

REC: 23.05.17
H/02/26/02

REC 16/17 5B

The University of Edinburgh
Researcher Experience Committee (REC)

23rd May 2017

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development: Progress Reports May 2017

Executive Summary

This paper gives an overview of the progress made from February to May 2017 for all areas of the Excellence Programme. Detailed reports are then given for work stream 1 (supervisor training and support) and work stream 2 (mentorship). These include initial findings and proposed next steps. The committee is requested (as the Programme Board) to discuss these reports and approve proposed next steps where appropriate. Further information on the Programme 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 Academic and 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

Equality and diversity implications are being considered as part of the work streams. Equality impact assessment will be undertaken on any resulting new or amended policy.

4. Freedom of information

The paper is open

Key words

Doctoral education, supervision, mentoring

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May 2017

Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme: Progress Reports May 2017

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. mentorship 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>

Summary Table of Progress made in all areas of the Programme

Area of work	Summary of Progress February 2017- May 2017	Further information
Communication and Consultation	Progress made in both areas	Further details in this report
Work Stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support	Focus on benchmarking and mapping. Initial findings and proposed next steps identified.	Further details in this report
Work Stream 2: Mentorship and Wellbeing	Focus on benchmarking and mapping. Initial findings and proposed next steps identified.	Further details on mentorship in this report Report on wellbeing to be completed by end of June 2017
Work Stream 3: Personal and Professional Development Record	Task group met for the first time in May. Now working on setting objectives and principles for the work.	Task group to meet again in June. To report to the November REC meeting

REC is requested to discuss, comment on and, where appropriate, approve:

- The general progress made by the Programme and future plans for communication and consultation
- The proposed next steps for work stream 1
- The proposed next steps for work stream 2 (mentorship)

Overall Progress to date

Communication

Dedicated Programme webpages have been developed and can be found here:

<http://edin.ac/2pFy7zo> These will be updated as the work progresses.

The Programme was presented as a lightning talk at the Senate Committees Away day 2017. This led to an invitation to present at the Quality Assurance Committee.

An article on the Programme is featured in the May edition of Teaching Matters.

<http://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/?p=1639>

The Programme has been on the agenda and discussed at all IAD PGR School meetings. Each year, the IAD doctoral training team meet with each School (College in CMVM) to discuss training and support for PGR students. This has generated useful and interesting discussion and comments on various aspects of the Programme, as well as raising awareness.

Future plans for communication

- Continue to update webpages and link to other work/ initiatives
- Proactively identify opportunities to communicate the work of the Programme to all relevant stakeholders
- Continue to update College committees of progress

Consultation

A paper on the Programme was drafted for Colleges to discuss at committee meetings and disseminate to Schools. Comments and feedback were requested by the end of March 2017.

A PGR supervisor network will be launched on the 21st of June. Booking is now open. This network will aim to inform supervisors of University initiatives and consult on proposals to better support PGR supervision. It will also provide a forum for supervisors to meet and share practice. Participants will have the opportunity to feed into the priorities for network events throughout academic year (proposed to have 3 or 4) 2017/18 and to join a mailing list.

Schools (through Colleges) have been asked to share examples of mentoring practices for PGRs and to give details of thesis committee structures (where they exist). The findings of this exercise can be found in the progress report for work stream 2.

Dates for student discussion groups have been set up (central area/ Kings Buildings / Little France). Ethical approval for this has been granted by Moray House School of Education. These will discuss aspects of the Programme and will comprise a maximum of 20 students. These initial discussions will then be followed up by another series of discussions in the autumn semester of 2017/18.

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

Work stream one: Supervisor training and support

The focus of this work stream to date has been on benchmarking and mapping activities. This report sets out the initial findings and observations of this exercise, and details proposed next steps. The committee is requested to consider and approve these.

Background and context

Research supervision and its definition, support and formalisation has attracted a great deal of attention and work over the past decade, both from organisations and individual institutions. Much of this work has generated similar recommendations and materials. This is a rich source of existing information which can be drawn from as a basis for enhancement and development.

Guiding principles

1. Salzburg Principles II 2010

'Supervision must be a collective effort with clearly defined and written responsibilities of the main supervisor, supervisory team, doctoral candidate, doctoral school, research group and the institution, leaving room for the individual development of the doctoral candidate. Providing professional development to supervisors is an institutional responsibility, whether organised through formal training or informal sharing of experiences among staff. Developing a common supervision culture shared by supervisors, doctoral school leaders and doctoral candidates must be a priority for doctoral schools. Supervisors must be active researchers.' http://www.eua.be/Libraries/publications-homepage list/Salzburg_II_Recommendations.pdf?sfvrsn=0

2. QAA Quality Code B11: Research Degrees – Indicator 9

Higher education providers appoint supervisors with the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support and encourage research students, and to monitor their progress effectively.

To ensure that all supervisors possess the expertise required for their role, higher education providers use criteria for eligibility in appointing supervisors, whose performance in the role is kept under review. Supervisors are expected to engage in development opportunities, to equip them to supervise research students, and to meet requirements for continuing professional development. Supervisor training and development opportunities are relevant to research education, providing advice on how to supervise research students effectively in different circumstances, and are given similar status to programmes on teaching and learning in higher education for new academic staff. In supporting supervisors to enhance their knowledge and skills, higher education providers define and enable sharing of good practice and encourage strategies such as mentoring relationships, for example for new supervisors. http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Pages/Quality-Code-Chapter-B11.aspx#.WRR_OXpps40

Selected Projects and Initiatives – International and UK Organisations

Universitas 21

Universitas 21 has an ongoing interest in research supervision. In 2014 it undertook a study of five member universities, looking at policy, practices and procedures related to research supervision.

Main findings of the report:

- Need to recognise excellence in supervision
- Professional development of supervisors is important
- Universities should look to build communities of practice around research supervision
- Universities should have clear and dedicated web pages for supervisions – a 'hub' of resources
- Particular emphasis should be given to inducting international students and staff into a different culture of learning

Link: <http://www.universitas21.com/article/research/details/274/research-supervisor-support-development>

COIMBRA Group

The Doctoral Studies working group has an interest in research supervision and has been collecting examples of good practice from across the network. Some of these will be presented as part of the annual conference which will be held in Edinburgh in June 2017.

Link: <http://www.coimbra-group.eu/policy-pillars/education/doctoral-studies>

UKCGE

UKCGE runs events which focus on research supervision and have recently focused on recognition of good or excellent supervision at institutional and national level. This has led to the addition of a new category at the Times Higher Awards from 2016 (sponsored by UKCGE) for 'outstanding supervisor of the year'. A paper has also been published (March 2017) which analyses the structure and criteria for institutional awards for research supervision across the UK and Australia.

Links: <http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/>
<http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/more/awards.aspx>

QAA Scotland

The QAA Scotland Focus on project (2016-2017) on the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student experience identifies support for staff who supervise research students as a priority area. This involves a series of webinars on good practice in research supervision, films, advice and commentary from experienced research supervisors from a range of institutions and disciplines.

