

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

Year on response report

PPR of: College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine

Date of review: 13/14th March 2019

Date of 14 week response: 13th August 2019

Date of year on response: Due 7th May 2020 (Deadline extended to 31st July 2020 in light of the disruption caused by the Covid-19 lockdown)

The College/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.

Please Note: Since completion of the CMVM Postgraduate Programme Review, and the 14 week follow-up, the situation for postgraduate provision in CMVM has been dramatically altered by the sudden and unexpected need to respond rapidly to the restrictions introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This response has required dramatic changes for postgraduate students and many enforced changes (e.g. remote PhD vivas, remote Thesis Committee meetings, electronic thesis submission, home working) were introduced with unprecedented speed under emergency regulations. Requirements for PhD completion were not relaxed, as it was felt that maintenance of quality was essential. Numerous additional steps have been taken in an effort to improve student support during this period, including accelerating the introduction of changes/ processes that we would have planned to introduce anyway. Postgraduate student issues are addressed in a number of different committees (including the Adaptation and Renewal Teams set up to co-ordinate the response to the pandemic). Please note that some of the plans developed before the pandemic may have to be adjusted to account for the 'new normal' we will return to as we adjust to the realities of living with Covid-19.

Over the past 12 months CMVM has undertaken a thorough review of postgraduate management in the College Office, to clarify the roles and reporting structures for key committees. This has co-ordinated and streamlined postgraduate support, and continued reforms are in progress. Significantly, since the review was held, the plans to open a Postgraduate Centre at the Old Kirk have been shelved indefinitely, which was a major disappointment. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the introduction of a University-wide Doctoral College. This is co-convened by the Deans of the three Colleges and is already making significant progress in providing consistency of support for postgraduate students in Edinburgh.

Recommendation no	Recommendation	Timescale for completion	Comment on progress towards completion and/or identify barriers to completion	Completion date
1	<p>Thesis Committee</p> <p>The review team recommends that Thesis Committees are implemented consistently across the College and in particular, the role of the Principal Supervisor in these committees should be clarified.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the 10 week review meeting should be standard practice across the College and that it includes training needs analysis discussion with students. Training needs analysis should also be a standard part of all annual progression reviews.</p> <p>The review team recommends that there should be clear procedures for the formation of Thesis Committee membership and in particular, membership should not be allocated by the supervisor. The College should ensure consistency of allocation, clarity of roles and a truly</p>	1 year	<p>The Postgraduate Board of Examiners has implemented steps to streamlining thesis committee processes across the College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM). It has reviewed current practice in all Deaneries, and is in the process of producing a single set of Guidelines and Principles for formation and function of a Thesis Committee. The new guidance will explain the principles behind formation of the Thesis Committee and will explain the roles of the Committee members. It is anticipated that the Thesis Chair will be selected from a pool of experienced senior staff. The 10 week review will be promoted as standard practice. Training needs analysis will be built into the process, probably by inclusion of an Appendix to the Thesis Committee Form mapping training opportunities against postgraduate student lifecycle.</p> <p>Since the PPR, it has become evident that there is a conflict between the Thesis Committee Structures run by the College/ Deaneries and</p>	<p>Original Deadline 13th March 2020</p> <p>New Deadline: 1st December 2020</p>

