

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee
held on Tuesday 23 May 2017 at 2pm
in the Torridon Room, Charles Stewart House, Chambers Street**

Present: Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal
Researcher Development
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Head of Doctoral Education,
Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &
Engineering (CSE)
Mr Patrick Garratt, Vice-President Academic Affairs, Students'
Association
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Students' Association Staff PGR
Representative
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student
Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)
Ms Sharon Maguire, Careers Service
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,
Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Attending: Dr Eve Hepburn, Institute for Academic Development (for item 5)
Professor Konstantin Kamenev, School of Engineering
Ms Ruth McCulloch, Student Systems
Ms Katie Scott, Students' Association (for item 5)
Ms Tracey Slaven, Director of Planning (for item 4)

Apologies: Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College
of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CAHSS)
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's
representative)
Ms Katharina Heil, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CSE)
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2017

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

2. Matters Arising

The Committee noted the paper which provided updates on matters from previous meetings.

In relation to item 3 Postgraduate Research Space, REC **agreed** that the Dean of Students CSE would provide updates to future REC meetings from Space Strategy Group. It was also noted that the Convener had provided feedback to the Director of Estates on the development of a Graduate School at Queens University Belfast.

In relation to item 4 Distance PhD Implementation Group the Convener reported that Student Recruitment Strategy Group had identified that more discussion was needed on differentiating the offering of distance and online PhD. Key stakeholders will be identified for inclusion in further discussion and a report will be provided to Student Recruitment Strategy Group.

Action: Convener and Secretary

It was also noted that CMVM are working on a business case for a small pilot for online PhDs recruited from their online Masters cohort. The business case and a fee proposal will be submitted to Fees Strategy Group.

In relation to item 5 Early Career Researchers – determining focus of REC support, the IAD Head of Researcher Development will be invited to the next committee meeting to progress discussion.

3. Convener's Communications

3.1 Vitae mentoring for Researcher Developers programme pilot

The Committee noted the launch of the pilot.

3.2 LERU Doctoral Summer School

The Convener reported that in addition to the selected institutional candidate, our second candidate had also been accepted to the summer school. It was noted that previously Schools and Colleges had supported candidates to attend. It was agreed that the Convener would submit a proposal to Research Policy Group to consider funding for candidates attending future LERU Doctoral Summer Schools.

Action: Convener

LERU have requested expressions of interest in hosting the next Doctoral Summer School. Information will be circulated to REC members for consideration.

Action: Secretary

3.3 Coimbra annual meeting, June 2017

This week long event will be held in Edinburgh from 5 June 2017. In addition to executive and working group meetings, University tours will be provided for attendees including the Doctoral Studies Group. It was noted that good practice in supervision is included on the agenda for this event.

Action: Vice-Convener to circulate further details via Secretary

3.4 Survey results: Research Staff and Principal Investigators & Research Leaders

The Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators and Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) results were similar to previous years but response rates remain low. It was noted that other Russell Group institutions are not participating in these surveys and Research Policy Group has agreed that the University will no longer participate in future CROS and PIRLS surveys.

For Discussion

4. Policy changes in PhD funding

The Director of Planning reported on PhD loans which will become available to English domiciled students from spring 2018. There will be no restrictions on the number of students that can apply for loans, nor on the subject of study or UK institution where students will study. However, loans will not be able to be combined with Research Council studentships. Professional doctorate students will be eligible to apply for PhD loans as will students enrolling on MSc progressing to PhD study. It is not yet clear whether the Scottish Government will introduce similar loans for Scottish domiciled students.

5. Excellence in Doctoral Education & Career Development: Programme Board

The Committee noted the paper. The Vice-Convener reported that as part of communication work information is available online at: www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/projects/excellence-in-doctoral-education. A Postgraduate Supervisor Network facilitated by IAD has been set up and student discussion groups (with ethics approval from Education) will be held.

5.1 Progress report on work stream 1: Supervisor Training and Support

Sector benchmarking and mapping had highlighted much existing online support material for supervisors, a gap in provision of optional resources at the University, formal recording and accreditation of supervision, the need to facilitate communities of practice and institutional recognition of excellence in supervision.

The paper proposed eight next steps for this work stream. In discussion, the committee noted that expectations of supervision were broadly similar in sector benchmarking. The meeting discussed enforcement and recording of supervisor training and noted that this was linked to the HR strand of the Service Excellence Programme (SEP). It was agreed that the Vice-Convenor would circulate the proposed consultation questions in relation to the timescale for renewing supervisor training to REC.

Action: Vice-Convenor

The Committee supported the proposal to enter shortlisted supervisors in the Students' Association Teaching Awards in the Times Higher Outstanding Supervisor of the Year Award for June 2017.

