

The University of Edinburgh

Internal Periodic Review

1 year response report

**PPR of:** School of GeoSciences

**Date of review:** 20/21 March 2019

**Date of 14 week response:** 9 August 2019

**Date of year on response:** 1 May 2020

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 strongly <b>recommends</b> that the planned model for Advisors is implemented and that Advisors meet students twice per year, and be available as needed for pastoral support.	Sept 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was implemented in September 2019.</li> <li>Students will meet their Advisor twice in the first year (at the start and to prepare for the Confirmation Panel) and at least once in year 2 and 3 to prepare for the annual reviews. Advisors will also reach out half-way through year 2 and 3 to ask how things are going and offer an optional meeting should the student wish to have one.</li> </ul>	September 2019
2	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the first year confirmation process is used as the basis for the first year annual review, and subsequent reviews should take place annually.	Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have streamlined the confirmation and annual review process in Year 1, providing better guidance and avoiding duplication where possible. We have now refined the wording in the supervisor handbook based on discussion during and Advisor training session in January 2020. The supervisor handbook now explains: "If substantial issues were identified in the Confirmation Process, a Year 1 Annual review meeting should be scheduled around Month 11 (otherwise the physical meeting can be skipped and the online form completed remotely)."</li> </ul>	February 2020
3	The review team <b>recommends</b> a system of oversight to ensure the minimum threshold of supervisory meetings is met, as stated in the University's Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students.	Sept 2020 Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code of practice requires 2 meetings per 3-month period, and the University-wide annual review form already asks whether there have been supervisor meetings twice per semester.</li> <li>We have requested that the annual review form is harmonised to reflect the Code of Practice and this has been added to the list of change requests for Student Systems</li> <li>We have added this requirement to the supervisor/advisor handbook and to a template of topics for the Advisor to discuss during meetings with the student and during annual reviews.</li> </ul>	May 2020 May 2020 May 2020
4	The review team <b>recommends</b> that a workload allocation model is	Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was agreed by SPARC in November 2018 that supervision workload credits are divided among supervisors based on their relative contribution as recorded in</li> </ul>	

	implemented that reflects the work of co-supervision.		EUCLID. This will be implemented in the School's new workload model software which will be used from AY20/21.	
5	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School identifies appropriate space for informal/social discussions, including coffee/tea facilities on each of their sites.	Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each site has a coffee room with coffee and tea facilities, which are used to different degrees by PGR students – we will continue to encourage their use of this space, e.g. during welcome week.</li> <li>More broadly, the School has been investigating options regarding reallocation of space, and this recommendation will be discussed at the School's SPARC management committee meeting. However, there are considerable issues regarding lack of space across the School (especially within Grant and the Crew buildings), and any significant action would require a radical review of how space is used, and a major investment in capital, which may be difficult to secure. This will be exacerbated by the Covid crisis so it is unlikely that dedicated PGR space will be used as anything other than study space in the near future</li> </ul>	
6	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School ensures that Course Organisers adopt best practice consistently in inducting, training, and supporting tutors and demonstrators.	Sept 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Our T&amp;D training has received good feedback, but we acknowledge that at course level there is variability in practice. In answer to this the Academic Head of T&amp;D and T&amp;D administrator(s) will streamline the bi-annual induction day, with some training being offered in person and some online. The in person training will prioritise marking and feedback (guidelines, exercises, advice from experienced T&amp;Ds).</li> <li>We will review and expand the guidance given to Course Organisers to help with training and supporting their tutors and demonstrators. This work will be carried out over the summer. We aim to produce a CO online briefing/ training session which will be compulsory for CO's to attend/ complete before they will be allowed to recruit T&amp;D's for their courses.</li> <li>We will ask CO's to hold briefing sessions with their T&amp;D's halfway through semester and again at the end of semester to ensure they are supported and any gaps in knowledge/ experience identified and addressed. This is still ongoing. The disruptions in 2019/20 with strikes and a global pandemic have prevented us from closely monitoring the implementation of this practice.</li> <li>The new Academic Head for T&amp;D will hold twice-yearly feedback events with all T&amp;D's to gather their feedback and input on what we could do to further support them, and ensure any issues around training. Induction or support are resolved. The feedback event took place in Semester 1 but attendance was low. Plans for Semester 2 were derailed by Covid 19. We expect both feedback sessions will take place in 2020/21.</li> </ul>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student Services Projects team will be piloting a regular newsletter for PGR students involved in Tutoring and Demonstrating. This will contain information on various opportunities related to training and personal development, and we will use this as a means to regularly showcase and signpost the Edinburgh Teaching Award scheme, along with other training and CPD opportunities.</li> </ul>	November 2019
7	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School resources additional supports for the anticipated increase in international student numbers.	<p>Oct 2019</p> <p>Nov 2019</p> <p>March 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We identified additional support that can be offered in a series of PGR focus groups, including more opportunities for social interaction and establishing a buddy system for new PhD student. However, the School is unable to provide additional resource so we are trying to see how we can support student led activities.</li> <li>We have improved sign-posting to student support outside the School, in collaboration with IAD and English Language Communication</li> <li>We are investigating ways of implementing a School buddy system in Sept 2020, as well as signposting other support initiatives by EUSA to our students (Global Buddies and Tandem Language cafes).</li> </ul>	<p>December 2019 (focus groups)</p> <p>January 2020</p>
8	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the School ensures that students are aware that clear structures exist for elected student reps to feed into School level meetings, including the Equality and Diversity Committee.	September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will develop and implement a policy for this which will include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing an overview of committees with PGR representation (or link to suitable webpage) on the PGR LEARN student hub , with descriptions of the roles</li> <li>Ensuring committee names accurately represent the purpose, remit and membership of the committee</li> <li>Implementing a transparent application process for appointing student representatives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
9	The review team encourages any planned activity to streamline and edit the website content, and <b>recommends</b> that there is a strategic review of the website to include scope for self-editable research student profiles, an overview of current activities, opportunities, and funding across the School.	<p>Jan 2020</p> <p>December 2020</p> <p>December 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have archived a number of outdated pages both of our own initiative and with the help of the Head of Marketing and will continue to do so, keeping only a handful of pages for current students and trying to make the content for applicants more concise. All PhD funding can now be found on one page that is updated regularly.</li> <li>Our School's IT support is working on system to allow students to create and edit their own web profiles</li> <li>We are unable to make any major changes to website infrastructure for PGR alone, but there is a School-wide project and PGR has been feeding into the website review workshops</li> </ul>	

10	The review team <b>recommends</b> that the Service Excellence Programme prioritise required changes to the EUCLID system to ease administrative burden on managing annual reviews.	uncertain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have strongly indicated to the Service Excellence Programme to prioritise relevant changes to EUCLID and know that other Schools have done the same. We have not been given any information on timelines for the improvements.</li> </ul>	
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review	<p>We implemented the new Advisor system and held a training session early January and we received positive feedback as well as suggestions for future sessions.</p> <p>Every student who started their PhD this year has received a letter with the name and contact details of their advisor and a description of their role.</p> <p>Every advisor is now receiving a workload allocation of 7 hours per year and they are consistently recorded as 5% supervisors in student records.</p> <p>The PGR Team is in charge of allocating Advisors. Putting this process at this level instead of the supervisors' is already helping achieve a more consistent level of support and we notice that the advisors are more engaged in their role, and students are more confident that their advisors are an independent source of support rather than an extension of their supervisors.</p> <p>Both students and advisors have provided feedback on possible tweaks that would improve the system and the process and this has been/will be taken on board.</p>		