



# University of St Andrews Students' Association Postgraduate Executive Forum

## MINUTES

Tuesday 23 February 2016 – Committee Room, 5pm

### Present

| <b>Name</b>                       | <b>Position</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Anja Ivic                         | Art History PG Exec Rep                                |
| Irene Munao'                      | Chemistry PG Exec Rep                                  |
| Matthew Payne                     | Classics PG Exec Rep                                   |
| Professor Al Dearle               | Dean of Science  |
| Joe Tantillo                      | Director of Representation                             |
| Ilaria Gidoro                     | Education and Representation Coordinator               |
| Mirte Keulen                      | English PG Exec Rep                                    |
| Michael Stefan Luigi Mueller-Rust | Geography & SD PG Exec Rep                             |
| Katrin Ganser                     | Management PG Exec Rep                                 |
| Kelly Rogers                      | Medicine PG Exec Rep                                   |
| Emily Feamster                    | Postgraduate Administrative Officer (Proctor's Office) |

### Absent

|               |                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Carla Freund  | Biology PG Exec Rep                  |
| Ishaan Bindal | Economics & Finance PG Exec Rep      |
| Archana Yadav | Mathematics & Statistics PG Exec Rep |
| VACANT        | PG Convenor                          |

### **1. Apologies**

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Adeola Fabola          | Computer Science PG Exec Rep               |
| Professor Paul Hibbert | Dean of Arts and Divinity                  |
| Johannes Knecht        | Divinity PG Exec Rep                       |
| Sebastian Fischer      | Earth & Environmental Sciences PG Exec Rep |
| Connor McMorran        | Film Studies PG Exec Rep                   |
| Gillian Jack           | History PG Exec Rep                        |
| Emil Archambault       | IR PG Exec Rep                             |
| Charlotte Pearce-Slade | Modern Languages PG Exec Rep               |
| Joe Slater             | Philosophy PG Exec Rep                     |
| Claire Motion          | Physics & Astronomy PG Exec Rep            |
| Katie Dickerson        | Psychology & Neuroscience PG Exec Rep      |
| Sara Lenore Hellman    | Social Anthropology PG Exec Rep            |

**The apologies were accepted without dissent.**

### **2. Matters arising**

## 2.1. Stats Training Module

The module has not started yet, but the Dean of Science confirmed that it will start in the future. He explained that an external company is making this distance learning course and, hopefully, it will be ready before the end of March.

## 2.2. Training for Tutors

The Dean of Arts and Divinity wrote a report to be read during the meeting. Examples of in-school training approaches for PGR tutors are being collated. The collated material will be presented at the next PGRC to encourage further development in those schools where that would be helpful. In addition, a PGR Tutoring Working Group has been formed and met for the first time on Wed 17th Feb. Remit includes looking at: role outline & expectations; orientation/induction; structured training; supervision and monitoring; ongoing support, development/review and mentoring.

## 2.3. Policy on Publication of Articles prior to Thesis Submission

The Dean of Science read the relevant policy: "Single- or multi-authored papers may not be directly reproduced or repeated as a standard chapter, however, these may be included as appendices. It is permitted to include chapters based on published work in the thesis, as long as the relevant publication and collaborations are acknowledged." (Section 10.1 of Policy for Supervisors and Students in Research Postgraduate Programmes). The Deans sent this text to the DoPG in Biology (Thomas Meagher) and asked him to provide feedback on the issues with the current policy. The Dean of Science advised PG students to be careful not to commit academic misconduct (everything needs to be cited appropriately). A paper can be included in the Thesis, but this should be contextualised to fit the narrative.

## 3. Update on PG Working Groups: length of study, progress reviews, fieldwork

**Length of study:** Final proposal from the group is a 4-year PhD (3 + 1 continuation) with a max of a 1-year extension. This proposal is going through committee approval. The group also made proposals to decrease the fees during years 4 & 5 but, as this was outside the remit, it is still up for further discussion with the appropriate committees. The proposal is that fees would be £250 in the 4<sup>th</sup> year, and £250 per quarter in the 5<sup>th</sup> year (to encourage students to finish as soon as possible).

Irene stated that she collected feedback about this from other Chemistry students. In Chemistry—and perhaps in similar disciplines—, students might need more time to get results, or data might not be enough, or there might be cases where the supervisor thinks that a student does not have enough results to submit their thesis. She stated that it does not seem fair that the continuation fee is paid by the student in such cases, which are outside the student's control. She proposed that the fee should at least be split between the student and the supervisor. The Dean of Science noticed that the University needs money to pay the supervisor and suggested Irene speaks with her Director of Research Nick Westwood, or with her HoS, if concerned on this point.