	independent Thesis Committee Chair. This will support the College remit item on equality of student experience.		those run for cohort-based programmes (e.g. Precision Medicine, EastBio). These processes will be aligned. Students and staff will be involved in the review and revision of the Thesis Committee process via the College Researcher Experience Committee (REC) and direct communication with supervisor groups and postgraduate societies. The new guidelines and forms will be made available on the College Wiki, and will be promoted to staff and students through Deanery Postgraduate Deans, PG REC, Supervisor Briefings, welcome events/ inductions and direct communication to supervisor groups and postgraduate societies. Responsibility: College .	
2	The review team recommends that the College considers separating pastoral support from the Thesis Committee and ensures support for pastoral issues is available in all areas.	2 years	Separating pastoral support from the assessment component of the Thesis Committee is seen as a preferred option. The review and revision of the Thesis Committee has included consideration of a mechanism to provide students with a suitable individual/individuals to provide pastoral support. For example, it could be envisaged that the Thesis Committee Assessment meeting will be followed by a meeting with a different member(s) of staff with a role in student welfare/ support. This will require identifying, recruiting and training suitable individuals. It is conceivable that these members of staff should also be selected to ensure that they are not close colleagues of the other staff members of the Thesis Committee. This approach has been discussed with the Head of Welfare and will implement a subsequent recommendation (from Welfare) that the Director of PGs and ECR Experience increases visibility of his role and establishes suitable for a for direct communication with students. In addition, communication with Academic Services (Complaints) and Welfare has indicated a need to Streamline the processes for Support for Study and Complaint handling with the CMVM processes for student and staff support. This will be built into the formation of a new sub-committee of the PG Board of Examiners to co-ordinate student support. Responsibility: College (liaison with Student Welfare)	13 th March 2021
3	Communication The review team found evidence of variable student experience of induction, particularly where students arrive before or after the start of the academic year. There was also evidence of inconsistency in the information available to new students. The review team recommends the College ensure standardisation of induction and that all students have access to induction.	1 year	CMVM has worked with recruitment and admissions teams to streamline College Welcome and Induction events with those provided centrally (by the University) and locally (by Centres/ Research groups). This included the first live Virtual Open Days for MScR and PhD students during the Virtual Open Week (March 2020). We have also worked to co-ordinate Welcome and Induction events, this year using the Induction Guiding Principles to clarify purpose, remit, and role of Central, College, School/ Deanery,	13 th March 2020

	<p>The review team recommends that the College consider developing a central repository for information relevant to all postgraduate research students, such as tutoring opportunities, seminars and student representatives and ensures that students are aware of where to find this information.</p>		<p>Institute/ Centre inductions. There are plans to provide a College presence at regular Welcome events provided by IAD to improve communication with students who arrive before or after the start of the academic year.</p> <p>College inductions have been updated to include a clear overview of the support structures available to PG students during their time in CVMM. Presentations are provided by Postgraduate Societies from different geographical locations to underline the local resources and opportunities available to students.</p> <p>Student representation on the College Researcher Experience Committee (REC) has proved to be a positive change and allows a direct link between PG Directors and students from across the College. This individual liaises with Postgraduate Societies at the 4 main Campuses (Little France, Easter Bush, Western General Hospital, Central Campus) to disseminate information and to feed back to the College.</p> <p>The restrictions imposed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic have emphasised the need to increase visibility of student support systems, particularly to peripheral campuses. During the pandemic Deanery PG Directors (with input from College) have hosted online fora/ Q&A sessions for PhD students. These have proved to be very positive. A recent report into student experience in the Deanery of Molecular Genetics & Population Health Sciences has emphasised the need to address student concerns directly in individual Deaneries. The Director of Experience will continue with the plan to set up a structured programme of presentations/discussions with students in Deaneries and in Cohort-based doctoral programmes (these plans were interrupted by the lockdown in response to Covid-19).</p> <p>Finally, at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown regular newsletters were produced by College PGR support for PhD students, MScR students and Early Career Researchers. These were initially released on a weekly basis and then moved to a monthly format. The newsletters provide students and their supervisors with updated information on responses to the challenges posed by the lockdown as well as a digest of key information (meetings, webinars, training opportunities, job adverts) released during the preceding period.</p> <p>Responsibility: College</p>	
4	<p>Student Voice The review team recommends that the College explore ways to support sustainability of societies, including</p>	3 years	<p>The College PGR support is interacting closely with Chairs of Postgraduate societies to improve support and promotion of these groups. Representatives from the postgraduate societies now</p>	13 th March 2022

