

**Minutes of the meeting of the Researcher Experience Committee  
held on Tuesday 27 September 2016 at 2pm  
in the Raeburn Room, Old College**

Present: Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Convener), Assistant Principal  
Researcher Development  
Dr Fiona Philippi (Vice-Convener), Acting Head of Researcher  
Development, Institute for Academic Development (IAD)  
Professor Susan Hardman Moore, College of Arts, Humanities & Social  
Sciences (CAHSS)  
Dr Antony Maciocia, Dean of Students, College of Science &  
Engineering (CSE)  
Ms Tanya Lubicz-Nawrocka, Students' Association Staff PGR  
Representative  
Mr Patrick Garratt, Vice-President Academic Affairs, Students'  
Association  
Ms Zoe Lewandoski, Director of Human Resources (for item 11)  
Ms Nichola Kett, Head of Enhancement Team, Academic Services  
Dr Vashti Galpin, School of Informatics, Early Career Researcher  
representative  
Ms Nataliya Muzyka, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CAHSS)  
Ms Katharina Heil, Postgraduate Research Student Rep (CSE)  
Ms Julia Ferguson, College of Science & Engineering (CSE)  
Ms Shelagh Green, Director of Careers Service  
Dr Paddy Hadoke, Centre for Cardiovascular Science  
Ms Jane Johnston, Head of Postgraduate Recruitment, Student  
Recruitment & Admissions (SRA)  
Ms Pauline Jones, Head of Strategic Performance & Research Policy,  
Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP)  
Ms Susan Hunter, Academic Services (Secretary)

Attending: Professor Konstantin Kamenev, School of Engineering  
Professor Jane Norman, Vice-Principal People and Culture (for item  
11)  
Ms Theresa Sheppard, Academic Services  
Mr Dominic Tate, Acting Head of Library Research Support (for item 5)

Apologies: Professor Neil Mulholland, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, College of  
Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CAHSS)  
Professor Philippa Saunders, Dean of Postgraduate Research, College  
of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (CMVM)  
Mr Tom Ward, Director of Academic Services (University Secretary's  
representative)

**1. Minutes of the previous meeting**

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

**2./**

## **2. Matters Arising**

### **2.1 PGR Space**

The meeting noted the paper and recommendations, which will be transmitted to Space Enhancement Management Group. It was also noted that the Convener would report on discussions with Estates and Buildings at a future REC meeting.

### **2.2 PGR Start Dates**

The meeting noted the paper. The Head of Postgraduate Recruitment reported that the Head of Admissions is looking at adding dates to offer letters.

**Action: The Head of Postgraduate Recruitment will clarify the position on dates for CAS letters.**

## **3. Convener's Communications**

### **3.1 Committee Priorities: Terms of Reference and Membership 2016/17**

The meeting noted the paper. In relation to College Early Career Researcher membership, the ECR representative will consider how to reach Schools for nominees. The Dean of Students, CSE reported that a College representative will be nominated later in 2016.

### **3.2 Coimbra: 3 Minute Thesis**

The Convener reported that Coimbra members would be invited to send representatives to this new competition. The University winner or runner up will be nominated, but due to the timing of the Coimbra competition this will be the winner or runner up from the previous year.

The Vice-Convener reported that Maddie Long, UoE 3 Minute Thesis competition winner had won the People's Choice award in the UK competition.

## **FOR DISCUSSION**

## **4. Flexible PhDs**

### **4.1 Progress on implementing task group recommendations**

The meeting noted the paper, which provided an update on current progress. This paper will also be submitted to the Distance PhD Implementation working group (see 4.2 below).

It was noted that the prospectus had already been published and any changes will need to be confirmed and transmitted to Communications and Marketing by December 2016 for marketing purposes.

The meeting considered that a different application route may be necessary for Distance PhDs and asked the working group to consider this further.

The meeting asked the working group to consider online English testing, as the online Masters provision may not be appropriate for PhD students.

#### **4.2 Distance PhD Implementation working group: remit and membership**

The meeting noted the paper and REC **agreed** the remit and membership. The first meeting will be held on Monday 3 October 2016 and a report will be available to the next REC meeting.

