

Internal Periodic Review of: School of Chemistry**Date of review:** 12th & 13th March 2024**Date of 14 week response:** Oct 10th 2024**Date of year on response:**

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	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: The review team recommend that the School build on the good work already undertaken to promote EDI across School activities and to widen access to postgraduate study in Chemistry to under-represented groups.	annually	Each academic year begins with an introduction to all EDI/wellbeing services for PGRs. The EDI committee sponsors a ChemSoc coffee morning allowing PGRs the opportunity to discuss and engage with EDI initiatives within the school. We have recently set up a mentoring scheme for students of colour from UG and PGR communities. The mentors are provided with training and the scheme will be more widely rolled out within the school in the coming months. Racial Equity covering how to call out racism, gain experience in having difficult conversation and understand the importance of allyship has been delivered to UGs and will be delivered to PGRs this academic year. A student ran event "I belong in Chemistry" comprises of a seminar, panel and network evening featuring women of colour in chemistry from various stages of their careers across the UK. The aim is to highlight the unique challenges these women face in both industry and academia while empowering and inspiring students who may find themselves in similar situations. Following the talks, a networking event will provide students with an opportunity to connect more deeply with the speakers, creating a space where they feel included and heard. The EDI committee will liaise with the graduate school to ensure PGR opportunities are advertised to a broad group of prospective students. The first RSC Missing Elements UG Internship was completed this summer, as part of the grant secured by the EDI committee. This strongly encourages Black and minoritised ethnic groups at UG level within the UK to apply and experience research labs, as the RSC Missing Elements report showed a large drop off of these groups from UG to PGR study. We're continuing the internships next year.	annually
2	Student Induction and support for tutors and demonstrators: The review team recommend that student induction activities be spread over a	1 year	Student induction takes place over 3 x ½ days in the first week of September. We believe it is vital the new PGRs are provided with all the fundamentally important information required at this time, rather than spreading it out over	September 2025

	longer period to avoid overwhelming new students, that signposting to guidance and support takes place regularly and that the induction activities for tutors and demonstrators include information and discussion about how to teach and support UG students.		a longer period. All of this information/detail will be now included in our new, easily accessible, easy to navigate, Sharepoint site. The IAD has introduced new workshops/orientation courses (2024/25) for new demonstrators and tutors (https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/tutors-demonstrators/courses/orientation) which all new PGRs will undertake. All new demonstrators will be given the opportunity to practice/complete experiments they will be asked to demonstrate and will be paid for the time they need to do this. This will be completed prior to demonstrating the experiments in class.	
3	Physical space and working environment: The review team recommend that School ensures that all staff and students have access to a safe, high quality working environment that meets their needs, as far as the building will allow.	annually	Thorough annual safety audits ensure that building faults are highlighted and reported to the University's Estates and Buildings Division (E&B), ensuring the school's estate is maintained safely and is fit for purpose. A quick and efficient fault reporting system is in place and open 24/7 to all school occupants/users to make sure that our Technical Services team have the information required to either rectify or escalate faults (to E&B) for safe and speedy repair. Reports involving H&S issues are always given the highest priority and attention.	annually
4	<p>Teaching and Support: The review team recommend that the small number of MRes students are considered separately from the wider PGR community, to determine whether they have any specific unmet academic and/or support needs.</p> <p>The review team recommend greater integration of Careers Service support for PhD students through more meaningful communication, and improved signposting to Royal Society of Chemistry and other sources of careers information.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the induction activities for tutors and demonstrators are further developed to include information and discussion about how to teach and support UG students, and could be spread over a longer period. New demonstrators should receive 'on the job' support from more experienced demonstrators.</p>	<p>1 year</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>1 year</p> <p>2 years</p>	<p>We will have an elected MScR class representative sitting on the PGR SSLC in 24/25 which meets several times a year. This representative will gather the thoughts and opinions of the MScR cohort on improvements required and suggestions for new initiatives (academic/support). We will develop plans for greater MScR inclusion in the induction, and establish a separate MScR Handbook and Sharepoint space.</p> <p>Rebecca Clacy-Jones from the Careers service was included in the Induction week programme in 2024, and we have planned a meeting for S1 (2024/25) with her and the PGR committee to discuss opportunities for greater communication and engagement, increase visibility, and to plan regular careers events suitable for Chemistry PGRs.</p> <p>All new demonstrators will have three training sessions. The first is a general introduction to demonstrating. The second is a training session in the lab they will be demonstrating in, held before that particular lab runs (so, two or more weeks following the general session). A third session covering assessment, will be introduced this year (2024/25), and will run four weeks after the start of semester.</p> <p>We have already started reducing the amount of assessed formal reports in all UG labs. This is both to free up PGR time and reduce UG workload. Over the next two academic years all lab organisers have committed to cutting assessment by at least 10%, and in many cases significantly more. We have introduced on-line worksheets with instant feedback in three of our teaching labs so far and plan to expand this into other labs, further reducing PGR</p>	<p>September 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>September 2026</p>

