



PGR Postgraduate Executive Forum

2.00pm - 12th December 2018

Small Rehearsal Room (Student's Union)

Present:

Member

Position

Ashley Clayton	Academic Convenor (AC) (Chair)
Paul Hibbert	Vice-Principal Education (VPE)
Tom Brown	Dean of Science (DoS)
Frank Lorenz Müller	Dean of Arts and Divinity (DoAD)
Sibylle Scheipers	Pro-Dean PGR (PDPGR)
Alice Foulis	Director of Education (DoED)
Emmy Feamster	Academic Policy Officer PGR (APPGR)
Emma Bond	Deputy Provost St. Leonard's College (in place of Monique Mackenzie) (DPStL)
Brett Dodgson	Graduate School Manager (GSM)
Ana Neferu	PG Society Secretary (PGSec)
Xu Zhu	Computer Science (CS)
Flamina Incecci	International Relations (IR)
James Edwards	Earth and Environmental Sciences (EES)
Ethan Landes	Philosophy (PHI)
Jacob Francis	Psychology and Neuroscience (PSY)
Fabien Troivoix	English (EN)
Rikst van der Schoor	History (HI)
Rhea Stewart	Physics (in place of Laura Staffini) (PHY)
Stephanie Haywood	Management (MN)
Chiara Villa	Mathematics and Statistics (MT)

1. Apologies

Approval of previous Minutes:

Minutes of the previous meeting are approved without alteration.

2. Introductions & Membership

All attendees introduce themselves to the room.

It was discussed that a CAPOD representative would make a useful addition to these meetings.

AC to reach out to CAPOD.

3. PGR Orientation and Community

AC asked the executive reps their opinion about the 2018/19 orientation experience at the Postgraduate Society and St Leonard's College level.

- PSY: Postgraduate Society is doing a good job in terms of events, so there is less pressure for them to do events within the school.
- MN: It is very difficult to have a sense of community among all PGRs because some people have families and others live outside St. Andrews. For new PGRs, they usually start on 27 Sept and there was a problem this year that PGR orientation happened before that day. Within their school they have a dedicated social representative and funding in the school to help with community building. Within the school it was hard to meet people from other schools given the orientation date.
 - o GSM: the St. Leonard's drinks reception for new postgrads can potentially be delayed to match the usual start date.
 - o DoS: a PhD student of his started at an unusual time and there were no events to welcome them in the PG community.

AC to ensure and confirm that orientation events happen around 27 September in 19/20.

AC asked about the orientation experience and community-building events within the departments to engage some best practice discussion.

- PHY: there are many events within the department, mostly from student run organizations which have welcome events for new and other people. One such event series consists of meetings in the staff common room and student-led seminars at 5:30pm that give people the chance to interact with others about science in a comfortable environment, with no professors present.
- IR: There is also a staff-student seminar of the type in physics where they also provide pizza, but because they are a big school, people do not feel compelled to show up because others will. There are monthly socials usually in a pub, and a Christmas social.
- PHI: there is a Friday PG afternoon seminar where people usually go to a pub afterwards.
- AC: there is such a casual seminar in Mathematics too, which is useful because there are no staff so there is no pressure for students to speak up. There is a possibility to provide funding from the schools for such events, and potentially from the University too if representatives wish to enquire.
- PSY: there are such school-wide student seminars in the school too.

- CS: there was an induction in the school, and some joint events with master students: one over pizza, and another Christmas themed. It is good to have joint events because there are more people which makes it easier to organize. The school organizes student seminars every 2 weeks.
- EES: they do a lot of events with Geography because they share a building and used to be one department. They do Friday drinks and Christmas parties.

AC to organize a pizza event next semester for PGR Reps to meet and share experiences.

AC asked if anyone has run into funding issues. No problems were brought up.

- DPStL: The Provost is keen to support cross-school events and they have set up a community fund for such events. One such event that has already received funding is PubHD, where students give a talk in a pub. Details are on the St. Leonard's website. (<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/pgstudents/stleonards/community/communityfund/>).
- PHI: they tried to organize a cross-school event and the school had logistical problems with more than one school involved. This also caused problems with the tickets sold on the Union website.
- MN: on the topic of cross-school events, last year there was a proposal of a PGR Mental Health event, which would be very useful.
 - o EES rep offered to carry it on, as the previous EES rep started it.
 - o PHY: there was such an event in the school: a wellbeing day for several sections of the school (undergrads and postgrads). This was well-attended and very successful. They also got feedback that the school can implement.
 - o DoEd: the Director of Wellbeing proposed such an event to all schools, and all school presidents were keen to have one.

EES to investigate such an event, AC to put Postgraduate Development Officer, DoWell and EES in touch to provide support.

4 PGR Class Representative Experience and Election Dates

AC and MN asked DoED if the election dates for PGR representatives can be postponed, as elections currently occur before the start date of most new PGRs. DoEd replied that this would be easy to do.

