

**Meeting of the Senate Researcher Experience Committee
held on 14 May 2019 at 2pm
in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

Present: Professor Stephen Bowd (Convener), Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Director of Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Early Career Researcher Experience, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Fabio Battaglia, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, Students' Association
Dr Sharon Maguire, Head of Doctoral Education, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Daniel Dodd, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CMVM
Professor Jamie Pearce, Scottish Graduate School for Social Sciences
Kirsty Woomble, College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences
Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Apologies: Megan Brown, Students' Association Staff Postgraduate Research (PGR) Representative
James Saville, Director of Human Resources (HR)
Ben Möws, Postgraduate Research Student Representative, CSE
Dr Caroline Proctor, School of Biological Sciences
Dr Katie Nicoll Baines, Early Career Research Representative, CMVM
Dr Mits Ota, School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences
Dr Shari Sabeti, Moray House School of Education
Professor Robert Semple, CMVM

Attending: Julia Ferguson, College Office Academic Affairs, CSE
Sarah Harvey, Service Excellence Programme

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2019

Subject to a factual correction to item 12, replacing reference to CAHSS with CMVM, the Committee approved the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

The Committee noted that early indications are that the response rate has increased. Student Surveys expect to be able to publish PRES results week commencing 20 May 2019.

2.2 Old Kirk Project

The Committee Conveners had met with the Senior Vice Principal and expressed disappointment that this project had been paused. Academic

Services will seek advice on an appropriate announcement in relation to the project.

Action: Academic Services

2.3 Scholarships

The REC sub-group had received updates from Schools on progress for their Enlightenment Scholars. The sub-group chair will remind Schools that all scholars on the teaching track should be enrolled on the Edinburgh Teaching Award.

The Committee noted that there were plans for a broader review of scholarships.

2.4 Electronic Business: Public Defence of Theses

The Committee had submitted comments to the Director of Academic Services by email in April 2019 to support ongoing work in developing joint PhD programmes with European partners.

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Senate Committees Review

The Committee noted the plans for an enhanced Senate Learning and Teaching Committee to include postgraduate research business in its remit. This committee is likely to be renamed Education Committee. Membership of this committee is to be confirmed but may include the three College Deans representing postgraduate research. The Education Committee's terms of reference will not initially include broader student experience matters. Future governance of student experience matters will be clarified following implementation of the University Executive's Student Experience Plan and the new Vice Principal Students' priorities.

The Committee noted the plans for early career researcher business to be included in Research Policy Group's remit and to establish a reporting route to Senate for that Group.

The Committee noted plans to rename Curriculum and Student Progression Committee as Academic Policy and Regulations Committee and to include staff with research student responsibility from each College in membership.

The Committee noted that as this was likely to be its final meeting, no further actions for this Committee would be recorded. However, the Committee could remit any actions arising from discussion to appropriate committees or business units.

3.2 PhD Graduate School

The Committee noted that a paper is being submitted to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) in May on structures to support postgraduate research governance. The aim is to promote discussion on providing an externally facing structure and more internal coherence without change to current operations.

The Committee discussed the opportunity to bring together areas supporting postgraduate research and enhancing visibility for Doctoral Training Partnerships, Centres for Doctoral Training and other cohort-based activity.

Once submitted to LTC, the Dean of Postgraduate Research, CSE will circulate the paper to this Committee.

Action: AM

4. Update: Research Staff Scoping Project

The Committee noted the paper summarising a consultation with research staff on their engagement with University support and systems. The key recommendations included developing a single information point for research staff and a business case for specialist careers support for research staff.

The Committee supported the recommendation for IAD to liaise with Communications and Marketing to develop dedicated web pages for research staff.

The Committee supported the proposal for IAD and Careers Services to develop a case for University support for a specialist careers adviser for research staff.

The Committee noted that IAD is committed to provide support for mentoring for research staff.

IAD will report on progress with the project to the appropriate committee once confirmed.

5. Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development: Report on current status of work streams

The Committee noted the paper. Following recommendations from work stream 1, supervisor training and support, a working group has been set up to look at developing online training for supervisors and review the effectiveness of supervisor training. IAD will support this in the short-term.

A PhD intern has been recruited to continue work on peer mentoring in relation to work stream 2, mentoring and wellbeing. IAD and the Students' Association will retain oversight of this project.

Implementation of a postgraduate research personal and professional development record (work stream 3) will be progressed by the Service Excellence Programme's (SEP) postgraduate research (PGR) lifecycle project.

The Committee discussed overall co-ordination and strategic approach to the Excellence in Doctoral Education and Career Development Programme.

The Committee approved IAD retaining ownership of work stream 1, IAD and the Students' Association retaining ownership of work stream 2 and SEP progressing implementation of the PGR personal and professional development record.