Link: <http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/focus-on/postgraduate-research-student-experience>

Irish National Association for the Integration of Research, Learning and Teaching (NAIRTL)

NAIRTL have produced a practical guide to Developing an Institutional Framework for Supporting Supervisors of Research Students (2012). This was an output of a four-year project to develop strategies to optimise support for research supervision. Available here: http://www.nairtl.ie/workgroupDocs/SupervisorSupport_Guide.pdf

Selected Institutional Examples – International and UK

A benchmarking exercise of different institutions, internationally and in the UK has highlighted a number of different models of policy, training and support for research supervisors. A selection of these are outlined here as they offer examples of practice of particular interest to this Programme.

- 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

Karolinska Institute, Sweden

The Institute has developed an online course for research supervisors and have made completion of this mandatory for all principal supervisors. It has 7 sections and takes 1-2 hours to complete.

Link: <https://internwebben.ki.se/en/web-course-supervisors-doctoral-students-ki>

Imperial College London

Imperial is currently undertaking a large project which focuses on 'World Class Supervision'. This looks at various elements of the supervisor- student relationship.

Link: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/study/pg/graduate-school/quality-assurance/development-projects/world-class-research-supervision/>

University of Oxford

The Oxford Learning Institute hosts a particularly detailed and accessible hub of resources for research supervisors and doctoral students as well as those involved in mentoring doctoral students. For each area of practice within research supervision there is a section on ideas and tools and insights from research and literature.

Link: <http://supervision.learning.ox.ac.uk/>

University of Bristol

During 2016/17 the University launched an extensive programme of workshops and symposia for doctoral supervisors in addition to compulsory training for new supervisors. These include co-supervision, recruiting and attracting doctoral students, examining, interdisciplinary supervision and distance/on-line supervision.

Link: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/academic/learningandteaching/doctoral-supervision-programme/>

Various Australian institutions

A number of Australian universities require research supervisors to be accredited. There are various levels of this and different pathways.

Examples:

Monash University: <https://www.monash.edu/graduate-research/supervisors-and-examiners/supervisors/training>

Griffith University: <https://www.griffith.edu.au/health/griffith-health/research/higher-degree-research/supervisory-arrangements>

University of Edinburgh Provision*Compulsory supervisor briefings*

All new supervisors at the University are expected to attend a supervisor briefing before they start supervising a student. All continuing supervisors should renew this once every five years. This requirement is set out in the Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students¹.

Individual Schools hold responsibility for identifying the training needs of their supervisors and ensuring that all members of staff with supervisory responsibilities have attended an appropriate supervisor briefing event.

Currently, the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) works with the three Colleges to organise compulsory supervisor briefing events at both School and College level throughout the academic year. The IAD has a responsibility to provide records on attendance at these events for the purposes of ELIR and for internal reporting to Colleges and Schools.

In 2016, IAD created a checklist for these briefings which was circulated to REC members and discussed. An updated version of this is included in Appendix A. SharePoint was also set up for supervisor training but has not been used as yet.

Optional supervisor events and training

IAD runs a number of optional workshops for research supervisors. In 2016/17 this has included:

- Handling International Students' Writing Problems (2 times per year)
- Recognition of supervisory activity as teaching: gaining accreditation from the HEA

In addition, there are a number of other workshops of relevance to supervisors in the research and academic staff programme.

¹ www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/copsupervisorsresearchstudents.pdf

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2015 – analysis of free text on supervision (University of Edinburgh)

An analysis of free text comments relating to supervision generated the following observations.

A significant number of comments highlighted the positive experience of supervision. Respondents particularly appreciated these factors:

- Supervisors who are helpful and accommodating and understanding of issues outside supervision
- Supervisors who are challenging and supportive and encourage participation in training activity
- Supervisors who are knowledgeable and skilled
- Supervisors who give regular and timely feedback
- Supervisors who encourage students to look at career possibilities

Equally, there were a number of comments which highlighted negative experiences. These focused on:

- Supervisors being too busy and inattentive, overloaded with work
- Lack of feedback or support generally
- Supervisors who lack knowledge about procedures, training and support available etc.
- Supervisors who do not support activity outside research
- The variability between individual experiences across the University
- Supervisors leaving the University

A number of comments focused on suggestions for improvement in supervisor arrangements. These included:

- Having a more robust mechanism for selection, training and accountability of supervisors
- A more supportive institutional environment for supervision, a number of respondents blamed workloads for inattentive supervision, rather than the supervisor
- Clearer guidance as to what to expect from supervision

Full details of free text comments are available in the surveys wiki: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/data-matters/about-surveys-reporting/student-surveys/central-student-surveys>

Supervision in Postgraduate Programme Reviews (PPRs)

An analysis of PPR reports from 2014-15 to date highlighted a number of areas of good practice in supervision, particularly in relation to mentorship schemes for new supervisors and opportunities for supervisors to share practice. They also found that some Schools found it difficult to enforce mandatory training, especially for continuing supervisors. There were also recommendations for Schools to look at potential inconsistencies in supervisory role due to variations in workload. Reports can be found here: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/teaching-and-postgraduate-programme-review/postgraduate-programme-review>

Initial Overall Findings and Observations for Work Stream 1

1. There is a wealth of online material and support for supervisors in existence, both externally and internally. The difficulty is that much of this is dispersed and contained in a multitude of web pages.
2. There appears to be a gap in provision of optional resources and training for supervisors at the University, 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.
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 1: Proposed next steps

1.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.

TIME FRAME: aim to be launched by December 2017

2.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.

TIME FRAME: scoping and organising June – September 2017 – pilot activities: academic year 2017/18

3.Strengthen the central support for compulsory supervisor briefings through sharing of resources and accessible checklist

TIME FRAME: by the start of academic year 2017/18

4.Further explore and scope development of an online training resource for research supervision using the Karolinska Institute model as a starting point.

TIME FRAME: from June 2017, options to be presented to REC by November 2017

5.Consult with Colleges (through committees) about the 5 year rule for renewing supervisor training

TIME FRAME: College Committees to be consulted from June 2017

6.Explore and scope options for recording compulsory supervisory briefings online.

TIME FRAME: options to be presented to REC by November 2017

7.Work with EUSA to identify three supervisors from the Teaching Award shortlists for institutional entry into the Times Higher Outstanding Supervisor of the Year Award (deadline 28th June 2017).

