



## **PGR Postgraduate Executive Forum Minutes**

**3rd May 2018, 3pm**

### **Students' Association Committee Room**

#### **Present:**

#### **Member**

#### **Position**

Andy Murphy	Provost
Doug Philp	Dean of Science
James Plamer	Pro-Dean PGR
Fanny Empacher	PG Academic Convenor (Chair)
Cameron Rice	PG Society Secretary
Joanna Thornborough	Academic Policy Officer (Research)

Clare Fisher	Art History
Cameron Rice	Chemistry
Xu Zhu	Computer Science
Jessica Crumpton-Banks	Earth Sciences & Geology
Nayha Mansoor	Economics & Finance
Parker Gordon	English
Hailey Ogle	History
Erika Brady	IR
Steph Haywood	Management
Ashley Clayton	Mathematics & Statistics
Inés Nearchou	Medicine
Ethan Landes	Philosophy
Kristin Lund	Physics & Astronomy
Giuseppe Troccoli	Social Anthropology
Jacob Francis	Psychology & Neuroscience

#### **1. Apologies & Introductions:**

Lorna Milne	Proctor
Paul Hibbert	Dean of Arts
Zachary Davis	Director of Education

Brett Dodgson	Director of Graduate School
Monique MacKenzie	Deputy Director of Graduate School

Remi Fritzen	Biology
Paul Childs	Divinity
Ana Maria Sapountzi	Film Studies
Zongtian Guo	Geography & SD
Eleanor Crabtree	Modern Languages

No PGR representative	Classics, ELT
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All attendees introduce themselves to the room.

## **2. Approval of Minutes:**

Approved with alterations.

### **3. Announcements:**

Following from last meeting:

**Tutor Pay:**

A rectification to the Tutor Pay scheme has been prepared by the Dean of Arts. So far, this has been passed by two independent committees (Postgraduate Research and Learning & Teaching), but it is yet to be passed by the Academic Council.

The Academic Convenor and Incoming Academic convenor are happy to take any comments regarding the proposal, once it has been circulated.

**Training for Tutors:**

A new PGR development group has been set up to help tackle issues that Postgraduate Tutors face. It is hoped this will fill in any gaps that the current CAPOD Tutor Training course does not address.

**Networking Opportunities:**

A PG Class Rep Events Workshop in January was well received and will be repeated in coming years.

The PG Society also hosted their first PhD-specific events – these were very well attended.

**CAPOD's Three-Minute Thesis tournament:**

Elimination tournament that challenges PG students to describe the work of their thesis a three-minute presentation. Preliminary rounds will take place in the coming weeks, with the winner receiving a £500 prize.

**PG Society & St Leonard's College PG Researcher retreat:**

Three-night retreat, taking place at The Burn (Glenesk) in August.

Programme of events will focus on how to be a researcher.

**Funding secured by Ethan (Philosophy) and Jessica (Earth Sciences & Geology):**

Funding has been secured from the Union to host an interdisciplinary event for volunteers to introduce their research topic to students from other schools.

The event is expected to be informal and run by students.

### **4. Orientation:**

Item originally listed on the Semester 1 PGR Executive Forum Agenda.

**Academic Convenor:** The University is in the process of making large changes to the PGT Induction/Orientation system. What were your Orientation experiences and is there anything that you would like to see changed for PGRs?

**History:** Generally, the induction process was fantastic.

However, certain student body representatives, such as ones representing students with families, were not present at the induction event. This made it very difficult for some students to find their feet in the early days.

**Management:** Some overseas students arrive late to so St Andrews and hence miss Orientation Week and induction events, meaning there were limited opportunities to meet fellow students.

Those students who were present during Orientation week found there was a lack of appropriate (PG-specific) events.

Furthermore, many Management students have already taken at least one degree at St Andrews, and so compulsory orientation events centred on where to find the Sports Centre, etc., were of limited relevance. There should be more clarification on who needs to go to which Orientation event and what they will cover.

However, those who did attend the events found them to be very informative, particularly ones where 2<sup>nd</sup> year students spoke of their positive experiences.

**Computer Science:** The school operates a mentoring scheme for new students. Here, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years are up with 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students within the school. This is common with PGTs across other subjects in University, but not so much with PGRs. Is it possible to roll this out across the University for PGRs as well?

**Medicine:** Incoming students are again paired up with a current student within the school. On their first day, the current student will show them around the building and have lunch together with them. This works really well.

**English:** No formal Orientation process at all, however, this is being discussed with the School President currently.

**Maths & Statistics:** The Orientation process and experience seems to vary from year to year.

### **Response:**

**Academic Convenor:** CAPOD has a computer system that can be used to sort out Orientation pairings/buddy systems. However, you would still be able to sort out within your school.

**Academic Policy Officer (Research):** PhD mentoring schemes have recently been floated across the University, without great success. However, this could be tried again. The above ideas will be discussed with CAPOD (responsible for induction events) and Penny Turnbull (Orientation) in meetings in the near future.