REC endorsed the progress on this work stream and **approved** the proposed next steps.

5.2 Progress report on work stream 2: Mentoring and Wellbeing

Benchmarking and mapping showed several models of mentoring operating within the University which were consistent with wider sector provision. The meeting heard from the Students' Association on current peer mentoring for students and from IAD on work focusing on comparative best practice in PGR student wellbeing.

The paper proposed 5 next steps for this work stream which focus on promoting and enhancing mentoring. In discussion, the Committee noted that much peer support is available across the institution but this is variable and there is a lack of clear communication on what is available. The Committee also noted a clear link between student wellbeing and the mentoring role and that appropriate training is needed for those undertaking a mentoring role.

REC endorsed the progress on this work stream and **approved** the proposed next steps.

5.3 Progress report on work stream 3: Personal and professional development record

The Committee noted that the task group for this work stream is working on setting objectives and principles for the work and that a report will be available for the November 2017 REC meeting.

6. Eligibility to Supervise for Post-Doctoral Scientists

The Committee noted the paper. During discussion the Committee noted that there are differences in eligibility to supervise expectations across Colleges; recognised the need to acknowledge post-doc contribution to supervision; confirmed that the Postgraduate Degree Regulations do not prohibit post-docs

from being supervisors; recognised that potential implications for REF were unknown.

REC **agreed** that having a PhD Adviser role in EUCLID, without any supervision percentage attached, would be useful and Student Systems was asked to investigate this.

Action: Student Systems

The eligibility regulations in the paper were specific to CMVM. Practice around post-docs who supervise in CSE could inform proposals for discussion in CMVM by the appropriate College committee. This would be taken forward by the CMVM College representative.

Action: PH

7. **Postgraduate Research Student Status**

The Committee noted the paper and that Academic Services and College postgraduate office representatives will discuss next steps. It was noted any system change proposals will need to be picked up within SEP. A progress report will be available at the next REC meeting.

Action: Secretary

8. **Task Groups:**

8.1 **Review of Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators**

The Committee noted the paper and **agreed** further consideration by electronic business on remaining issues identified. Comments by email on key areas highlighted in the paper were invited.

9. **Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students**

The Committee noted the paper. REC **agreed** the content for publication noting that it may be subject to further minor amendments following the forthcoming Curriculum and Student Progression Committee meeting and clarification of content relating to English language requirements, intellectual property and student representation.

10. **Committee Terms of Reference and Membership**

The Committee noted the paper. REC **agreed** the amendments to the composition section of the Terms of Reference.

A tabled paper provided nominations received from Colleges for co-opted membership. The committee discussed these and the length of co-options.

REC **agreed** that College administration co-option would come from CAHSS and the other co-options as tabled to provide a balanced spread of membership across Colleges and between academic and support staff.

REC **agreed** School administration, College administration and Postgraduate Director co-option would serve for an initial period of two years. Other co-options would serve for three years as this would best support Committee business.

Co-opted members to be invited onto REC:

- Professor Jamie Pearce (three year term)
- Dr Debbie Roberts (two year term)
- Professor Sarah Howie (three year term)
- Ms Kirsty Woomble (two year term)
- Dr Caroline Proctor (two year term)

The Committee thanked all members who had come to the end of their tenure for their participation and valuable contributions to committee business.

For Information and formal business

11. Knowledge Strategy Committee report: 24 March meeting

The Committee noted the paper.

12. Research Policy Group report

The Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy reported that the REF-readiness exercise indicated the University was on track with preparation. A mock REF will be held in 2018 and a management data dashboard was in development to support School level activity.

13. A.O.B.

13.1 Conferences & Events

13.1.1 QAA focus on PGR

Several Committee members had attended this event on 17 May in Glasgow. It was noted that sparqs are seeking members for a working group on postgraduate research representation and engagement.

Resources from the event are available online:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/focus-on/postgraduate-research-student-experience

13.1.2 UKCGE Annual conference, July, Porto

The conference dates of 6 and 7 July 2017 were noted.

13.1.3 Society for Research into Higher Education, “Postgraduate study and employability”, Edinburgh, 19 May

Committee members had attended and reported a useful morning session on postgraduate research. Presentations are available online:

www.srhe.ac.uk/events/pastevents/

13.1.4 CSE DTC Forum

The College is hosting and Doctoral Training Centre event on Friday 26 May 2016.

13.2 UKCGE Executive election

The meeting was reminded of the internal deadline for votes of 29 May 2017. The Secretary will return the institutional vote.

Date of next meeting: 26 September 2017, Board Room, Chancellor's Building, Little France

Susan Hunter
24 May 2017