<http://www.the-awards.co.uk/2017/en/page/home>

8. Continue to benchmark and map examples of good practice both externally and internally and include in this a review of relevant research literature. TIME FRAME: ongoing

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

Work stream TWO: Mentorship and Wellbeing

Background

There is increasing awareness of the added benefit for doctoral students to have access to a mentor. It is less clear how this mentor function should operate. It appears that there are several different possible models, each with advantages and constraints. This work stream will conduct background work to identify existing good practice, benchmark and scope for several models. Further details are available within the following paper: <http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/papera-excellenceprogramme.pdf>

Progress to date

The work for this work stream has been divided into two areas, mentorship and wellbeing. This report details the initial findings and proposed next steps for the mentoring part. A full report on the work on wellbeing will be completed by the end of June 2017. To date, a benchmarking and mapping exercise has been carried out to identify examples of practice across other institutions and within the University of Edinburgh. This has led to a number of observations and proposed next steps.

Benchmarking

A benchmarking exercise was conducted to identify models of mentoring for PGRs across several external institutions. This involved initial desk research looking at institutional webpages which was followed up by email/ phone discussions with relevant contacts. A number of models with high levels of reported success were identified (Appendix B). From this it was found that two distinct models were being particularly utilised by a number of institutions.

1. One-to-one/Face-to-face mentoring

A number of institutions operate one-to-one/face-to-face schemes. In the majority of cases, this involves a post-doctoral researcher or a PhD student in the later stages of writing their thesis acting as mentors for new PhD students. These types of schemes are normally managed at School or department level and entail a significant amount of administrative coordination which can involve matching students with mentors, organising and delivering training sessions for mentors. In some cases the schemes are monitored and evaluated for a fixed period of time. All mentors and mentees within the institutions approached receive clear guidance as to the types of queries that mentors can be expected to answer and what should be referred to other sources of support.

Some advantages

- This type of scheme allows students to seek information, advice and guidance from a mentor who has recently experienced similar challenges and is not part of the student's supervisory team.
- Interaction within these types of schemes is not prescribed and the relationship can take many forms ranging from having regular meetings to exchanging an e-mail occasionally regarding specific queries. This flexibility means that it can be tailored for individual needs.
- In most cases, mentors are provided with a number of training opportunities and are able to enhance their skills as mentors and advisors. This is particularly useful for post-doctoral researchers.

Some considerations

It was reported that this type of scheme requires a significant amount of administrative support, particularly in the initial stages where students are matched with mentors and when mentor training takes place. It is also much more difficult to monitor such schemes, as the relationship between the mentor and mentee can vary to a great extent and are designed provide a personal experience for the mentee. A number of institutions were wary of appearing intrusive when gathering feedback.

Selected Examples of Practice

The University of Sheffield Thesis Mentoring Scheme

This scheme is a one-to-one coaching programme where research students are paired up for four months with experienced post-doctoral researchers who are trained in the skills of mentoring. The aim of the scheme is to enable research students to understand how they might work best and how to utilise the resources available to them. The Thesis Mentor encourages students to keep up momentum during the write-up period. Thesis mentoring comprises of eight, one hour sessions over sixteen weeks and ends with a formal evaluation. All mentors are provided with training and guidance. The Thesis Mentoring scheme has become a valuable scheme for both students and post-doctoral researchers. Research students at Sheffield have highlighted the value that they have found in being able to speak to someone who has experienced similar challenges and can provide guidance and encouragement when needed. Further information is available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr/mentoring/thesismentoring>

The University of California, Riverside Graduate Student Mentoring Programme

This programme aims to support new PhD students upon arrival. Each new PhD student is assigned to a mentoring 'family' which consists of one to three other new PhD students and a peer mentor who is studying within a related field. Two to three families are also part of a team which is overseen by a 'Faculty mentor' who is a member of staff.

Mentees meet with their peer mentors individually, in families or in teams weekly. They are also given the opportunity to meet with other mentees and their faculty mentors regularly. This type of scheme encourages interaction amongst peers and provides varying levels of pastoral support from staff. Further information is available at: <http://gradmentors.ucr.edu/>

Feedback from these schemes

Feedback from the co-ordinators of the above schemes suggest that they have proven to be successful and are highly valued by both students and mentors. PhD students feel supported and have the advantage of being able to benefit from the knowledge and support of someone who has undergone the rigours of research and thesis writing.

2. Online Alumni Mentoring

A significant number of institutions chose to provide mentorship to PGR students via the design and implementation of internal online networking sites for Alumni and students. These are designed to allow students to interact with established alumni who wish to connect with students with an interest in their field of work and/or study. In the majority of cases, students are able to choose their mentor by viewing a suite of alumni profiles and requesting them as a mentor. The mentor is able to accept and decline requests using the online platform. All interaction between the mentor and mentee takes place online either via the platform designed by the institution or via e-mail. As with one-to-one/face-to-face mentoring, the interaction within this type of scheme is not prescribed. The nature of the relationship is dictated by the mentor and mentee. Mentors and mentees are provided with some guidance on what can be expected from both parties. Mentors are given guidance on support and mentees are provided with a guide on how to interact with their mentor. Online evaluations take place periodically (after 6 months in most cases) and the relationship is no longer monitored or evaluated thereafter.

Some advantages

- This type of mentoring exposes students to a variety of career paths (usually out with academia) and provides them with an opportunity to interact with an established member of alumni who can provide advice and guidance as well as share their experience of studying.

- Online mentoring does not require a great deal of administrative support as it operates independently. Administrative support is only required if any issues are raised by the mentor or mentee.
- This type of mentoring can lead to career opportunities as it was reported that a number of students have gained employment via their mentor.
- It is flexible, students can decide whether or not they would like to use the online networking site. It is not a requirement.
- A significant amount of data can be obtained regarding the usage of the scheme. Interactions can be measured using statistics recorded on the networking site e.g. how many times students and mentors have signed in, how many times interaction has taken place etc.

Some considerations

- Coordinators of the schemes have reported that it can be a challenge to continuously recruit alumni to act as mentors.
- Coordinators have also highlighted that it has often been difficult to manage student expectations in terms of the level of support that they can expect to receive from their mentor as some mentors prove to be much more active and supportive than others.
- One of the institutions approached has chosen to appoint an administrator to match mentees with mentors rather than allowing mentors to choose their own using the online platform. This was reported as being quite time consuming as it involves the administrator contacting the mentees for a list of desired mentors and then manually making a match. In this particular case, the scheme operates on a small scale and if it were to expand, the team would consider allowing students to approach mentors directly using a request facility.
- This type of mentoring is most suited to those who are seeking a career out with academia as in the majority of cases, mentors are established alumni working in non-academic positions. This model does not work particularly well for those who wish to continue researching within an academic setting.

Selected Examples of Practice

The University of Manchester – Manchester Gold Scheme

The Manchester Gold Scheme allows students to seek information advice and guidance about their future from an alumni mentor. The scheme has been active for fifteen years and is highly regarded by students who are mentors. Mentors are provided with guidance on what mentees can expect of them and mentees are asked to attend a mandatory introduction session which outlines the how the scheme works and what is appropriate to discuss with their mentor. Mentees select and request mentors via the 'Manchester Network Portal'. Once the mentor agrees to accept the request, interaction begins. Mentors and mentees decide how to manage the mentoring relationship and decide how to interact e.g. via e-mail, phone or face-to-face meetings.

