

**PGR Committee  
07 December 2022  
Minutes**

**1. Welcome and apologies**

Attendees: Ekkehard Ullner, Ailhlin Clark, Rhiannon Thompson, Kate Smith, Graeme Nixon, Lucy Leiper, Victoria Gillman, Phil Ziegler, Mehmet Kartal, Paul Hallett, Robert Findlay, Peter Mtika, Valerie Speirs, Peter Cserne, Audrey Paterson, Aravinda Guntupalli, Claire Ransley (clerk), Simon Bains  
Apologies: Patric Bach, Suk-Jun Kim, Melanie McCann, Sanni Ahonen,

Graeme Nixon (GN) welcomed to the committee Victoria Gillman as the PGR Representative for SBS and Ailhlin Clark from Student Support.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting and action log**

**PGR 23\_06**

- 2.1 Minutes approved from September committee meeting.
- 2.2 GN provided an overview of the action log from July committee meeting.
- 2.3 Lucy Leiper (LL) advised that the Disability Guidance document is being continuously updated.
- 2.4 Rhiannon Thompson (RT) provided an update on the absence policy discussed in the September committee meeting that the Student Hub will no longer be included for absence reporting up to 30 days and will instead be advised to inform supervisors and school administrators.

**3. School PGR Items**

**PGR23 \_07**

- 3.1 Paul Hallett (PH) highlighted to the committee that continued consideration needs to be given to students in relation to covid mitigation for students who started near the beginning of 2020 which was noted to be picked up later in the committee meeting.
- 3.2 Aravinda Guntupalli (AG) raised the cost of living crisis was discussed during school drop ins whereby students requested further signposting for support available (including physical spaces to gather in and financial). LL highlighted bimonthly meeting discussions already happening for cost of living crisis but noted it would be helpful to discuss the feedback from students.
- 3.3 Mehmet Kartal queried if 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year assessments can be carried out online and GN clarified that while it is preferable for these to be in person, where the nature of the assessment is suitable for online assessment, it can be done.
- 3.4 Kate Smith raised that there have been some teething issues for new visa processes but feedback is being fed to Briony about this.
- 3.5 Peter Cserne updated the committee that Law recently held a meeting for supervisors to provide information on PGR policies and process with RT which was very well received and helpful for supervisor training. It was noted that the Engagement Team is working on school specific supervisor training sessions.
- 3.6 GN emphasised the importance of the student survey and committee members were encouraged to promote this to schools.

#### **4. Doctoral Reps Group Items**

#### **Oral Update**

- 4.1 Victoria Gillman (VG) provided an overview about PGR experiences with Support Services. It was requested that more infrastructure/guidance be provided to students when they need to request reasonable adjustments and for schools to have awareness of adjustments that can be provided. Ailhlin Clark (AC) encouraged students to utilise drop in sessions for students to talk to advisers on campus to provide clarity on these situations. It was suggested that having timelines and guidance outlined to students at the beginning of the process that this could help set and manage expectations.
- 4.2 In relation to viva provisions, Robert Findlay raised there may need to be amendments to policy around additional people being present in examination.
- 4.3 LL update the committee there is PGR specific guidance for Disability Support going through working group.
- 4.4 The committee discussed the importance of safeguarding for students when working off campus – this was raised in relation to student experiences where they have felt unsafe during trips off campus e.g. conference attendance). LL noted that R&I have been developing a safeguarding policy to ensure that this is being considered in discussions with supervisors prior to time spent off campus.
- 4.5 The cost of living crisis was discussed as a concern to students. AC detailed initiatives being launched by the Support Team e.g. food lockers, holiday support cover and Simon Bains asked that library openings over Christmas be promoted to students.

