses. This will be made available to external examiners. Where moderation practice wasn't in line with current University policy, the Course Organisers were actioned with rectifying this.	Dec 2020	Gillian Bell	Complete
5b.	The review team found that there was no underlying problem with students rejecting opportunities to teach and recommends that the School delivers teaching, including postgraduate support for teaching, within the available teaching resources and GTA resource budget, and that students are allowed freedom to pursue the teaching that interests them. Course Organisers should work with the Informatics Teaching Organisation to advertise teaching opportunities.	[ITO] The ITO will continue to advertise teaching support positions as proposed by the course organisers.	The Teaching Organisation has improved the information shared via the Student Services webpages. This includes a specific area that advertises available job roles and communications that inform the student body of where the roles are advertised. https://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/teaching-support/current-vacancies	Sept 2020	Neil Heatley Vicky MacTaggart	Complete
5c	The review team commends the good practice in tutor training and materials provided by Course Organisers in the larger courses for example, Machine Learning and Pattern Recognition (INFR11130). The review team recommends that the School consider ways this good practice can be shared with other Course Organisers.	[DHoGS] The School will review existing tutor training courses and circulate best practice with all Course Organisers. In the current year, a two-week IAD training is already underway for blended learning.	DDoGS will meet with the Senior University Teacher to discuss further.	July 2021	Mary Cryan	In progress
		[ITO, JRobertson] The School will consider other ways in which best practice in particular courses can be shared with other Course Organisers, including the regular Teaching Hour.	Teaching lunches are planned to discuss support and the School is currently running training courses for tutors. Judy Robertson will organise and delivering teaching support hours during May/June.	June 2021	Mary Cryan Judy Robertson	In progress

SECTION 6 – Student voice

6.	Student voice	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
6a.	**(Recommendation 6)** Students were aware of variable occupancy of postgraduate research student offices and the impact growth is having. There were also tensions around different expectations of office etiquette. The review team recommends the School supports students to develop a set of student-led, shared values, particularly in terms of office etiquette.	[DHoGS] [IGS] The School welcomes these recommendations for student-led shared values in terms of office etiquette. The Graduate School will review operation of the existing Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and work to improve its effectiveness.	The Graduate School suggested it would facilitate the formation of an Informatics PGR student group, based on the Institutes' PGR reps. However, the group discussed this further and agreed to focus on making the current SSLC model more effective in delivering on its current remit. The IGS will look to confirm the specific role and responsibilities of an SSLC rep, to help increase student led actions and outcomes outside of the quarterly SSLC meetings. We will liaise with SSLC reps to better understand how to engage the students in delivering on their responsibilities.	Extended to July 2021	Mary Cryan Patrick Hudson	In progress
		[DHoGS] The Graduate School will consult with Institutes with a view to enhancing their role in improving office culture and in improving student representation.		Extended to July 2021	Mary Cryan	In progress

| 6b. | The review team recommends that the School facilitate the formation of a student body that makes the most of the Institute representative system so that greater communication between students from institutes is achieved and opportunities for collaboration enhanced. This would also help address issues around acceptable behaviours. | [PGR students] The SSLC will be asked to develop a guide to shared office etiquette. | SSLC reps will be asked to liaise with their peers to develop an etiquette guide, which includes a list of "Do's and Don'ts" / state what is acceptable / unacceptable office behaviours. The guidance should include how to self-police and resolve issues on a peer to peer basis, how to make a formal/informal complaint and what the sanctions could be for continued non-compliance. | Extended to August 2021 | Mary Cryan Patrick Hudson | In progress |

SECTION 7 – Procurement and provision of capital purchase equipment

8.	Procurement and provision of capital purchase equipment	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
7a.	(Recommendation 9) a) The review team recommends that the Head of School and School Management Team ensures clarity for staff on financial routes and what can and cannot be achieved. If particular operational difficulties are incurred, College should work with the School to resolve these.	[DoPS] Changes to the University's financial model in recent years has changed the way College and Schools can fund equipment and capital projects of >£50k; these capital investments now prioritised at College level within budgets provided to Colleges. Improved forward planning is required at School level to plan equipment purchases and replacements, and our improved budgeting processes will support this.	The School made some changes a year ago to restrict the ability for our Institutes to fund equipment purchases, which is being reversed from FY 2020/21 which will provide more flexibility for Institutes to support PGR student equipment needs.	Sept 2020	Joy Candlish	Complete *Review again once COVID financial restrictions are lifted.*