Mentees are asked to complete an evaluation after six months. Further information is available at:

<http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/experience/mentoring/>

The University of Sheffield – v i s t a Online Mentoring Portal

The v i s t a mentoring portal allows PhD students and research associates to browse profiles of PhD graduates who have succeeded in careers outside of academia, giving students an insight into potential future careers. Students are able to obtain advice and support regarding their development. Mentors and mentees can interact via e-mail, skype chats or meeting face-to-face.

Interaction is not prescribed and an evaluation takes place after 6 months. The online portal is complemented by v i s t a seminars which consist of a programme of lunchtime seminars on post- PhD careers beyond academia. Talks are delivered by PhD graduates who work in non-academic positions.

The seminars expose students to the broad range of professions open to researchers and make them aware of the skills, knowledge or experience required to move into a new career. Further information is available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr/mentoring/vista>

Feedback from these schemes

Feedback from the above schemes suggests that online mentoring is popular amongst PGR students who have highlighted the value that they have found in being able to interact with someone who has faced the same challenges and can provide guidance and encouragement when needed.

Mapping of existing practice across the University of Edinburgh

A mapping exercise was conducted to identify examples of good practice within the University. This was conducted by consulting PRES 2015 free text comments for examples within Schools and an email request for information sent out to Colleges. It was found that several models exist across schools/subject areas and departments (Appendix C).

Selected Examples of Practice

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)

Thesis Committees

Thesis committees are operated College-wide and, in most cases, are responsible for having oversight of a student's progress and are available for the student to seek advice, guidance on training and research skills. Thesis committees normally consist of a chairperson, all supervisors and an external member of staff who should be independent of the group. Membership can vary for each individual student depending on the school/subject area. Each school/subject area is responsible for deciding how meetings are conducted and guidance for each meeting are published online or within a handbook provided for PhD students. Thesis committees have a pastoral role and provide support and guidance to students in addition to the advice and support provided by PhD supervisors.

Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies – 'The Hub'

'The Hub' is an online social space for postgraduate students, staff and alumni within the School. 'The Hub' provides a social network with opportunities to communicate key information e.g. job opportunities, research projects etc. via the newsfeed and various discussion forums set up by students and staff. It also contains links to a number of resources which contain information on student support and reading materials which may be of interest. 'The Hub' provides students with an open social space in which they can ask questions, share experiences and seek support if necessary. Staff do not monitor student discussion forums (unless they are specifically asked to be involved in a discussion).

'The Hub' can be viewed at: <http://buddy.vet.ed.ac.uk/>

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (CAHSS)

Moray House School of Education

The School operates a 'Buddy Scheme' where each new PhD student is allocated a buddy who is a PhD student in year two or above. Each of the buddies are volunteers and are usually from a similar area to the one of the new PhD student. These allocations are made before new students start and all students are e-mailed with the names of their buddies. The relationship is not prescribed and can take many forms e.g. buddies who have more than one mentee often organise group meetings, allowing further interaction and sharing of experiences.

Health in Social Science

The School provides each student with a 'Critical Friend' who attends each of the student's annual review meetings. This is a member of academic staff who can input into the student's academic progress each year but is not part of the supervisory team. The 'critical friend' is not expected to provide any pastoral support.

College of Science and Engineering (CSE)**Physics and Astronomy**

All PhD students have access to a Pastoral Support team who they are all required to meet with during a Year One Pastoral Meeting. All PhD students also have an interview with the Head of School and the Director of the Graduate School at the beginning of Year Two. This is a pastoral meeting and is designed to give the student the opportunity to raise any problems that they may be facing.

Geosciences

All PhD students are allocated an Advisor in addition to their supervisors. The Advisor's role is to provide an independent source of advice to the student out with the supervisory team. The Advisor provides a potential intermediary between the student and supervisors, if any issues arise during the course of the PhD. The Advisor is also present at the progress and monitoring events and to give feedback to students.

Development and Alumni/Careers Service – Student Alumni Platform

The University Development and Alumni and Careers Services are currently in the process of creating a new University online community which will be used to for networking and communication. This will replace Connect.ed, the current alumni platform (which has 44 PhDs signed up – April 2017). It will be open to all members of the University of Edinburgh community. Members will be able to use it to connect with each other. Each user will have a profile which includes key information about themselves. Users will be able to search for others using certain key attributes mentioned in user profiles. They will then be able to approach users with any queries that they may have using the system. Members of the University community will be able to use the system in a number of different ways including for mentoring and professional networking. Further information is attached in Appendix D.

Peer Support Schemes – implemented and supported by the Edinburgh University Students' Association

A number of postgraduate research peer support schemes were highlighted by Schools. A significant number of schools have expressed their support of peer support initiatives and students have found these to be a valuable source of support.

Edinburgh University Students' Association play an active role in the implementation of peer mentoring for within all schools/subject areas and are willing to support Schools who wish to establish such schemes for postgraduate research students.

Initial Overall Findings and Observations for Work Stream 2 (mentoring)

- The benchmarking and mapping exercises (Appendices B and C) have highlighted that there are several models of PGR mentoring which are operating successfully within the University and these align with those offered elsewhere. The variety of models which have been implemented externally and across the University (Appendix C) indicates that there is no single mentoring model that would be suitable for all postgraduate research students.

- PGR students appear to value the added benefit that mentoring can provide, and the mentoring experience can also have clear benefits for those in mentee positions, such as other PGR students or post-doctoral researchers.
- External institutions approached provide formal guidance and/or training to those in mentoring roles for PGR students. This appears to be more variable within the University of Edinburgh.
- External institutions and Schools/departments within the University have highlighted the difficulty in evaluating a number of their mentoring schemes due to much of the interaction taking place via e-mail, Skype or face-to-face.
- Thesis committees exist across parts of the institution, particularly in CMVM. Similar structures appear to exist in some other Schools, but these are known by different names. Where thesis committees do exist there is no uniformity in structure, role descriptions or guidance.
- Edinburgh University Students' Association provide advice and support to schools/subject areas wishing to create and implement peer support schemes within their area. The Association also has a large amount of experience in designing, implementing and evaluating peer mentoring schemes for UGs and PGTs.
- The forthcoming online platform created by the Careers and Development and Alumni services is seeking input regarding the requirements of different types of students to ensure that it would be beneficial to all.