	The review team recommend reducing the frequency of assessed lab reports for UG students to free up PhD student demonstrators to take up other development opportunities.		marking time. Reducing lab assessments/restructuring UG labs/improving feedback is also part of our wider curriculum transformation project.	
5	<p>School Management and Strategy: The review team recommend that the School Senior Management team consider succession planning for the Director of Graduate School role, to ensure that the good work and new initiatives are sustainable.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the School carries out a review of the resourcing of IT Services and Technical Services.</p>	<p>completed</p> <p>completed</p> <p>1 year</p>	<p>The DoGS role is advertised >6 months prior to the departure of the incumbent academic so that the incoming candidate has several months of overlap/job share to understand the role and responsibilities and to ensure the sustainability of all new/ongoing activities/initiatives.</p> <p>In 2024 a report on School of Chemistry IT Operations was completed and clearly identified a requirement for additional staffing in the School IT Services team. On the back of this report a business case was put together for the appointment of an additional Grade 5 Computing Officer. The School management team backed the business case and it was subsequently presented to the College Office. The current recruitment freeze has caused the appointment to stall, but it is hoped that once the freeze is over this can be progressed.</p> <p>The School has a small, but highly valued team of Workshop Technicians supporting our PGRs and researchers. Their expertise is vital for ensuring research activities in the SoC run smoothly, and it is therefore of paramount importance that we maintain this level of know-how. We are therefore developing a succession plan involving apprenticeships to ensure we retain not only skills but also the ethos and work ethic of our incredibly dedicated Technical Team. Succession planning for technicians in SRFs is already in place through standard recruitment procedures.</p>	<p>completed</p> <p>TBC after UoE recruitment freeze is lifted</p> <p>September 2025</p>
6	<p>Systems and Processes: The review team recommend that a Working Group be established to improve finance and administration issues for PGR students arising from the implementation of People and Money and to promote consistency of approaches across Research Groups where possible.</p> <p>In relation to People and Money, the Review team recommend that the School works with the</p>	<p>completed</p> <p>ongoing</p>	<p>As part of the school's work to support People and Money implementation, PGR specific training sessions were scheduled for all new students. Note this was developed in the absence of University wide training, which would be welcomed. There is updated finance guidance, linked from the internal PGR webpages. PGR reps will be asked to gather feedback on issues relating to People and Money and inconsistency across research groups upcoming SSLC meetings.</p> <p>The school has representation on the Finance and HR Processes and Systems Implementation through both implementation (Operations manager) and user groups (Research and Business support manager, Staffing coordinator).</p>	<p>December 2024</p> <p>ongoing</p>

	<p>Finance and HR Processes and Systems Implementation Board and the University's Data Protection Officer to review processes and develop improvements.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the Graduate School work with central University systems to continue to improve their EDI data collection to allow for monitoring of applicants to ensure that successful applicants reflect diversity. This could include improved data collection to ensure that students from Widening Participation backgrounds are represented in the PGR cohort.</p> <p>The review team recommend that the College raise the payment for external examiners.</p> <p>The review team recommend that a case management module within EUCLID be developed to support the needs of PGR students and their supervisors.</p>	1 year	<p>UoE has recently upgraded its data monitoring in line with the University's strategy 2030. Currently, ethnicity, gender, disability and age are protected characteristics which can be tracked. WP is not a protected characteristic, but can be partially captured by SIMD data. We will liaise with the central team to include WP data for PGRs. In the interim we will continue to improve compliance with the collection of this information on applications "in-house".</p>	September 2025
		completed	<p>As an institution, UoE raised the External Examiner fee payment from £175 to £200 from January 2024. This followed discussion at the Doctoral College Operational Group, with benchmarking against Bristol (£180), Cambridge (£234), Newcastle (£180) and Kings College (£150). While we note that the University regards the external examiner fee as a token rather than a payment, the value of the award pro-rata remains well below the UK minimum wage.</p>	January 2024
		TBC	<p>The University has recently procured a new case management tool (Symplicity Advocate) recognising the suitability of EUCLID to hold confidential personal circumstances. Procuring a tool designed for Higher Education aligns with our IS Strategy to procure cloud services and ingrate with relevant core system (the student record) rather than building and maintaining our own solutions. Symplicity is in use in more than 500 universities worldwide and has an active user community continually improving the product. The initial implementation was within the Student Wellbeing Service and Residence Life; phase 2 of the rollout will be to Colleges and Schools. Discussion to date has focused on the prioritisation of cohorts with strong support PGR student should be prioritised due to the lack of functionality they have access to within the current product offer.</p>	TBC
7	<p>Estates and Facilities: The review team recommend that the School consider how lab space might offer greater flexibility in future.</p>	1 year	<p>A full and thorough space review is scheduled for the academic year 24/25. This will include both office and lab space provision for research groups. Findings will be fed back to the SoC management committee (CPRC) for consideration, planning and implementation of new organisational strategies that maximise the suitability and efficient use of space. Groups found to be struggling for suitable space will be prioritised with respect to the reorganisation of space allocations.</p>	Sept 2025
	<p>The review team recommend increased monitoring of temperature and ventilation in labs and office spaces to ensure that all staff and students experience comfortable working conditions.</p>	1.5 years	<p>Environmental monitoring across our estate is carried out 24/7 via a campus wide live BMS system (installed and maintained by Schneider Electric). Ongoing improvements to Chemistry's ventilation systems and the slated installation of a new large scale heat pump chiller system (dual duty standby chillers with a total capacity of 300KW) in 2025, will hopefully allow us to</p>	Dec 2025

