Internal Periodic Review
14-week response report

Internal Periodic Review of: SPS PGR Programmes
Date of review: 7th and 8th of November 2019
Date of 14 week response: 31 July 2020
Date of year on response:

 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.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	The review team recommends that the School prioritise the annual PGR Annual review process and actively lead reviewing practice to be redefined as a significant event in the academic cycle across all years of the PhD, implemented robustly and efficiently for all students (2.2 & 3.1).	**2020/21 Academic Year**	Using the revised structure of the Postgraduate Board of Studies and the Postgraduate Education Committee (proposals for revisions currently under review) as the primary mechanisms for consultation, the SPS Learning and Teaching Directorate intends to engage Subject Areas via Heads of Subject, Programme Directors and other stakeholders in a round of consultation exploring the issue of annual student reviews in more depth. Given the differences in disciplinary practice represented across SPS, meeting the general aspiration of instituting PGR Annual Reviews beyond year one of the PhD degree will require more information and local guidance before a policy requiring such reviews can be instituted. The Directorate does, however, undertake this consultation with the review team's recommendation serving as a guide and motivating factor in favour of instituting the practice where possible and appropriate. From October, We will review the annual review process in SPS to improve practice and emphasise its significance as an event	**September2020**

2	The review team recommends that School management prioritise the dialogue with current students regarding the redeployment of student space within the school estate plan (2.4.2 & 2.8).		Though this item has been largely superseded by the impact of the Pandemic, and the closing of all campus buildings, we have made some progress. As the school moved to open some of its building for the 2021 academic year, the PGR community were invited to put forward a representative for the Buidling Review Team. In the end we have had two representatives, and this has worked well in developing the School plans for reopening its buildings, including discussions around use of a building largely dedicated to the PGR community.	**August 2020 and ongoing**
3	The review team recommends that consideration is given to provision of additional staffing within the professional support staff team of the Graduate School(2.7.1).		Since the review, we have revised the graduate receptionist role and articulated a requirement to support the PGR support team. The team has already benefitted from this during the last Scholarship cycle. We're currently working on refining and further clarifying that support further.	**September 2020**
4	The review team recommends the School review student representation to give prominence to the role and then ensure effective inclusion on all major school committees (2.4.3).	**2020/21 Academic Year**	We will engage with the PGR student community to discuss how they might best engage with the SPS committee structure and support them to be represented on relevant committees.The Postgraduate Research Student community in SPS has demonstrated a high degree of self-organisation and engagement in the period since the lockdown due to Covid-19 went into effect. Engaging the new informal structures that students themselves have created is now a strong element of our own approach to improving student representation on formal committees and other appropriate School bodies. The Learning and Teaching Directorate has also proposed a series of changes to the Postgraduate Committee and the PG Board of Studies that is intended to enhance the overall effectiveness of these bodies, including more robust mechanisms of ensuring robust, effective student inclusion.	**Ongoing**
5	The review team recommends that the School consider the increased involvement of core		We recognise that core academic staff are crucial to ensuring this consistency and quality of tutoring within	**By November 2020**

		academic staff in the tutor role to ensure consistency and quality across this provision (2.3.4).		the School. To that end, each Subject Area have or will identify an academic responsible for tutors and tutoring and we will meet once per semester under the guidance of the Director of Student Development. This steering group will include Tutor representation and look for ways to improve the delivery, quality and training of tutors within the School	
6		The review team recommends further expansion of the Research Training Centre with a more directional suite of training opportunities and a portfolio of courses designed to support diverse student needs in research training (1.3 & 2.1).		5 new lecturing staff have joined or will be joining the RTC in the period January to September 2020. In the Independent Learning week in February 2020 the Research Training Centre (RTC) organised a Research Methods Week with 18 methods workshops attended by over 600 students from across the School. The Covid19 pandemic has inevitably required some reframing of plans. The RTC have developed online resources for both staff and students conducting research at this time. We have submitted a board of studies proposal for a suite of Micro-Methods courses from 2020/21 focussing on specific social science methods and offered for 5 credits rather than the usual longer 20 credit courses. The intention is that students will be able to flexibly chose a selection of methods training to supplement our existing methods offerings. The uncertainty around teaching in the pandemic means that we have approval to pilot these Miro-Methods courses in 2020/21 and then to offer for credit in 2021/22.	**September 2020**
7		The review team recommends that consideration be given to the appointment of a dedicated academic to manage performance and development of PGR tutors (1.6 & 2.3.4).	AY 2019/20	A Director of Student Development (0.2 FTE) has been appointed, taking up the role in May 2020.	**May 2020**
8		The review team recommends the process of PGR tutor workload allocation is communicated more		The School will look at ways of improving the detail in the Job Description provided for tutors before they apply for a role in the School and will ensure that the	**September 202**

	effectively to make this more transparent and equitable (1.6 & 2.3.4).		hours offered to tutors are appropriate to that role while bearing in mind the eclectic mix of duties and the way that Course Organisers allocate tutor duties. In the longer term, enhanced guidance in line with the recommendations of the review team will be provided for course organisers on the tutor role - in the immediate term, Course Organizers will be reminded of their responsibilities in terms of not extending tutor duties beyond what they are paid to do. Further, to recognise the new and different role many tutors will be embarking on, a feedback mechanism will be in place for Semester 1 allowing tutors to immediately report back issues with working hours directly to the Director of Student Development, in order to enable intervention at the earliest opportunity to ensure transparency and equity.	
9	The review team recommend the School make it clear for recipients of the Alice Brown Scholarship that sufficient work exists within the School or if students require external employment (2.5.1).		The School will make clear when the scholarship is awarded what the offer entails, this is likely to take place after the award is offered via a meeting with the PGR director to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the offer.	
10	The review team recommends that the School review the induction process and consider expanding the delivery timeframe beyond Welcome Week to enable a wider volume of information to be disseminated and understood by students(2.3.2).		For 2020/21, the School is creating a plan to elongate the induction and orientation period for new students in order to pace out the dissemination of information. This is also in line with the University's new recommendation in response to the Covid-19 situation. Events are likely to be delivered largely online for 2020/21 and in-person where possible. It is expected events will be dispersed across a six-week period, commencing two weeks before Semester 1 begins and continuing for the first four weeks of the semester. The School is working to create an array of online content by theme so students can access it as appropriate throughout the elongated induction period. The intention is to retain this new induction structure within	**September 2020**

			the School on a permanent basis. This acknowledges that spreading these events across a longer time period delivers a better student experience and a more nuanced grounding as they begin their programme of study.	
11	The review team recommends development of EUCLID to permit recording of meetings by students and increased flexibility to permit administration access to annual reports by professional support staff (2.7.2).		The School will approach Student Systems with request for comment on the feasibility of addition of a Meetings and Notes tab for PGR students.	**September 2020**
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	The unexpected lockdown and move to hybrid modes of teaching delivery will require the School to extend the period of time traditionally taken to feedback to students on the outcome of the review, as our typical methods of engagement have undergone substantial revision. With these revisions now take, the School will be able to more comprehensively feedback and discuss the outcomes of the review with students during Semester 1 (and through the 2020/21 academic year) as required.		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			