SECTION 8 – Comparison to USA PhD degrees

8.	Comparison to USA PhD degrees	Comments, proposed actions and action plan	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion target	Assigned to	Status
8a.	(Recommendation 10) The unfavourable comparison by staff and PhD students of the Edinburgh PhD to that of American competitors should be avoided as it appears to devalue the offering. The review team recommends that the Graduate School and Careers service work with students in recognising the value of their PhD work.	[DHoGS] The School recognises that there are differences between UK and US PhD programmes, and each has some advantages and disadvantages. The Graduate School will work to promote the benefits of the shorter UK PhD programme to students, highlighting job prospects, transferable skills, etc. We will also promote the benefits of the full-time research position here versus the part-time teaching responsibility positions associated with US/EU PhD positions. We will include a section on the benefits of the UK PhD model relative to the US/EU PhD model in the School's supervisor update training.	We have amended the IGS induction schedule to include presentations from PGR students, who discuss their teaching and internship experiences (as examples of ways in which PGRs can supplement their academic training and develop their transferable skills and employment opportunities). DDoGS has organised a series of social PGR events with student keynote speakers who will discuss their internship experiences and employment experiences post-PhD. If these sessions are well received, the IGS will look to make these sessions' annual events. DDoGS will hold an email discussion with supervisor re: positive aspects of the UoE PhD model compared to USA model. This has been implemented.	Dec 2020	Mary Cryan	Complete
		[CAREERS] This will include input from the Careers Service.	We will asked Careers Service for advice and guidance (Kyla Atkinson, Careers Advisor) on how to address this issue. We were pointed to the Careers webpages, which were generic to PhD students (rather than Informatics specific). We've received no further comments or suggestions from the Careers Service and have chosen not to pursue this further at this time (given current work demands/priorities in the IGS).	July 2021	Mary Cryan	Complete
		[COMMS] The School will publicise, through its Communications and Outreach team, the impact of the research carried out by our PGR students, highlighting the strong publication record of students across the School and the contributions they make to society.	*We are investigating how the School can take relevant information on student success stories and link them into an IGS webpage collating all the positive experiences and achievements of Informatics PhD students. However, at present there is no automated way to collate relevant information that is published via research success stories submitted to CRC, CSMG and Principal's Office (and included in the CSE newsletters), Informatics website, Informatics newsletter, Informatics social media channels. Bigger stories might be included in the University website and corporate social media channels. Collating this information manually is not a task that can be accommodated within the current staffing resource of the Inf Communications team.*	*Extended to Aug 2021*	*Kasia Kokowska*	*On hold*

One year update

As demonstrated in the above action planner, the School has made good progress with many of the IPR recommendations, which are either complete or in progress. Whilst there are some actions that have yet to be acted upon, we feel the progress made thus far is good, especially given the impact of COVID on current the School's operations and staff workload/availability.

a) Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review

We held an IPR focused PGR town hall meeting with students on 26 August 2020.

We keep the IPR intranet page updated:
https://restricted.web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/postgraduate-programme-review

We regularly update the "You Said, We Did" IGS intranet webpage:
https://restricted.web.inf.ed.ac.uk/infweb/student-services/igs/phd/student-support/you-said-we-did

We have held regular PGR Townhall and SSLC meetings in 2020/21, which include updates on the progress of the IPR action plan initiatives.

The D-IGS and DD-IGS have started communicating news, events and information related to student experience via a quarterly PGR newsletter.

b) Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review

It is now a requirement of all supervisor to have completed the following training:
- Data Protection (required)
- IS Essentials (required)
- Challenging Unconscious Bias (optional)
- Equality & Diversity Essentials (required)
- IAD supervisor update (once every 5 years)

Completion of the required training is checked by the IGS at the point of a PhD place offer and a record of the training completed by each PGR supervisor is now kept. Offers of admission are not made to supervisors who have out of date or incomplete training records. This has significantly increased supervisor engagement with completing the required training.

The IGS Student Support webpages have been updated to clearly indicate where students can seek support and advice on managing their mental health, and who to speak to if help is required and the number of PGR tutors has been increased from one to two, and both now offer weekly drop in sessions at fixed times during the week. The Deputy Director of IGS now also offers a weekly drop in session and is also available by appointment. The IGS sends monthly email reminders to all PGR students about the PGR Tutor service, as well as highlighting their role and responsibilities during the PGR Induction sessions. This service has been used more regularly than in previous years and has been a valuable support service during the COVID pandemic.

The IGS provided funds to support the training of 10 x PGR Mental Health Student Ambassadors, who will be using their training to provide peer support and guidance to their fellow PGR students. They will also be asked to coordinate a series of student events focused on enhancing student wellbeing and reducing the stigma around talking about mental health issues.

The IGS reviewed the Induction sessions and now provide incoming students with an induction session focused more towards experience, opportunities and support:
- PGR supervisor roles and responsibilities – delivered by an experienced PGR supervisor
- Internship opportunities (student case study) – delivered by a PGR student
- Teaching and demonstrating opportunities – delivered by a PGR student.
- Student support services

- **Feedback for the IPR team**

We would like to take this opportunity to provide feedback to the IPR team on the IPR process. Our feedback is as follows:

- Change the template of the PGR IPR report to be one specifically targeted towards PGR programmes; and
- Reduce the IPR visit to one working day. This is because a two day review visit feels excessive and requires a significant and additional workload to facilitate the process; and
- Keep the number of recommendations to be actioned to a reasonable and achievable limit; we would recommend a top 5. By focusing SMART targets on a smaller number of top priority improvement areas, this would in our opinion, allow Schools to concentrate effort towards the most important and impactful areas of student experience. This would also help reasonably manage the additional workload associated with post-IPR activities.