			mitigate the high summer temperatures we experience in a number of our laboratories (labs, 10, 14, 25, 29, 34, 49-52 & 210 - 213).	
	The review team recommend that the facilities at King's Buildings are reviewed in line with the student and staff population with a view to increasing choices and services.	TBC – dependant on consultations	Estates collaborated with the school during a series of workshops. The data gathered over the last 12 months affords a clear understanding of current footprint and locations per group/school; staffing and student numbers; vision for school or group including anticipated growth; challenges and pressure points; potential opportunities within current spaces to improve environment and user experience.	TBC
		1-2 years	<p>Café Options - ACE</p> <p>Nucleus Café has added significant improvement from 2022 in provision on site with a new menu launch semester 1 (24/25) providing a range of healthier options, such as hot bowls.</p> <p>https://nucleuskb.mysaffronportal.com/Menus/Details/NU04%20Hotbowl</p> <p>In addition to increase variety for 24/25 the “Tuk Truk” has been located on site offering 6 weekly rotating world food menus in recognition of the wide internal staff and staff market at UoE.</p> <p>https://nucleuskb.mysaffronportal.com/Menus/Details/TT01%20Tuk%20Truk</p> <p>Catering Strategy</p> <p>A new catering strategy was endorsed by University Executive in June 2024 with the key objective to integrate food and drink provision into the overarching University experience and is twofold:</p> <p>Provide a service to students, staff and visitors, through development of environments that inspire creativity, foster collaboration, and ignite innovation.</p> <p>To enhance the student and staff experience whilst also improving financial performance and reinvest surplus back into the University.</p> <p>Central is the development of four simple but distinct formats to ensure variety, flexibility and choice. Each of the 4 formats will have its own set of guidelines for interior design, brand identity and menus. Five priority areas are identified for works to commence from 2025 onwards of which two at Kings Buildings have been included with immediate priorities for capital investment driven by a combination of:</p> <p>Condition/immediate need to refurbish.</p> <p>Greatest impact on student, staff and visitor experience.</p> <p>Address issues of duplication of the same on sites of multiple provision.</p> <p>Greatest potential to secure long-term financial stability with increased revenues and more consistent surplus conversion.</p> <p>Investment is required to deliver the strategy and it is agreed, albeit subject to securing funding, to move forward within a period of 1-3 years the first stages of the strategy.</p>	2025/6

	The review team recommend that a review of accommodation for PGR students is carried out to ensure that the University support and protect its students both in private and university accommodation.	TBC	<p>ACE are aware that Edinburgh is a highly desirable place to live and finding accommodation can be challenging. Given the pressures on both availability and cost of housing in the city, early indications are that a range of Scottish Government initiatives to remedy wider housing shortages are beginning to have an impact, for example, introduction of short-term let regulations. In light of housing pressures, ACE have undertaken weekly research into market conditions across the Privately Rented and Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) markets to understand availability of housing beyond the 9500 students who fall within the accommodation guarantee. An Accommodation Advice Service has also operated, in conjunction with the Advice Place, at the start of the academic year to assist any student struggling with housing concerns and to provide insight into the scale of housing problems our students have experienced.</p> <p>University of Edinburgh have also led on creation of a Student Living Report which covers housing issues impacting students from all four universities across the region. The report identified that, in 2021/2022, institutional operated housing was 91% less expensive when compare to privately operated PBSA. The report commits to institutions taking a lead on campaigning for low rents in the sector. It is also worth noting that rents in the Private Rented Sector, in areas historically occupied by students, have largely fallen month on month since the introduction of Short-Term let regulation, which is to the benefit of all renters in the Edinburgh area.</p>	TBC
	Please report on steps taken to feedback to students on the outcomes of the review	The review was shared with the PGR committee and will be discussed at the first SSLC of the academic year. Discussions regarding the recommendations above will be continually disseminated in the SSLC meetings.		
For Year on response only	Any examples of a positive change as a result of the review			