Work Stream 2 (mentoring): Proposed Next Steps

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.
TIME FRAME: consult with student groups May/June 2017. Report to REC September 2017.
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.
TIME FRAME: Consultation to start in June 2017, development through academic year 2017/18
3. Develop central resources for evaluation of mentoring schemes which can be made available to staff involved in mentoring schemes.
TIME FRAME: academic year 2017/18
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.
TIME FRAME: Options to be presented to REC in November 2017
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.
TIME FRAME: Ongoing

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

Appendix A: Checklist of content to include in compulsory supervisor briefings 2017

Theme	Description of content	Information
Introduction & overview	An overview of the UoE context and some of the challenges for the institution and the College.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Strategic Plan 2016 • Senate Researcher Experience Committee papers • University factsheets- student facts and figures • Postgraduate Research experience Survey (PRES) results – surveys wiki • Different modes of study, recruitment, funding, duration of PhD Projects, timely completion
Regulations & expectations	Links to University-level policy, regulations and Code of Practice are emailed out in advance (by IAD). Attendees are expected to familiarise themselves with the content and bring questions to the session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Policy, Regulations and Guidance for Research Students
	Highlight key changes in regulations during the session and signpost to support for specific queries (some of these may come out through discussion of case studies).	
	Explore the roles and expectations of the student and supervisor (according to the Code of Practice including any College slant) and the training expectation.	
	Emphasise the importance of establishing expectations and structuring a project so that it can be completed within given time constraints.	
	Explore the role and expectations of the internal examiner.	
Procedures & processes	Introduce School and College support and administrative procedures including where to find further information and who can be contacted for support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUCLID online annual review (software workflow Prezi) • Postgraduate Admissions training module <i>Postgraduate Admissions: the legal and policy framework</i> on Learn • Health and Safety online training for PIs and Supervisors • Attendance monitoring
	Emphasise the importance of monitoring progress regularly and keeping written records. Raise awareness of key milestones and information flow. There should also be a detailed (local) induction for new academics focusing on practicalities.	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English language requirements School/College specific guidelines OneDrive could be suggested as a way to share documents and keep records of regular meetings
Experience & challenges	Reflection and group discussion on the process of supervising research students. Using a range of case studies highlighting various challenges led by experienced supervisors with School and College input.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full set of case studies as examples
Developing your skills & support available	Highlight support available for supervisors and services they can signpost students to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate School, College Office, PG adviser, webpages, wiki, contacts IAD (provision for Doctoral researchers, Tutors and Demonstrators and Supervisors). Disability service (Helping distressed students – a guide for University staff) Mental health and wellbeing Student counselling EUSA, Advice place Careers Service: support for PhD supervisors Edinburgh Global (training for staff on Tier-4 PGR students)
	Encourage continued professional development and signpost to further sessions and online resources.	
Time for Q&A		

APPENDIX B: Examples of Mentoring at other Higher Education Institutions

Institution	Examples of Mentoring Schemes
Aarhus University, Denmark	<p><u>AU Mentor PhD</u></p> <p>The programme consists of matching mentors (alumni and external individuals wishing to mentor PhD students) and mentees (PhD students) with mutual interests.</p> <p>The goal of the programme is to bring PhD students and the business community closer together to ease the transition for students from research to a career outside academia.</p> <p>Further information is available at: http://www.au.dk/en/collaboration/mentor/</p>
University of Cambridge – Centre for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities	<p><u>PhD/Post-Doc Mentoring Scheme</u></p> <p>The mentoring programme is consists of one-to-one mentoring and is intended to support doctoral students (mentees) as they negotiate the challenges of a rigorous and often isolating academic programme and to help post-docs (mentors) enhance their mentorship skills.</p> <p>Further information is available at: http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/events/26776</p>
University of Glasgow	<p><u>'The Network'</u></p> <p>'The Network' is an online professional networking site for alumni and students. The aim is to allow students to step on the career ladder through established alumni who wish to network with students with an interest in their field of work/study. It is also a channel for allowing Alumni to interact with their peers.</p> <p>Students and Alumni can search for mentors/peers by skills, expertise, company and location and then send messages to other users, network and find mentors. Further information is available at: http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/careers/thenetwork/</p>
University of Manchester	<p><u>Manchester Gold Mentoring Scheme</u></p> <p>The Manchester Gold Mentoring Scheme has been running for 15 years and is highly regarded by students and mentors. Mentees are able to select and request mentors (alumni and in some cases employers) via an online portal. Mentoring can take place online via the portal, Skype or e-mail and in some cases face-to-face. Further information is available at: http://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/experience/mentoring/</p>
University of Sheffield	<p><u>v i s t a mentoring for PhD students</u></p> <p><u>v i s t a Seminars:</u> v i s t a seminars are a programme of lunchtime seminars on post- PhD careers beyond academia. Talks are delivered by PhD graduates who work in non-academic positions.</p> <p><u>v i s t a Mentoring Portal:</u> The v i s t a mentoring portal allows PhD students and research associates to browse profiles of PhD graduates who have succeeded in careers outside of <u>academia</u>, giving students inspiration for their future careers. Students can also gain expert advice and support for their development by selecting a mentor to work with on a one-to-one basis.</p> <p>Further information is available at: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr/mentoring/vista</p>

	<p><u>University of Sheffield Thesis Mentoring</u></p> <p>The thesis mentoring scheme is a one-to-one coaching programme where research students are paired up with experienced post-doctoral researchers who are trained in the skills of mentoring for four months.</p> <p>The aim of the scheme is to help research students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand how they work best and how to work with others - understand what is expected of them and what a good thesis looks like - break down the task of thesis writing and set milestones for their writing - keep up momentum, getting started and continue - be more effective and productive as part of a writing community <p>Further information is available at:</p> <p>http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/ecr/mentoring/thesismentoring</p>
University of York – Chemistry Department	<p><u>Research Student Mentoring Scheme</u></p> <p>Year 2 and 3 PhD students are nominated by academic members of staff and are assigned as ‘buddies’ to incoming Year 1 PhD students. This is a one-to-one mentoring scheme and mentors are responsible for showing mentees around the department and campus as well as provide advice and guidance when required. Mentors are also tasked with inviting students to research related events taking place across campus. Further information is available at:</p> <p>https://www.york.ac.uk/chemistry/postgraduate/mentors/</p>
The University of California	<p><u>Riverside Graduate Student Mentoring Programme</u></p> <p>This programme aims to support new PhD students upon arrival. Each new PhD student is assigned to a mentoring ‘family’ which consists of one to three other new PhD students and a peer mentor who is studying within a related field. Two to three families are also part of a team which is overseen by a ‘Faculty mentor’ who is a member of staff.</p> <p>Mentees meet with their peer mentors individually, in families or in teams weekly. They are also given the opportunity to meet with other mentees and their faculty mentors regularly. This type of scheme encourages interaction amongst peers and provides varying levels of pastoral support from staff. Further information is available at: http://gradmentors.ucr.edu/</p>

Appendix C: Examples of Mentoring at the University of Edinburgh

This sets out the results of a consultation of Colleges/ Schools on mentoring schemes/ thesis committees and information from the Edinburgh University Students' Association on peer mentoring

*A number of PGT models have been cited below with the aim of reflecting the current provision of peer support at postgraduate level. Additionally, all Schools within the University already have established peer-led programmes at undergraduate level, this may offer the opportunity to extend this provision to include PGR students. However, this would need some investigation to ensure its meeting the unique needs of this cohort and appropriate resources are available. The Department of Peer Learning and Support would be keen to examine this option, offering a sustainable and embedded series of programmes.