**Progress review:** the working group has a very well developed set of guidelines and processes, but there are some remaining nuances to be finalised. These are principally concerned with different perspectives about the appropriateness of confidentiality in documents submitted by

supervisors and students. Students should have a clear line of communication to a neutral party (the Pro-Dean) when there are supervisory relationship issues. Currently, the results of the progress review can be: satisfactory, satisfactory with concerns, and unsatisfactory. It was proposed to split between minor and major concerns. The working group is taking careful account of different views in this area as the output is finalised – the outcome is going to be a fair, decisive and much clearer process.

**Fieldwork:** needs some additional consideration due to tie-ins with fees policies and implications for length of study in relation to, for instance, research council requirements (some fieldwork activities, including learning a language in the field, merit an extension to the normal time, whereas others may not). Emily is doing research on how other institutions regulate this.

#### **4. Update on Tutor Pay**

Emily read a report from the Dean of Arts and Divinity. The conclusion on this item in the last set of minutes was: “The Dean of Arts and Divinity agreed that tutors should be trained more to be able to mark more quickly.” – and progress in that direction has already been noted above (see 2.2.). Moreover, this is outside the remit of the current working group. The Proctor told the students at a PG Exec Rep Meeting last year that tutoring pay had been evaluated against the job description/contract and was deemed to be appropriate. Current work is focused around ensuring that tutors are doing an appropriate amount of work, at an appropriate level for what they are being paid and ensuring that they receive adequate training and support.

#### **5. Parental Leave Policy**

Ilaria read a message from Claire. Claire heard that there is a proposal to change the parental leave policy for PhD students and asked why the students have not been informed of this. Joe replied that there has been a lack of communication due to the fact that the PG Convenor post is currently vacant. Emily stressed the need for the PG Convenor role to be filled as soon as possible, as the students should have been asked about this change of policy. Emily summarised the proposal: the University would introduce a parental leave for PGR students of up to six months for students with Research Council grants. The University will provide status for those who are on University funding. The leave should be self-funded if the PGR student is self-funded. Council tax should be waived if the student lives in Fife (there are no agreements with other councils). The policy also applies to students who have a pregnant partner. This proposal has gone to PGRC. Joe said he would send the link of the policy proposal.

**Action: Joe to circulate the link with the policy proposal.**

#### **6. Costs of 5<sup>th</sup> year and beyond for PhDs: current status and future plans**

This question, coming from a Classics PG Rep, has been already covered in point 3. Matthew asked how many more meetings the proposal on length of study needs to go through. The Dean of Science replied that it needs to go through a first meeting, then to PGRC and, finally, to Academic Council. This will probably be over by the end of this academic year.

#### **7. Information on post 3rd Year for PhDs**

A Classics PG Rep asked if there could be better information—and more available—on the University website about funding opportunities. Joe replied that there is a project called Senate

Efficiency Review. There is an online database that can be accessed through eVision and is called "Fund". The Dean of Science would check if this is already accessible. Joe stated that it is supposed to be launched soon, if it is not already available.

**Action: The Dean of Science to investigate if this is already accessible.**

Emily reminded that the ASC can also help on this point. The weekly emails from Heather McKiggan-Fee also occasionally refer to sources of funding.

## **8. Sharing best practice ideas**

There was nothing to report.

## **9. AOCB**

Ilaria reminded that reps can organise class reps events, School events, or year group events, and they can get funding from the [Education Discretionary Fund](#). There is still plenty of money in the fund.

The Dean of Science noticed that there are very few PG Exec Reps attending this meeting and asked why. Katrin stated that most of the items discussed today are PGR-related, and that PGT reps might not see the need to attend. Joe reminded that PG Exec Reps should represent the entire PG community in a School. He also said that a possible separation between PGT and PGR reps was discussed last year at a PG Exec Forum, but students did not want this.

**Action: Ilaria to investigate this point and get feedback from PG Exec Reps.** *(Note: Ilaria is waiting for a PG Academic Convenor to be appointed in order to check their views and then collect feedback.)*

Another Rep stated that, perhaps, the low attendance is simply due to the fact that this is a busy period in the term.

**The meeting adjourned.**