The Committee supported the new Education committee providing a strategic steer on programme governance.

6. Service Excellence Programme update

The SEP representative reported that the SEP Board had approved the blueprint and business case proposals for the PGR lifecycle project. This project was now in the detailed planning and design phase. SEP will look holistically across the Student Administration strand projects when prioritising work.

The Committee noted that the annual progression monitoring system enhancements are included in the PGR lifecycle project. SEP is working through the proposals on locating postgraduate administration in Schools.

The Committee noted that a SharePoint SEP information hub has been set up for sharing updates. The link will be circulated to Committee members.

Action: S Harvey to Secretary

7. Senate Themes for 2019/20 meetings

The Committee noted the paper inviting suggestions for the presentation and discussion section of Senate Committee meetings. The Committee supported suggesting the benefits and challenges of postgraduate research collaborations and joint PhD programmes, student mental health and supporting early career researchers.

Action: Academic Services

8. Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students: Review 2019

The Committee noted the paper. The Committee approved the amendments and plans for evaluating the Code of Practice. The Committee supported Academic Services reporting the evaluation results to Senate Quality Assurance Committee.

9. Handbook for External Examining of Research Degrees: Updates 2019

The Committee noted the paper.

The Committee discussed the responsibility for arranging the viva, noting that this lay with the Internal Examiner. Graduate Schools sometimes support the examiner in making arrangements and the Committee approved that this could be included in the Handbook with a clear statement on the Internal Examiner's responsibility.

The Committee discussed Non-Examining Chair appointment and noted that the regulations only require this in particular circumstances. The Committee noted that CAHSS routinely appoints a Non-Examining Chair to all vivas. The Committee approved an amendment to the Handbook to clarify that in some circumstances College may appoint a Non-Examining Chair for the viva.

Action: Academic Services

10. Communications

10.1 Tutors and demonstrators

The Postgraduate Research Rep, Students' Association presented results from a survey of tutors in the School of Social and Political Sciences.

The Committee discussed the University policy for recruitment, support and development of tutors and demonstrators, work allocation models and the learning and teaching experience of students.

The Committee noted that the University policy will be evaluated in the next academic year. There were opportunities to input to College reviews of work allocation models through College postgraduate student reps. Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results also provide institutional evidence on tutoring and demonstrating experience.

10.2 Postgraduate research student reps

The Postgraduate Research Rep, Students' Association reported on the challenges of communicating with students for an institutional level representative.

The Committee discussed University guidance for Schools on communication between student reps and students, mechanisms for collaborative work and sharing information, and training for student reps.

The Committee noted that Academic Services and the Students' Association will review the University guidance. The Students' Association has plans to revise student rep training. There are

opportunities to raise communication issues for College committee discussion through College postgraduate student reps.

11. External engagement

11.1 League of European Research Universities (LERU)

The Convener reported on a recent meeting in Leuven on the European Union budget for research. LERU is lobbying to promote budget increases against some resistance.

11.2 UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE)

The Committee noted a UKCGE consultation on postgraduate supervision is underway. The Secretary will forward the consultation email to the College Deans for circulation in the Colleges.

Action: Secretary

The CAHSS representative had attended a recent Doctoral Education Training event with a presentation from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) presenting on their priorities for interdisciplinary and cross-Research Council funding.

11.3 Coimbra

The Head of Doctoral Education, IAD had attended a recent Doctoral Studies Working Group on employability. Coimbra are running a Three Minute Thesis competition and a University of Edinburgh student will participate in the final.

11.4 Network of Universities from European Capitals (UNICA)

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

11.5 Universitas 21

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

11.6 Russell Group PGR Special Interest Group

The Director of PGR, CMVM will attend the next meeting on 11 June in Nottingham.

12. Report from Knowledge Strategy Committee: 22 March 2019 meeting

The Committee noted the paper.

13. Research Policy Group report

There was nothing to report to this meeting.

14. Any other business

14.1 Postgraduate Research Degree Examiners

The Committee noted that CMVM require a Non-Examining Chair where two external examiners are assessing NHS staff members. The College will submit a proposal for consideration in the next regulations review for a Non-Examining Chair to act as Internal Examiner in these circumstances.

Action: CMVM/Academic Services

CMVM will submit a proposal for consideration in the next regulations review on Thesis Committee members acting as Internal Examiners.

Action: CMVM/Academic Services

14.2 Erasmus+ postgraduate research student opportunities

Academic Services will contact Edinburgh Global for information on postgraduate research student take-up of Erasmus+ opportunities and report electronically to the Committee.

Action: Academic Services

The Convener closed the meeting with thanks to all for participation and contributions, particularly the Secretary.

Susan Hunter, Academic Services
16 May 2019