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)

School	Examples of mentoring schemes	Thesis committees (or equivalent)
Business	<p><u>UEBS Doctoral Society</u> The School supports an active UEBS Doctoral Society who events throughout the year, starting with dedicated sessions in Induction Week. They have a small budget to arrange academic, career, development and social events to encourage the development of a strong cohort and peer support for each other.</p> <p><u>Teaching Assistant Mentor</u> The School also has a dedicated academic as a TA Mentor, as well as leading on the actual TA training programme she is available to provide individual support to students who are working as tutors.</p> <p>The Business School are very interested to developing further models of Postgraduate peer support. School contact: Rosalyn Claase, Head of Student Experience, Rosalyn.Claase@ed.ac.uk</p>	<p>No thesis committees but pastoral support is provided through the assigned supervisors in the first instance.</p> <p>The School has subject group PhD Representatives, and part of their remit is to be a source of advice and support on matters that students do not wish to discuss with their supervisors in the first instance. The Programme Director is also available in this capacity.</p>
HCA	<p>The School is in the process of establishing a PGR mentoring scheme, intended for the start of 2017/18. This is being developed by the Deputy E&D Director (Stephen McDowall), in collaboration with the PG Director (Emma Hunter).</p>	<p>The School do not operate a Thesis Committee, instead they have a dual supervision model (standard UoE) and Programme Directors with a pastoral remit.</p>

Law	<p>The School do not currently run a PhD mentoring system over and above the mentoring function of supervision. The School supports the PhD community to operate in a mutually supportive way through funding scholarly and social activities and through a structured training programme. This programme is currently under review in line with RCUK, SQF and Vitae guidance.</p> <p>PhD students within the Law School have well-established Reading/Discussion groups within their subject area. These groups consist of students at different levels of their study. They are provided with a small amount of funding to arrange speaker events etc. pertinent to their field of study.</p> <p>There are currently no plans to develop mentoring in the School.</p> <p>For interest: PGT provision</p> <p>In 2013, two student-led communities were established for PGT students in the School of Law. Edinburgh Law Connections (ELC) focused on forging links with alumni as potential sources of professional guidance/future networking, and the Edinburgh Law Postgraduate Hub (ELPH) is dedicated to enhancing the experience of all on-programme taught Masters students through organising social and academic events of direct interest to them, often in collaboration with Postgraduate Programme Directors and other academic staff in the School.</p> <p>Guidelines for each community were drafted by the then Director of PGT, after which students took ownership drawing in staff as required. Both communities were also given support through discreet budgets (Devolved Funding for Postgraduates), leading to the creation of a Law Masters Hub in Old College, with rooms designated for exclusive use by Masters students as a community space, where ELC and ELPH meetings and other shared student-led enterprises (e.g. study groups) could take place. Both of these groups continue to function.</p> <p>School contact: Richard Jones, Director of Postgraduate Taught Studies, richard.jones@ed.ac.uk</p>	<p>The School does not operate a thesis committee structure. Students are assigned two supervisors.</p> <p>They are assessed at a panel, involving two independent academics within the first year in line with regulations. Further panels can be arranged in line with identified needs.</p> <p>There are currently no plans to develop a thesis committee approach.</p>
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LLC	<p>The School does not offer a mentoring scheme.</p> <p>For interest: PGT</p> <p><i>LLC Dissertation Workshops</i></p> <p>The LLC Masters Dissertation Workshops were first introduced in AY 15/16, led by two Literature MA students, with the aim of fostering a sense of community within LLC and supporting academic skills development, particularly among new international students.</p> <p>It comprised of a series of five workshops designed to appeal to a wide range of LLC students, from English and Scottish Literature, Film Studies, Theatre Studies, and Languages and Translation Studies. The venue was 50 George Square where all the LLC classes are, and had around 16 attendees per session.</p> <p>The workshops centred on key study skills necessary for the MA courses in LLC. Topics included essay writing, proofreading, using secondary sources as themes, and hearing from current PhD students on their experiences of writing their Master's dissertations.</p> <p>This project ended when the student leaders graduated and no replacement leads have been identified in the current cohort.</p>	The School does not operate a thesis committee.
ECA	<p><i>Design PhD Mentoring</i></p> <p>The Design PhD Mentoring Scheme was established in AY 15/16 with the express aim of supporting Masters students to make the transition in to doctoral studies. This involved current PhD students' mentoring Masters students through the PhD application process and getting started. The programme was successful and there was an interest from the school in continuing, however unfortunately this did not happen due to staffing changes within ECA.</p>	The School does not operate a thesis committee.
HSS	<p>The School does not offer any form of mentoring scheme for PGR students.</p> <p>Students receive support from their supervision team, and are directed within the PGR Handbook to the four subject area Postgraduate Research Directors with whom they can meet if they require additional support.</p>	The School provides each student with a 'Critical Friend' who attends each of the annual review meetings. This is a member of academic staff who can input into the student's academic progress each year, but who is not expected to provide any pastoral support. The 'assessment panel' therefore consists of

	Additional support is also provided by the Postgraduate Research Co-ordinator when required.	the supervisory team and the 'critical friend'. A 'panel chair' is only assigned if this is thought to assist the process.
PPLS	<p>The School does not offer a mentoring scheme.</p> <p>The School is in discussion about the possibility of developing a peer mentoring scheme for PhDs which would match senior PhDs with new students but nothing formal has been introduced at this stage.</p> <p>On a more local level, PhD students in Linguistics and English Language are hoping to develop a new peer mentoring scheme starting in September 2017. They are also developing a reading/training group for Linguistics MA and PhD students for statistics, as there is currently a lack of advanced statistical training within the Department. There is a desire for peer support to sit alongside this group, and for it to become a sustainable project even if/when more formal training for statistics is provided by the School. The Department are currently investigating how this group would sit vis-à-vis the statistics group and how the needs of the cohort will be best served. Plans will be reviewed by May 2017 before proceeding for the next academic year.</p> <p>School contact: Judy McCulloch, Head of Student Support and Experience, Judy.McCulloch@ed.ac.uk</p>	The School does not operate a thesis committee.
SPS	<p>The School does not offer official mentoring or a buddy system.</p> <p>Subject areas do include PGR students in research seminars and staff/PGR community activities.</p> <p>All subject areas have dedicated research PG advisors who can act as mentors and provide additional guidance to students, particularly when they are having problems.</p>	The School does not operate a thesis committee.

