PGR Committee Minutes – **5th June 2023** at **12:00**

1. **Welcome and apologies**
    1.1 Attendees: Jason Bohan, Peter Cserne, David Johnston (in place of Peter Mtika), Charlotta Hillerdal, Baylee Schutte, Patric Bach, Lucy Leiper, Graeme Nixon, Simon Bains, Rhiannon Thompson, Ekkehard Ullner, Paul Hallett, Claire Ransley, Isabella Kasselstrand
    1.2 Apologies: Phil Ziegler, Robert Findlay, Mehmet Kartal, Suk-jun Kim, Samantha Miller, Audrey Paterson, Valerie Speirs, Amudha Poobalan, Kate Smith, Melanie McCann
    1.3 Graeme Nixon (GN) welcomed Jason Bohan (JB) as Dean for Student Support and Experience and Baylee Schutte (BS) as PGR representative from the Maths department.

2. **Minutes of previous meeting, matters arising**   **PGR 23_16**
    2.1 Minutes from the March meeting were approved by the committee.

3. **Action Log**   **PGR 23_17**
    3.1 GN provided an overview of the action log from the last committee meeting.

Minute Point		Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
08 March 2023	**2.3**	Mehmet Kartal (MK)/Ruth Quigley (RQ) to review EngD programme	**MK/RQ**	**Ongoing**
	4.1	GN to raise PGR fees at next SRC	**GN**	**Ongoing**
	5.1	PGC's to contact Reps to increase visibility of role.	**PGR Committee**	**Ongoing**
	6.1	Ruth to finalise ARC paper and flowchart for inclusion in supervisors handbook	**RQ**	**Will be available for start of AY 23/24**
	8.1	Val to share buddy matching information with RT.	**VS**	**Complete**

4. **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2023**   **PGR 23_18**
    4.1. JB provided an update on the PRES 2023 results which had a response rate of 21% in comparison to normal rate of 31% so will look to improve this in future with Student Experience team. The current results are based on rough analysis prior to full report being sent by Advance HE in July. JB requested feedback from the committee about the relevance of PRES vs ASES survey feedback and their continued use in the university. Clarification was

sought on ASES feedback confirming the previous response rate of only 10%; this is thought to be because of survey being too long and time of year (being requested in November).

4.2. It was confirmed data hasn't been compared to previous institutional PRES data but the last time this was run was 2012 when the question set would have been very different.

4.3. GN drew attention to the fact that some schools have very low response rates and results might not be representative of the whole population.

4.4. Paul Hallett (PH) suggested having data split by year group/discipline would be helpful and GN added that it would perhaps offer insight on those specifically impacted by covid. It was also noted that support requirements vary drastically across year groups which would add context to results.

   Action: Jason to request if year/discipline specific PRES data can be provided.

4.5. It was suggested by PH that schools with low ratings in some areas could seek best practise from schools scoring high within the same category.

4.6. Frequency of the PRES survey was discussed with suggestions it be carried out every second year to allow for feedback to be actioned in good time and adjust survey questions accordingly.

4.7. BS added that where Geoscience scored poorly for research culture, this is reflected also within PGR Representative feedback regarding unusable common areas etc within the school. GN also commented on the generally low ratings for research culture and the importance of student perceptions of this. BS noted that Engineering and NCS students have been working collaboratively to bring PGRs together and would appreciate events e.g. poster presentations to bring schools together and add to research culture.

4.8. JB asked the committee to consider the best way to take PRES feedback forward to which Lucy Leiper (LL) confirmed this might be a mix of PGRS actions and school specific. It was suggested most actions should be handled within schools but that there was hesitancy to introduce a PRES specific action plan alongside so many others. It was suggested that feedback could be integrated into existing action plans across committees e.g. Athena Swan, EDI reps etc.

4.9. RT highlighted emphasised changes should be communicated to students to reflect how feedback has been taken on board. The committee discussed avenues to communicate this including Orientations and JB adding a feedback section to website.

Action: PGR Committee to discuss detailed PRES data at next meeting and to consider how feedback will be used within schools.

Action: CR to take detailed PRES data to Doctoral Reps group for discussion

5. **School/Directorate PGR Items**   **Oral Update**

5.1. Charlotta Hillerdal (CH) raised the issue of sick and parental leave for PGR students following discussion with Geoscience PGR representatives. It was noted that many students feel they are unable to be sick due to financial pressures to not take time off.