	<p>administrative support and formalised constitution of societies to promote transparency.</p> <p>The review team recommends that the College consider a more formalised structure for using the Postgraduate Student Reps in reporting up and down between students and College. The College should ensure appropriate training is available for all Reps, the sustainability of these roles and that Rep contact details are communicated to the student body.</p>		<p>contribute to Welcome events/ inductions and to co-ordinating communication links with societies at the different campuses.</p> <p>The inclusion of a postgraduate representative on REC has formalised reporting between postgraduate students and the College Office. These links will continue to be developed.</p> <p>SSLCs for PG students will be identified in the College Deaneries and it is intended that continued outreach/ Q&A sessions will allow greater representation of the student voice.</p> <p>Strategies for sustainable support for postgraduate societies, including administrative support and training for reps, combined with greater transparency, will be explored within CMVM and in discussion with IAD.</p> <p>Responsibility: College (in collaboration with IAD)</p>	
5	<p>The review team recommends the College ensures there is visibility and transparency in the publicising of and recruitment to teaching and tutoring opportunities for students. There may be opportunities for the College to explore the availability of demonstrating positions in the College of Science and Engineering to increase opportunities for its students. Supervisors should offer encouragement to all students to take up these opportunities.</p>	5 years	<p>This is desirable but challenging, as the College Graduate School does not administer these positions. Considerable effort expended at University level to increase transparency and equality of opportunity has had only limited effectiveness. The College will liaise with teaching organisations (MTO, BMT0), CSE, postgraduate student organisations and supervisors to determine what steps can be taken to improve this situation.</p> <p>The importance of this issue has increased with the response to Covid-19. There are likely to be more opportunities for students to teach and the College will work with relevant organisations to ensure students are made aware of these opportunities and are supported in contributing to teaching.</p> <p>Responsibility: College (in collaboration with teaching organisations, CSE, postgraduate student organisations, supervisors).</p>	13 th March 2024
6	<p>The review team recommends the College ensures that the University Mental Health Strategy and its implementation, are relevant for the specific issues faced by postgraduate research students within the College. The College should ensure that College support and activities related to wellbeing are better communicated to students, with clear sign-posting to support routes within Deaneries.</p>	5 years	<p>This will be a continual and progressive process, building on changes already introduced and implemented. Meetings have already been held with Student Welfare and the Counselling Service to address issues raised in the review; particularly those raised by students.</p> <p>Implementation of the University Mental Health Strategy will be reviewed for postgraduate students; including consideration and adoption of the new Support for Study Regulations. As indicated in the response to Recommendation No 2, plans are underway to introduce a Support for Study sub-committee to the Board of Examiners to improve process, transparency and resources for dealing with student support and welfare issues.</p> <p>Support structures are presented to the students at Welcome/ Induction events, through direct presentation to students in postgraduate societies and in cohort-based doctoral programmes,</p>	13 th March 2024

			<p>through Supervisors and thesis committees, and by placing relevant information on the College Postgraduate Wiki. Staff are informed of support structures through supervisor briefings, thesis committee information, and via the College Postgraduate Wiki.</p> <p>In response to recent concerns raised by PG students, CMVM PG Support are in contact with Disability Services to address a concern that Schedules of Adjustment are currently more relevant to UG than PG students.</p> <p>Responsibility: College (in association with Student Welfare and Counselling, and in collaboration with the other colleges).</p>	
7	The review team recommends the College ensures clarity on supervisory team appointment and responsibilities and monitors support for students during medium term supervisor absences.	2 years	<p>New procedures are being progressively introduced to monitor supervisory teams and projects for new students, with clear guidance on the recommendations and requirements for formation of an acceptable supervisory arrangement. Eligibility to Supervise forms have been updated to ensure appropriate information is provided about proposed new supervisors Teams. Clarification about the roles and responsibilities of Principal Supervisor and Co-supervisors in a co-supervisory arrangement is provided in supervisor briefings, and the role of non-University staff in student support roles (e.g. as Advisors to students studying abroad) has been clarified. This process has involved interaction with the other colleges as it has implications for supervision across the University. This is an obvious area where the formation of the University-wide Doctoral College has been a positive development. Discussion still needs to take place with Human Resources so that understanding of these roles is reflected in grading and promotion processes. This information is disseminated to staff and students through Welcome/ Induction events (for staff and students), relevant postgraduate and postdoctoral societies, supervisor briefings, Thesis committees, cohort-based doctoral programmes, and supervisor briefings.</p> <p>Support for students during medium term supervisor absences should be arranged by the supervisory team and, if necessary, through the Thesis Committee. Monitoring supervisor arrangements at this level would be a considerable change of approach for the College and would not be straightforward. Discussions will be arranged through the postgraduate Board of Examiners and REC, combined with revision of the Thesis Committee structure, to identify whether this level of monitoring can be achieved. Since this has implications for supervision in other Colleges, discussions will be had on this subject with the other College Postgraduate Deans and in Doctoral College Fora.</p>	13 th March 2021