	<p><i>For interest:</i></p> <p><i>SPS PG Mentoring</i></p> <p>A new PG Mentoring Scheme has recently been established in SPS, with PhD students mentoring PGT/R students. The purpose of the programme is to provide advice and guidance on the different aspects of life as a postgraduate student, while building a sense of belonging within the School PG community. The programme follows the 'lifecycle' of the MSc programmes, including pre-arrival advice and information, settling into the UK education system, learning at PG level, making the most of tutorials and seminars, supervisory relationships, the job market and more. Additionally an emerging theme has been employability, in and out of academia. This is an area PhD students felt was lacking from their Masters experience.</p> <p>The support offered is pastoral in nature and any academic support is focused around skills development, with this purpose in mind mentor matches are not based on academic specialisms.</p> <p>The Scheme has support of school staff, Dr James Mittra (Deputy Director Graduate School – Research) and Lucie Stokes (Student Development Manager) and will be reviewed at the end of the academic year with a view to roll it out more widely if appropriate, this may include more experienced PhD students supporting new doctoral students.</p>	
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Education	<p><u>'Buddy System'</u></p> <p>The School has a mentoring scheme called the 'Buddy system'. Each new PhD student is allocated a buddy who is a PhD student in year 2 or above. Each of the buddies are volunteers and are usually from a similar area to the one of the new PhD student. These allocations are made in the week before the starting dates (1 October and 1 January each year) and all students are emailed with the names of their buddies. There is a School induction day in week 1. The scheme has been proven very popular with many students.</p> <p>For Interest:</p> <p><i>Performance Psychology Alumni Mentoring</i></p> <p>This new scheme was piloted in semester 1, 2016/17, having been conceived by soon-to-graduate MSc students at the end of academic year 2015-16. The idea was to start a Mentoring Scheme where alumni from the programme would mentor MSc students with aim of creating a legacy, connection and greater wealth of opportunity in the programme. They wanted to build a sustainable network of alumnus and current students to share experiences from one cohort to the next and to support students to find internships and job placements during the program, and open pathways for employment after the program.</p> <p>The Scheme ran in AY 16/17 and an online evaluation of the Scheme has found that mentees felt that the Scheme added a great deal of value to their student experience, bringing inspiration and connection to the wider professional network.</p> <p>School contact: Dr Evelyn McGregor, evelyn.mcgregor@ed.ac.uk.</p>	<p>The School operates an optional year 2 'forum'. This process is similar to the progression board in year 1 that can be triggered by a student or supervisor towards the end of year 2 (or p/t equivalent) of the studies. The School will strongly recommend the process when particular challenges or areas for substantial improvement are identified in the Y1 progression board; sometimes the expectation to hold the forum is clearly stated in the feedback of the Y1 progression board. Two internal examiners/advisers are involved in this forum (often the same as in year 1), as well as the supervisors. The process of the student and their future plans are reviewed and appropriate recommendations are made to improve progress. There is no pass/fail element to this process.</p>
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College of Science and Engineering (CSE)

School	Examples of Mentoring schemes	Thesis Committees (or equivalent)
Biological Sciences	<p>No mentoring schemes at present. The School did run a Peer Support Group for year 1 PGR students for 4 years, after which there was no longer a demand for the group.</p> <p>Each PGR student has access to a Postgraduate Advisor. Advisor's act as a source of support for students should they face any challenges or difficulties.</p> <p>For interest: <i>PGT Biology Dissertation Workshops</i> The PG Biology Dissertation Workshops ran in the second semester of the 2015/16. It was started by students and supported by Vicky MacTaggart, the Programme Advisor in the Biology Teaching Organisation and Frances Parry, the Deputy Head of Masters Provision at the Institute for Academic Development. Sessions were held at Kings Buildings with varying attendance between 19 and 40 students. The workshop topics were on various aspects of writing dissertations, with individual topics such as: time/project management, analysing papers and protocols, scientific style of writing, writing: planning, starting and keeping going, and more. The Peer Learning and Support Team are looking into developing this as a sustainable scheme embedded into the programme of study. School contact: Emma Currie, Administrative Assistant, Emma.Currie@ed.ac.uk</p>	<p>Thesis Committees are in operation within the School.</p> <p>Each student has: 2 supervisors 1-2 additional academics who are not directly involved in the student's project.</p> <p>Further information is available at: https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SBSGRAD/Training+and+Milestones</p>
Chemistry	<p>Mentoring for PGR students is led by the principal supervisor and co-supervisors.</p>	<p>Annual Review Committee In addition to the student's supervisors, an additional member of staff is assigned as a member of the Annual Review Committee. Graduate Committee The Graduate Committee has 4 specific functions within its remit.</p>

		6. To enable students to enhance their leadership skills 7. To enable student to enhance their transferable skills 8. To provide pastoral care to students 9. To prepare students for employment after graduation and enhance their communication skills
Physics and Astronomy	<p><u>Pastoral Support Team</u> In addition to supervisory support, student have access to a pastoral support team: https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SOPAGraduateSchool/Pastoral+Support All students meet a member of the pastoral support team during a pastoral meeting which takes place in Year 1 of the PhD programme.</p> <p><u>Pastoral Meeting</u> All students have an interview with the Head of School and Director of the Graduate School at the beginning of Year 2. This is a mainly pastoral meeting to allow the student to raise any issues that they may be having and to discuss future plans. This meeting takes place in an informal setting.</p> <p><u>Physics Intergroup Postgraduate Committee (PIPC)</u> https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=316726174 This committee is run by PhD student, for PhD students. A small committee of students in the later years of their study organise social events for PhD students. They also organise seminars to which they invite speakers and hold discussions. The committee also organise a weekend away during the summer. The purpose of the trip is to allow social interaction amongst peers.</p>	<p><u>Annual Interviews</u> Students are allocated two assessors to each student, who usually are staff/senior fellows who are not part of the student's supervisory team but are familiar enough with the student's work to assess it academically.</p> <p>These assessors carry out annual interviews with PhD students, without input from supervisors and wherever possible, the same two assessors conduct the interviews for the entire PhD.</p> <p>They also conduct a mock viva at the end of Year 1 of a student's PhD. This experience is designed to give students an insight into how a viva is conducted.</p>
Mathematics	Support is provided by the Postgraduate Advisor and 2 nd supervisor	Thesis committees are not in operation within the School
Geosciences	All PhD students are allocated an Advisor in addition to their supervisors. The Advisor's role is to provide an independent source of advice to the student out with the supervisory team. The Advisor	Thesis committees are not in operation within the School

	provides a potential intermediary between the student and supervisors, if any issues arise during the course of the PhD. The Advisor is also present at the progress and monitoring events and to give feedback to students.	
Engineering	<p>Students are provided with a clear support network outwith the supervisory team, including a Postgraduate Research Advisor, the School's Postgraduate Progression Committee and Graduate School support staff.</p> <p>The Peer Learning and Support team have found there to be a great deal of interest from PG students in creating a peer support system but no formal programme has been developed thus far. However, the PGR students run a society called the EngGradSoc, this group has a social focus and provides some informal peer support. The school is interested in developing a more structured Scheme and have a highly successful UG peer support provision, which this could be built on.</p> <p>School contact: Anna Creery, Postgraduate Taught Conversion Officer, anna.creery@ed.ac.uk</p>	Students are provided with an independent reviewer as part of the annual review process.
Informatics	The School had a peer mentoring programme, however, this was discontinued as a 'Student Families' programme was initiated.	Thesis committees are not in operation within the School

College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)

Deanery / Institute/ Centre	Examples of Mentoring schemes	Thesis Committees (or equivalent)
All Deaneries/Institutes/Centres within the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine	<p><i>Institute of Genetics and Molecular Medicine</i></p> <p>IGMM has a Buddy system in place for students based at the Institute, which is led by the Staff</p>	Thesis Committees are formed within Schools/Centres and the membership of these varies for each students.