**Action Point:** PG Society to organise events for the weeks of Induction/Orientation so that students who may have missed the 'Freshers' Events can still come to something.

## **5. Student Representation:**

**Academic Convenor:** You are now coming to the end of your time as PG Exec reps for this year. How had the process worked for you, and is there anything that you would like changed?

### **Response:**

**Earth Sciences & Geology:** A Social Representative for the school had been 'unofficially' elected recently. This appointment aims to further increase interaction amongst students within the school through social activities, such as a group hike.

### **Opinions on School Staff Councils:**

Maths & Stats: Having speaking rights at School-Staff meetings has proved invaluable and has allowed PG experience within the school to be broadcast to its' staff.

English: Having a seat on the Staff Council has been very useful.

Computer Science: Sitting on the Research Impact committee has been great for learning of placement and networking opportunities available to students in the school.

IR: Student representatives have no access to Staff Council meetings, meaning that some staff don't actually know who the student representatives are. Communication may be improved within the school if students were allowed to sit in this committee.

### **Response:**

Provost: Speaking form experience in the school of English, confidential and non-confidential matters are discussed at these meeting and so it is not always appropriate to have students present.

Pro-Dean PGR: Size of the meeting can also sometimes be an issue, with some schools unable to accommodate everyone if invitations are extended to students and student representatives.

Dean of Science: School Councils are often used for different reasons and so it is not appropriate to have students present. Aside from this, the content of the meetings would typically be of limited relevance to student representatives.

**Action Point:** Next semesters PGR Experience group to investigate this matter further. English, Maths and Geology & Environmental Science have full access to Staff Council meeting already.

### **Opinions on Intra-School Postgraduate Executive Forum:**

How would you feel about having a PG Exec forum within your own school? This is something that could be looked into next year if demand dictates.

### **Response:**

Economics and Finance: This sounds like a good idea in principle, but there may not be the need.

Earth Sciences & Geology: A very similar meeting already takes place within the school once a semester, where a free lunch is provided. This informal meeting works well and is timed before the University PG Committee meetings so that relevant information is ready for discussion.

### **Opinions on the work and events of the PG Society:**

Attendees agreed that the majority of events are attended by Masters students and that there some more PhD-specific events should be organised.

Management: There are minimal events available for mature students and students with families.

**Response:**

Academic Convenor: The Lifers Society are responsible for the mature student body, however, the PG Society will look to organise more events in collaboration with them next year.

**6. Data Storage:**

Academic Convenor: The issue of data storage provided by the University of PGR students was raised in the preparation meetings. There is a general feeling that the 3GB allocated to students on the University servers is not enough. What are your opinions on this?

**Response:**

Physics: The 3GB allocated to students is not enough for students in the school. There is no money pot available to pay for more.

Comp Science: 12GB is allocated to each student, which in some cases still is not sufficient. In cases where this is insufficient, students were able to obtain multiple TeraByte storage disks by simply asking the IT team in the school.

Medicine: Students in the school regularly have over 1 TB data. Although this is maintained by University, it is paid for by independent research groups.

Management: When enquiring with IT services about storage space, students were reassured that they would not run out of storage space, however, the space where excess files are stored was not made clear.

In some instances, there are data protection issues associated with storing research on non-local servers such as 'The Cloud'.

Dean of Science: PIs in the University are allocated 500GB storage and his students are allowed to use this to store their research data. This communal storage system is common in the Chemistry Department.

Each academic school also gets a storage allocation on central file systems. The limit to what is available for students to use of this is at the discretion of the school itself.

As this data storage issue is probably with PIs, the action should be on them in the first instance.

**7. Communication with PGR Students:**

Academic Convenor: Several issues with PGR communication have been raised. These mainly involve PGRs experiencing a lack of information on relocation of offices and a lack of information about the recent UCU strikes.

IR: Students on the ground floor of Bute Building recently have had to move up to Floor E (top floor) to make way for the new Graduate School. This caused a major reshuffle of the ground floor and happened with very short notice and limited negotiation, leading to some students raising issues.

The main problems students raised were that there was limited to no notice or communication with the students, prior to the move taking place. Students felt they should have been given the chance to represent themselves over the matter.

Philosophy: The Philosophy department have experienced similar disruption in their school, however this was due to the physical destruction of learning space.

**Response:**

Provost: The Space Manager has one of the hardest jobs in the university as they are tasked with finding room for learning and teaching in a space that doesn't physically exist. This can sometimes lead to complications.

Dean of Science: There are many community consultation systems and vertical ladders for communication within the University, but the actual passage of information is sometimes interrupted en-route (University Council to Heads of Schools, or Heads of Schools to students, etc). The PG Exec forums are a good opportunity for students to communicate with high-level University staff on important matters.

**8. AOCB:**

A PG Representative social will be organised in the near future as a way of thanking you for your efforts this year.

Meeting adjourned.