   5.1.1. LL mentioned that JB is looking into this for all students and highlighted that this will ultimately come down to finances within schools.

   5.1.2. UKRI sick leave policy was discussed where students can take up to 13 weeks sick leave in the year but noted this is difficult for schools to match. It was suggested that individual funders could be approached in some cases.

      Action: LL and RT – to add sick/maternity/paternity to policy list for review.

      Action: LL and RT to flag the ongoing discussion to Jason in catch up.

6. **Doctoral Reps Group Items**   **Oral Update**

6.1. BS highlighted feedback from PGR representatives around review/progression exercises explaining that many supervisors don't understand timings and expectations. It was suggested that training be provided around processes for this and how to deal with issues when they arise with students.

6.2. It was flagged that students would like a confidential way to raise supervisory issues separate to review forms they send to their supervisor. The online reporting tool has previously been suggested but is felt the categories are not fit for PGR purpose. Furthermore, the optional mental health check in was mentioned as students might not want to highlight concerns to their supervisors but flag to the Engagement Team.

6.2.1. RT highlighted this is part of wider conversation about how and where issues are raised and suggested PGRS could look to add a guide for this on to the website.

6.2.2. There was consideration of having a separate form for student and supervisor but was overall felt keeping things confined to one form was best.

6.2.3. Claire Ransley explained that review communications have been edited to emphasise issues can be raised confidentially with the Engagement Team.

6.2.4. Patric Bach (PB) raised School of Psychology have been trying to launch a committee students can approach for advice outside of their supervisors to which Paul Hallett noted this is generally the role that advisors take on for students in SBS.

6.3. BS explained some development areas that PGRs felt were lacking including thesis writing for PGRs before final year and training for careers in industry.

6.3.1. LL clarified the initial thesis writing events are going to be expanded to all PGRs following a successful launch for final year students.

Action: PGRS Training to organise focus groups to discuss training needs for PGRs.

7. **Off campus process**   PGR 23_19

7.1. LL provided an overview on the updated Off Campus form highlighting that ethics approval must be received before putting the form forward and that students should not be going off campus until their request is approved by a PGO.

7.2. PB questioned if shorter periods of time still require off campus request but it was clarified this is applicable to any length of time working off campus. LL added the conversation was raised with Registry at the time of updating the form but the conversation can be revisited in relation to short visits.

7.3. The committee approved the off campus update to be actioned.

Action: PGRS to put forward approved off campus forms for use from October

8. **Library Update**

8.1. Simon Bains updated stock has been moved off from floor two to be used for informal groups. As a response to negative noise feedback, it is hoped that discussions will be moved to this renovated space.

8.2. The committee was updated on the possible introduction of a silent floor to further take this feedback on board.

8.3. Following previous committee meetings on thesis deposits, the digital preservation storage programme is being taken forward.

8.4. It was noted that there are longer term discussions to take place regarding all library spaces being fit for purpose.

9. **Marking and assessment ban (PGR)**

9.1. GN clarified that UCU Marking and Assessment bans do include PGR assessment but that it is not known to be causing issues for PGR assessments so far.

9.2. It was mentioned both internal and external examiners could withdraw though external would be less likely due to contract obligations.

9.3. GN highlighted a paper went through Senate where it outlined Heads of School would need to reflect on process and work with Dean for QA if this happened.

10. PGRs and ChatGPT

10.1. GN opened discussion to the committee for how the university should approach the use of Chat GPT for PGRs. It was acknowledged there are systems arising for detecting it but that these are not reliable and that considerations need to be given for AI improvements.

10.2. 10.2 The committee discussed that instead of prohibiting it, guidance should be created for how it can appropriately be used and provide any necessary training.

10.3. PB highlighted that the viva should confirm the student wrote, understands, and can defend their thesis which would consider if Chat GPT was used.

10.4. Simon encouraged PGR considerations on this to align with UEC discussions on Chat GPT already and noted that there will likely be an institutional policy being created. The committee acknowledged there would need to be PGR specific guidance around research integrity.

10.5. LL highlighted that Chat GPT might be better considered by Research Committee than PGR Committee.

10.6. It was acknowledged that every institution will likely be having the same conversations and that this will be an ongoing discussion.

11. AOCB

11.1 GN confirmed to the Committee that he would be standing down from his position at the end of August so would be passing over to the new Dean of PGR prior to the next committee meeting and gave thanks to members.