	<p>Student Liaison Officer. The programme pairs 1st-year PhD students who wish to be involved with friendly and supportive final year students and aims to help with their integration into the Institute, informally answer any questions and queries regarding starting their PhD, and also to offer support with beginning a new life in Edinburgh.</p> <p>School contact: Dr Martin Reijns, Staff Student Liaison Officer, <i>Usher Institute of Population Health Sciences and Informatics</i></p> <p>The PhD committee at the Usher Institute run a holistic peer support programme, within this buddy system each new student is contacted by a current PhD student prior to starting their course. They arrange socials and a Firlush retreat –focused on outdoor activities and educational sessions. They also develop and distribute an Usher Institute PhD students’ guidebook and maintain online spaces including a wikipage which has information on school ethics processes, yearly reviews etc. They run this programme alongside their representation roles, attending PGR meetings to represent student issues.</p>	<p>Thesis Committees, in most cases, oversee a student’s progress and conduct annual assessments during the course of their studies. The Thesis Committee is also available for the student to seek advice and guidance on training and research skills.</p> <p>In most cases, Thesis Committees consist of a chairperson, all supervisors and an external member of staff who should be independent of the group.</p> <p>Each area is responsible for deciding how these meetings are conducted.</p> <p>Thesis Committees also provide pastoral support if the student requires it.</p>
Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies	<p><u>‘The Hub’</u> ‘The Hub’ social space for postgraduate students, staff and alumni from within the School. The Hub provides a social network with opportunities to communicate key information e.g. job opportunities, research projects etc. via</p>	<p>Thesis committees are in operation within the School in line with College requirements (described above).</p>

	<p>the newfeed and various discussion forums set up by students and staff.</p> <p>It also contains links to a number of resources which contain information on student support and reading materials which may be of interest.</p> <p><u>Online Peer Tutoring/Mentoring</u></p> <p>The Vet School has been running an online Peer Tutoring scheme for the last 3-4 years.</p> <p>This is aimed at online PGT students at this time.</p> <p>They have trained up a team of peer tutors (on campus students) who run sessions in various PGT online courses via Skype or Collaborate and answer questions on discussion boards.</p> <p>The focus is not on course content but on academic skills.</p>	
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Appendix D: Further information on new student alumni platform

Student Alumni Platform – Development and Alumni and Careers Service

Background

In a recent survey, one in five UoE alumni expressed an interest in mentoring. With nearly 200000 contactable alumni, there is a vast and talented resource willing to support the personal and professional development of students and peers.

The University's employability rating is generally high but this is not the case across the board and students have petitioned for more support, particularly with the transition from university into work.

The Careers Service and Development and Alumni are planning to procure a pan-institution digital platform using social networking technology to address these needs.

It will mean members of the University of Edinburgh community can connect to share and learn from each other's experiences and insights to their mutual benefit, wherever they are in the world.

The community would include other groups as well as students and alumni (including staff, prospective students and other supporters of the University) and the interactions could be broader in scope than careers inspiration and mentoring (e.g. voluntary work in the community).

Examples of similar successful communities can be found at most other top 50 world leading institutions, particularly in the UK and US.

Benefits

A large, diverse and active on-line community of Edinburgh students and alumni would provide a range of benefits aligned to the University's strategic goals:

1. Enhancement of the Student Experience through ready access to a tremendously powerful network, the availability of additional support and a sense of belonging to a community of people with a shared experience and interests
2. Support for the Employability agenda through the provision of inspiring careers advice and mentoring, alongside the provision of specific contacts and introductions for students with a clear career plan
3. Further support to existing efforts to improve student satisfaction and outcomes
4. Providing a new service to recent alumni, to facilitate alumni-alumni careers networking. Both individual alumni and the University as a whole have a shared interest in accelerated career progression for our graduates beyond their first job; we currently have no offering that can be managed at scale for tens of thousands of recent graduates
5. The facility for inter-disciplinary interactions (e.g. a History student looking to break into the business world linking up with an MBA graduate from the Business School) and cross-border interactions, consistent with our efforts to amplify European and other international connections and collaborations in a post-Brexit environment
6. A service or offering that can be promoted in the student recruitment process (international students, in particular, are known to value this element of a university's offering)

7. An additional means of engaging alumni in the life of the University (as well as a means of engaging students in a way that will encourage them to become active alumni in due course)
8. A means of mitigating the risk of losing contact with alumni as a result of coming changes to Data Protection regulations and the implementation of the Fundraising Preference Service
9. The opportunity to expand the on-line community in future to involve additional groups (staff, prospective students, and non-alumni supporters, subject to appropriate checks and balances) and to broaden the range of interactions that take place
10. The avoidance of a proliferation of duplicate local solutions, likely to be sub-scale, lacking consistency, and missing the connectedness and breadth of networking a University-wide solution will offer

Overview

We are talking about...

An exclusive community online, a space for networking and communication, similar to applications like LinkedIn or Facebook.

Who would use it?

It would be open to all members of the University of Edinburgh community. This potentially includes groups such as current students and prospective students, alumni, staff and friends of the University and allows for different levels of access and functionality.

What will users do?

Members of the community would use it to connect with each other.

Each user has a profile that includes information such as their location, place of work, programme of study, interests, club or society membership, and what areas they are willing to advise other members of the community about or offer help with.

Users are able to search using any of these attributes to find others. Depending on what they are looking for, they may be satisfied by simply reading the profiles of others or they may have specific questions they'd like to explore by connecting with them through the system.

Their motivation might span personal, professional and academic realms, and mean it is used in different ways:

- For example, as an information resource, like a directory,
- For social networking, e.g. around common interest groups, or location
- For professional networking, e.g. with transitioning from university into work, moving to a new city or country, branching out in a new career.
- The University could use the community tactfully as a means to offer tailored, structured support, for example, with mentoring.

Why?

What it offers is a safe, relaxed space that enables users to share and learn from others' experiences and insights.

It opens up new ways for members of the community to participate in the ongoing life of the University, for example, by making it possible to offer non-financial support from anywhere in the world according to the time, inclination and ability of the user.

It extends the Edinburgh Offer, beyond borders and well beyond graduation, making manifest the value of a University of Edinburgh experience and the Edinburgh connection wherever you are in the world and wherever you are in life.