#### **5. Engagement Monitoring Process**

#### **PGR 23\_08**

- 5.1 RT provided an overview of the monitoring policy and the importance of informal intervention before escalating to monitoring.
- 5.2 Phil Ziegler raised concerns over part time expectations for meetings and its connections to supervisor workload. He also questioned whether the process is adaptive for PGRs in comparison to UG. LL clarified that the wording of emails are to be updated and long term are discussions of changing the name from C6/C7 to allow further tailoring for PGRs.
- 5.3 AG sought clarity on who would manage the monitoring process and it was noted this would be overseen by the school.
- 5.4 AG raised if the monitoring process could be used for concerns over progression/quality of work but was agreed this would not be appropriate and would only be for lack of engagement. Progression assessment would remain the process for progression concerns.
- 5.5 AC clarified that where Student Support are requested to be involved for students not engaging that it is helpful for as much context as possible to be provided so they can handle the situation accordingly.
- 5.6 The committee approved the use of the monitoring policy.

#### **6. Electronic Thesis deposit for PGR**

#### **PGR 23\_09**

- 6.1 SB recommended to the committee that the university continue with thesis e-submission following the update of procedures over the pandemic and encouraged any feedback.
- 6.2 Paul Hallett questioned how this would work for individuals accessing files from outside of the university and how student IP is protected if it is not published yet. SB clarified that the university has control of these permissions already and will provide them based on discovery systems.

- 6.3 SB confirmed that submissions made throughout the pandemic would also be included within the new system following discussion.
- 6.4 SB clarified that the new system would be in place by 2024/25 academic year following needs analysis.
- 6.5 The recommendation for maintaining e-submission was approved by committee.

## **7. PGR Regulations update**

## **Oral Update**

- 7.1 LL asked the committee to consider if there are any regulations that require update going forward.

## **8. Covid mitigation funding and process**

- 8.1 LL provided an update on covid mitigation funding available for students following the previous 4 mass survey submissions that were made available for students with due dates up until September 2022. Rather than a further mass survey submission, it was explained extension applications and 30-month review forms will be flagged for students to be considered for further funding. The committee were informed this could be used for research activities and not just funded extension e.g. to spend time at another institution/conference. Extenuating circumstances e.g. caring responsibilities would be considered as in previous rounds.
- 8.2 LL informed that the Development Trust are looking to maintain discussions for long term recovery.
- 8.3 It was noted that PGR Admin teams are aware of this process and that the information is being flagged to PGCs without widely advertising to whole student population.
- 8.4 MK questioned if students could be supported if they have already received additional funding to which LL clarified they could be reviewed but not guaranteed to be approved.
- 8.5 PZ questioned if self funded students would be considered and GN clarified that all covid mitigation funds have been inclusive but also noted the only exclusion is for distance students.

## **9. Look After your Mate/PGR mental health update**

- 9.1 RT provided an overview of mental health training being provided by the Engagement Team – both the Look After Your Mate for students and Look After Your Student for the workshop tailored to supervisors. It was noted Engagement Team presented the workshop at the UKCGE Mental Health for PGRs conference and been well received.
- 9.2 VG voiced that it was assuring to know there are tailored sessions for different populations and that the focus isn't just on the student to solve issues.

## **10. AOCB**

10.1 SB raised the topic of library development which is starting with the second floor this year and seeks to be mindful of PGR needs. It was discussed that getting PGR input to this would be very valuable.

10.2 LL raised that the Support Committee has requested external surveys be considered for promotion within the university and suggested participation in PRES which will be open from Feb – May. Kate Smith voiced that this would be important as so much has changed for the community and the importance of capturing this information. LL clarified that limited results are published for external view but that participants are able to view more detail. Committee supportive of participating in PRES survey

10.3 RT asked the committee for any feedback on the Turnitin processes so far to which Valerie Spiers noted there were some complications with paper titles upon similarity rates. GN explained the importance of supervisors giving a judgement call on ratings in such cases to assess possibility of plagiarism. KS also added that if issues exist with parameters, they can be amended.

10.4 Committee members were asked to review updated absence policy and Structured Management Frameworks included within committee papers for information only.