

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT AND POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDIES

21/13 A meeting of the Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies was held on Monday 22nd January 2022 at 10:00am (on Microsoft Teams)

There were present: Professor Adrian Williams [Chair]
Dr Elena Bedisti
Professor Adrian Bell
Dr Nicolas Bellouin
Dr Andre Dornelles
Dr Rachel Foxley
Mrs Catherine Hale [Secretary]
Dr Nathan Helsby [by invitation]
Mr Jonathan Lloyd
Mrs Lynn Moore
Mrs Rachel Thorns

22/01 Apologies for absence:

Dr Graeme Cottrell

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

22/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th October 2021 were approved.

22/03 Matters arising

The Chair requested that the action for Committee members to speak to colleagues from their networks become a rolling action for each meeting.

There were no further matters arising

22/04 PGR Student Recruitment

The Committee received papers from the Recruitment and Marketing Officer. It was noted that the Home offers were down but explained that this was due to EU offers now being put with the International figures. It was also noted that only the successful SCENARIO applicants would now go through RISIS which also affects the figures for both home and

International applications.

The Committee heard that enrolments were currently 225 for the year, a decline of 61 compared to the same time last year. The EU numbers have affected this but there still seems to be 25% drop in home enrolments in comparison to this time last year. International enrolments are similar to last year at this point.

It was noted that a huge effort had gone into marketing and recruitment activities with targeted emails to CRM contacts, adverts on findaphd.com, webinars, recruitment fairs and studentship promotion on social media.

It was noted that the Graduate School website will be moved to the new template by the summer.

The Chair noted that it was a concern with the decreasing numbers but thanked the Recruitment and Marketing Officer for the great promotion of PGR programmes.

The Committee moved on to the Early Career Researchers on the Agenda due to time.

22/09 Researcher Development Concordat and HREiR Award

It was noted that Vitae had recently published a proposal on the way the award is governed. The Committee heard that there had been improvements such as a Community of Practice and an online platform for members which will provide further guidance and support. There is also a new Action Plan template which is more refined.

Currently a formal submission is made every two years and the proposal going forward is for this to be every three which gives institutions more time to make meaningful changes and to be able to review and make a difference.

The Committee was told that we were invited to give views on the new proposal through a survey by 1st March 2022. The Committee agreed with the new proposal and the Chair and Mrs Lynn Moore will respond to the survey.

It was noted that the next submission was due in September and that will remain unchanged. It was questioned whether this submission will require an external review. **Action: Mrs Lynn Moore to find out whether an external review will be required for September's submission and feedback to the Committee.**

Research Development Project Officer

The Committee were informed that this post was to be shortlisted soon and a fuller update will be made at the next meeting. It was noted that this post would be building a community for Early Career Researchers.

Online Induction for Research Staff

The Secretary recently sent round a draft for the Research Staff Induction module for comment. It's aimed at new PDRAs (or refresher for existing staff) to highlight the main pieces of information related to obligations, on both sides, under the Researcher Development Concordat. Mrs Lynn Moore thanked those who had already sent comments. It was noted that some of the wording might not be as welcoming and supportive. Ideally we would want to make it have more of a purpose and not just a tick box exercise. It was agreed that the wording will be reviewed to shift the emphasis to being more supportive. It was also noted that a welcome video by the Dean of Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development would make it more personal. **Action: Mrs Lynn Moore to review the wording and comments on the Research Staff Induction.**

The Committee heard that funding from UKRI would be used to find a way to promote our research culture that is inclusive. It was also noted that it would be good to have a candidate

pack at the recruitment stage to promote all of this. It was also noted that to take this forward HR would need additional resource.

The Committee discussed the Researcher Staff Committee and it was noted that the new Research Development Project Officer would build new communities of practice which will help to draw resource for this Committee.

The Committee went back to the original order on the Agenda.

22/05 Doctoral Statistics

The Committee received papers from the Head of Planning and reporting.

Research degree examination results 2016/17 – 2020/21

It was noted that it was a relatively stable data set and showed a slight increase in pass at first attempt. It was also noted that there are notable gaps within some protected characteristics which showed statistically significant gaps. The Chair noted that this was worrying but the Graduate School are working on an action plan looking at more data as it is hard to explain why the gaps are there and as the numbers in Schools are so small it is difficult to see a trend.