- EES: the former representative left events for him to organize without him knowing about it because he had to take over too soon, so a month later for the elections would be useful.

AC asked how everyone finds being representatives so far. The general consensus is that it is a good experience.

AC asked if anyone tried to organize a PG Forum after training discussion,

- EES has one every semester anyway, and it is very useful. They always provide food and coffee and tea which helps people show up.
- MN consulted a few people in the school whether they want it, and since only about 10 students are regularly in the office (the others live further away), they said it is not necessary because they can contact her in other ways. The system is working for the school.

5 PhD Thesis Turnitin trial

DoAD discussed that a trial for the process of thesis Turnitin checks will start in January in 3 schools, including IR and English. If the process is smooth, it will be introduced to all schools.

- PhD theses will also have to be submitted electronically (divided into subsections because one single document would be too large). The online submission would generate a Turnitin report, which would be available to the internal and external examiner, as well as the student.
- The reports do not determine fraud or plagiarism, but flag up quotes similar to something already published. If it is properly cited, it is no problem.
- The internal examiner will look at the document and if there is any problem, they will discuss with the external examiner if this is a case of academic misconduct prior to the viva.
- The University expects this to be a problem in practically 0% of cases.
- In the list of declarations that PhD students have to make, there is one more signature required to confirm that the electronic copy has been submitted as well.
- The viva examination is otherwise the same except there will be a tickbox to say that the thesis was checked for plagiarism.
- Turnitin is widely used at other institutions, either at the final submission stage or also at different intermediate stages such as annual reviews.

All reps to disseminate this information to their PGR cohort.

EES: What would Turnitin submission mean for patented work?

- DoAD: the software does not make the information available, unless another PhD thesis somewhere else submits the same text.
- DoS: we need to look into the legal implications of this issue. Geology asked if they are aware of other institutions using it for theses and it works for them.

MN: multiple PGRs did a master's degree right before their PhD, and the topic can overlap with the PhD. It is not the same work and the school and supervisors know this, and students have been taught how to not plagiarize themselves, but there is some worry that may be flagged up on Turnitin.

- VPE: just be honest that the methodology has been used in the past.
- DoA: if it is cited properly, it is not a problem.

6 PGR Tutor Pay check in

In 2017/18, The PGR tutor pay policy was reviewed and there is a new policy effective as of 1 September 2018/19. Part of this change was to combat previously expressed views of unfair marking policy "missing" hours of pay in particular. The former PG Convenor sent an excellent feedback survey last year prior to the policy. **AC will send a similar survey this year to collect follow-up feedback.**

The entire policy is available with examples on the HR website: <https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/hr/hourlypaidcasualteachingstaff/>

Staff members asked how the new policy been advertised.

- PSY: has not heard anything of the policy being updated prior to this meeting. Maybe most schools put it in the handbook.

- IR: knows about the policy, but only from personal investigation. IR is in the lower pay bracket.
- PHI: pointed out that there is a marking band and a separate preparation band. They expressed the view that the preparation band is not clear. The department does not communicate as to how the second band is applied, which may be a common problem.
- MN: PGRs in the school do not have to do marking at the moment but the prep band is implemented and was communicated, so everyone teaching knows of it. If one is teaching a class for the first time or something changed from the last time they taught the class, then they receive 3 hours extra pay, otherwise 1 hour. Everyone in the school is satisfied with this.

Representatives asked if the hours can be backdated from when the policy was implemented at the University level until it is implemented in practice in each school.

- AC: there may be individual school precedent for PGR back payments in other circumstances going back a few years.

Interested reps (where this is a problem) to investigate with their schools.

APPGR asked what the best way to communicate with students about changes such as this one is.

- PSY: an email from the Director of Teaching (DoT) or someone higher up is preferable.
- IR: the Teaching Coordinator or DoT to mention it during the school-specific preparatory workshops.
- AC brought up that he writes reports to the Students Association about the policy meetings he attended anyway, and he could send such a report to the PGR representatives as well, an idea well received by representatives.

AC to establish a fortnightly email for representatives of this manner.

- MN: it is better to communicate too many times than not enough. Also, they have no contact with the DoT but with the DoR (Director of Research), so the DoRs should also be more informed about this policy change.

IR: maybe it would be a good idea for PGRs who teach to be paid to attend the CAPOD mental health courses, because mental health incidents happen. The IR school said they do not have enough money, but maybe this is useful for other schools.

AC to talk to PG Development Officer about this.

7 MMS CAPOD Course (AC, CS)

AC and CS have noted that CAPOD do not provide guidance training on MMS marking for tutors and how to submit marks, so AC is currently in contact with CAPOD to set this up. This will hopefully become part of the regular induction or a separate course.

AC to continue investigations and to update representatives when completed.

9 AOCB

There was no other competent business.