#### **4.3 College annual reports on Distance PhD**

The meeting noted the paper, which will be submitted to the Distance PhD Implementation working group for information.

### **5. Proposal for Electronic Submission of PhD Theses to University Library**

The meeting noted the paper. The Acting Head of Library Research Support reported that this approach is recommended as technology has advanced and there are risks associated with disc submission. The Library has consulted with Colleges and can provide training on electronic submission. This will be via PURE in CMVM and CSE. CAHSS is developing a Sharepoint based system, which the Library can access. There are no accessibility risks associated with CAHSS using a different system.

Electronic submission is dependent on student information being added to PURE. A new Library team will support adding this data to PURE and completion has been agreed with IS Applications for 9 November 2016. It was confirmed that uploading large data files is easier in PURE.

The Library will review submission documentation and update as required.

REC **agreed** the proposed approach.

### **6. Excellence in Doctoral Research and Career Development**

The meeting noted the paper, which proposed a joint REC and Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) group to act as a co-ordinating project board for activity being addressed by different areas of the University in relation to research student experience. Having a joint group adds legitimacy and also links to ELIR recommendations in relation to postgraduate research student

experience. It was noted that support for this group has yet to be resourced, but there is a possibility of a secondment via IAD.

It was noted that some elements of the proposals require financial resources and will need to be submitted to the Planning Round.

The meeting noted the good work done by Student Systems so far in relation to tools for postgraduate research. It agreed that an overarching system is preferable to “ad hoc” solutions and that that requires an understanding of the postgraduate lifecycle that the proposed joint group could provide for Student Systems. It was also noted that including the relationship between student funding and thesis submission would be helpful.

REC considered that the postgraduate research student voice needs to be included and this should be incorporated in the proposals.

Subject to that addition, REC **agreed** the proposed approach.

#### **7. PhD Scholarships model: Edinburgh Enlightenment Scholarships, a new style of PhD scholarship**

The meeting noted the paper. The new scholarship model proposes a teaching route and a professional development route, and an implementation group to facilitate launch in September 2017. The paper will be submitted to Central Management Group’s next meeting, as scholarships need to be advertised from December 2016.

It was noted that Schools will decide how many scholarships to fund and that a central competitive fund may be available. It is intended to ensure a prestigious scholarship. The scholarship will offer four years of funding to allow time for teaching or professional development activity in addition the three year PhD.

It was noted that some bespoke courses may need to be developed, however many relevant courses are already available.

**Action: REC members to provide comments on the paper to the Convener by Friday 7 October 2016**

#### **8. Service Excellence Programme – workshop on postgraduate research students**

Colleagues from CSE gave a verbal report on the recent workshop. The main themes arising from discussion were:

- Inconsistent student information/data management information
- Inconsistent annual progression review practice
- Lack of clarity on postgraduate research lifecycle for students
- Recording programme changes

- The concept of a progression hurdle for postgraduate research students

The College Academic Affairs Officer has prepared some information for the College Research Training Committee and this will be shared with REC members.

**Action: JF to Secretary**

The meeting noted that expectations for part-time students need to be different in relation to lifecycle and annual progression review.

**9. Edinburgh University Students' Association Priorities 2016-17**

The meeting noted the paper. The Students' Association plans to increase its postgraduate and postgraduate research outreach and will be working in collaboration with the University on student representation. It will also be working collaboratively on support for postgraduate tutors, including policy development and the pastoral aspect of the postgraduate tutor role.

The meeting suggested a communications channel for postgraduate students and noted that work towards a University-wide position for postgraduate and postgraduate research students was ongoing.

The GaSP representative noted that the new Strategic Plan will cover student well-being. Students' Association input on developing measures for the University's progress in this area would be welcome.

**10. Task Group to Review the Code of Practice for Tutors and Demonstrators**

The meeting formally noted the remit and membership, which had been approved by electronic business.

The task group's aim is to produce a more concise Code of Practice that is fit for purpose and for the three audiences identified: Schools, tutors and demonstrators, and students being taught by postgraduate tutors. Completion is planned by the end of 2016.