Research student headcount 2017-2021

The Committee discussed the paper and figures and it was noted that it would be helpful to see a comparison with other institutions for student staff ratios.

The Chair noted that we will have more details when we receive the REF data.

It was noted that the core staff supervising PGR students are on Teaching and Research contracts but there will be other members of staff supervising.

It was confirmed that these numbers include professional doctorates.

The Committee discussed what we doing to support Schools that have an increase in PGR numbers. The Chair noted that we are continually looking at FTE and numbers that support the various Schools.

The Chair noted that the data looks positive but we need to continue to work hard on recruitment.

PhD FT submission rates by cohort

It was noted that work is currently being done on minimum expectations for PGR students which will then give us more insight into submission rates.

22/06 Update on Graduate School activities

Study Space

The Committee heard that we will continue to have hot desks this term during the hours of 9-5 within the Graduate School. It was also noted that our other study space in the Edith Morley building was being moved which results in a slight decrease in the amount of desks available.

The Chair noted that the Graduate School had recently had a break in but that hasn't changed anything regarding opening hours or study space available. The Graduate School pre-COVID was a home to many PhD students and this is what it will get back to.

The Chair also noted that the 5 year plans have just been submitted by Schools and Functions and it has been advised that Schools are more ambitious with their International PGR recruitment targets.

CeLM PGR 'event'

The Committee heard that the Graduate School are hosting an event to pull together a community of PGR students affiliated with the Centre for Literacy and Multilingualism.

22/07 Code of Practice

The Committee received a copy of tracked changes made to the current Code of Practice.

The Chair thanked Dr Andre Dornelles and Dr Rachel Foxley for their helpful comments. It was noted that any substantial changes to the Code of Practice would need to be approved by this Committee. The main changes highlighted are in relation to retaining electronic deposition of thesis and retaining online Vivas. The Chair noted that the Code of Practice was a rolling one and needed to be updated continually.

The Committee also heard that the Code of Practice was changed in Section 4, page 9 concerning the admissions process regarding an expectation a student had of having an external supervisor. The Code of Practice has now been made clearer to clarify external supervision is acceptable only in exceptional circumstances. The Committee agreed to the current changes in the Code of Practice.

It was noted that the Code of Practice states a student 'should' have a Supervisor. The Committee agreed this needs to be changed to 'must'. **Action: The Chair will clarify 'must' have a Supervisor in the Code of Practice**

It was discussed that the workload of a supervisor should define the number of PhD students they can supervise instead of stating a maximum number of 6. It was agreed that Heads of School should have involvement in this decision and should be consulted. **Action: The Chair to speak to some Heads of Schools regarding Supervision load**

It was also noted that other policies and codes are currently being looked at and updated.

22/08 Reports from other bodies

PGR Representatives Forum

The Committee received the minutes from the most recent meeting.

The Chair noted he attended the meeting and a main concern was the lack of statistical advice and courses. It was noted some work was being done using some funding from an award for Research Culture to work on what the immediate need is. It was also noted that an Academic in the Institute of Education was running a course which is open to anyone from PhD to Academics.

HBS Board of Studies

The Committee received the minutes from the most recent meeting.

Admissions Policy and Cover note

The Committee received a copy of the most recent updated Admissions Policy and cover note. It was noted that the policy had been reviewed with no substantive changes. The Committee agreed the policy.

22/10 Any other business

The Committee heard that a SeNSS Management Board meeting was being held on 1st February 2022 to discuss the renewal of the partnership and whether we will continue. The Chair will discuss with the SeNSS academic lead and report back to the Committee. **Action:**

Chair to discuss SeNSS Management Board with Academic lead.

The Committee were told that the Graduate School were hosting an induction for new PGR Students this week.

Summary of Actions

- Committee members to speak to colleagues from their networks to see what other institutions are doing to increase Home PGR student numbers.
- Mrs Lynn Moore to find out whether an external review will be required for the September submission and feedback to the Committee
- Mrs Lynn Moore to review the wording and comments on the Research Staff Induction
- The Chair will clarify 'must' have a Supervisor in the Code of Practice
- The Chair to speak to some Heads of Schools regarding Supervision load
- Chair to discuss SeNSS Management Board with Academic lead

22/11 Dates for the diary

Fairbrother Lecture (17th May 2022)

Doctoral Research Conference (15 June 2022)

22/12 Dates of next meetings

Monday, 9 May at 10am (venue to be confirmed)