			Responsibility: College (in collaboration with Academic Services, Human Resources, and the other colleges).	
8	The College and the review team identified obtaining clear, relevant progression and completion, and equality and diversity data to inform quality assurance and management decisions as a challenge. The review team recommends that the College explore with Student Systems how data provision might be improved and supplied to the College in a more usable format.	2 years	<p>Discussions are already underway in the College Office to improve clarity and reliability of progression and completion data. Through discussions on the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Committee, processes have been introduced to provide Deaneries with completion data for inclusion in Deanery Quality reports. It is considered desirable that completion and progression information is also monitored for individual supervisors; this was discussed at People Committee and with College Human Resources about data protection (GDPR) and transparency. These discussions will advance through the College Office and Board of Examiners and will be linked to Support for Study Sub-Committee.</p> <p>Equality and Diversity (E&D) data has been obtained through EdMarc. The Doctoral College will be used to ensure that Widening Participation Strategy remains in the forefront for Postgraduate students. There currently appears to be a perception that E&D considerations PG students only becomes relevant at progression from Undergraduate to Postgraduate: this seems a mistake. Efforts will be maintained to include Postgraduate E&D within the remit of the Widening Participation project. Discussions will also be initiated through the Doctoral College to determine how other Colleges approach postgraduate E&D (the situation in CMVM seems to be replicated in the other colleges).</p> <p>Student systems have commented that, given the timeframe for redoing the dashboards, they were not able to cover metrics related to PGR provision given the complexity of the population. This does, however, remain a priority for development. In the meantime the student numbers benchmarking report does cover PGR students and gives benchmarking on size, shape and student mix so colleagues can look at equality and diversity at a subject level.</p> <p>It may prove necessary to phase the production of any PGR reports as Student Systems are likely to be making some big changes to their reporting systems and it is unlikely they would consider developing complex reports that would need to be rebuilt in the following year. These developments have also been adversely affected by the need to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Responsibility: College (in collaboration with People Committee, Student Systems, and the other colleges).</p>	13 th March 2021
9	The review team recommends that the College consider with Academic Services the value of restructuring future postgraduate programme reviews.	1 year	This has been completed. Discussions on this matter were held with Academic Services and it was agreed that the PPR process was extremely valuable and helped shape PG Management in CMVM.	13 th March 2020

			<p>It has been proposed that future College-level PPRs would be helped by a greater understanding of PG management in CMVM. Thus it is advisable that future reviews give prominence to the CMVM Postgraduate Board of Examiners and the CMVM Postgraduate Management group. The next review will also need to consider the role of, and impact on, PG support played by the recently-introduced Doctoral College.</p> <p>Responsibility: College (in collaboration with Academic Services).</p>	
	<p>Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review</p>	<p>Feedback on the review to students has been provided through the REC, with the inclusion of a postgraduate student representative whose remit is to feedback to postgraduate student societies. In addition, the Director of Experience has attended postgraduate student society meetings to discuss the outcomes of the review. The response to the review will also be communicated to students and direct outreach events (e.g. Deanery Q&A sessions) and in the PGR newsletter.</p>		
<p>For Year on response only</p>	<p>Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication with PG Student Societies – including student representation on the College Researcher Experience Committee and contribution of PG Societies to Welcome and Induction events. • Improved approach to communication through student outreach sessions with specific groups (Tissue Repair, Precision Medicine) plus the Covid-19 Q&A sessions held for each Deanery. • Greater interaction with College QAE; Victoria Bennett (Quality Officer, CMVM) added to attendance of CMVM Board of Examiners. • An agreed process for future reviews to make them more straightforward to organise and to clarify their <p>These improvements have been introduced in parallel with a number of initiatives to support PGR students that were not a specific part of the PPR. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a University of Edinburgh online supervisor briefing/ training resource • Launch of a University of Edinburgh Doctoral College to co-ordinate postgraduate student activities and support across the three colleges. • An initiative in CMVM to streamline College Student support processes with the Complaints Procedure and the Support for Study process. 		