It was noted that different groups across the University are looking at tutoring and demonstrating. Information is being sought on the balance of postgraduate tutoring in different part of the University.

The meeting discussed research staff who do tutoring, the need to separate payment for postgraduate tutors from the studentship, time impacts on the three year PhD of tutoring, differing expectations on tutoring across the University.

REC considered that buy-in was essential for full implementation. Consultation should include Teaching Organisations as well as Graduate

Schools. It was noted that the task group membership includes a postdoc tutor who has good links with other tutors.

**Action: Students' Association VPAA to provide contact details to NM**

A report on task group progress will be available to the next REC meeting.

## **11. Enhancing Support for Early Career Researchers**

### **11.1 Stern Report**

The Vice-Principal People and Culture and Director of HR gave a verbal report on the potential impacts for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF). It was noted that this would be discussed at the next Research Policy Group (RPG) meeting. A REF-readiness exercise will be held early in 2017.

The meeting discussed the potential impacts for part-time staff and staff on career break, and potential impacts on movement of researchers and how universities recruit early career researchers.

It was noted that technical consultation will continue into October and November and RPG will coordinate the institutional response to the Stern Report.

IAD can provide evidence on support for early career researchers as compiled for the HR Excellence Award action plan.

### **11.2 Emerging Academic Fellowships – update**

The Vice-Principal People and Culture and Director of HR gave a verbal report on developments. The Industry Academic Fellowships aims to address a careers gap by providing early career researchers with a broader portfolio of skills. They will be provided in collaboration with industry partners who will share Fellowship funding, and fellows will be employed by the University. Industry partnerships will include government and third sector bodies as well as traditional industrial partners.

It is envisaged that this will foster good links with industry as well as creating a career path between PhD and Chancellor's Fellows. The programme is aimed at post-PhD candidates and will provide teaching, knowledge exchange and public engagement opportunities.

The Fellowships will be hosted in Edinburgh Research and Innovation (ERI) with individuals located in Schools. Initially three or four individual Fellowships will be trialled before a wider pilot across the University.

The meeting discussed the balance across the institution and that some Schools may not be able to use this fellowship if unable to

identify industry partners. Research would need to be industry relevant however the aim is to develop people and candidates will be matched with academic and industry partners. The Fellowship will last approximately three years and success will result in deeper engagement between the University and industry.

It was noted that this is an evolving concept and there were opportunities to learn from CASE studentships as well as opportunities for retaining our own PhD students.

## **12. Work strands**

### **12.1 MSc by Research policy/regulations review**

This item had been remitted to REC from the 2015/16 regulations review panel. It was noted that there are two aspects to this topic, regulations governing MSc by Research and the process and flow of information. REC considered that this should be addressed by a joint task group with CSPC membership. Suggestions for membership to be emailed to the REC Secretary.

**Action: REC members**

### **12.2 Student status during submission period**

REC noted that this includes the post-viva and corrections period as well. REC **agreed** the approach of an initial discussion with Student Systems and Colleges to identify issues. Thereafter this could be conducted by electronic business.

It was noted that a cross-College meeting is scheduled for 11 October and it might be possible to discuss this topic then.

**Action: JF to include Academic Services**

## **FOR INFORMATION**

### **13. Knowledge Strategy Committee report**

The meeting noted the paper.

### **14. Research Policy Group report**

The next meeting on 30 September will discuss the Stern Report and REF as discussed at 11.1 above.

### **15./**

**15. Any other business**

**15.1 Conferences and events**

The Convener and Secretary will be in discussion with UKCGE regarding a proposed PhD benchmarking event planned in Edinburgh for December. Details will be circulated when finalised.

**15.2 Code of Practice for Supervisors and Research Students**

The Vice-Convener proposed a review with engagement of users, potentially through a focus group. This would be consistent with the ELIR recommendations on postgraduate research student voice and ensuring consistency of use of the Code of Practice.

REC **agreed** this approach but noted that the Service Excellence Programme and University simplification agenda may have an impact on the Code of Practice. It was also agreed that the status of the Code would be explored as part of the next review.

**16. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 15 November 2016, Hodgson Room, Weir Building, King's Buildings

Susan Hunter  
28 September 2016