

PGR Committee Meeting Minutes 04/12/2024

1. Welcome and apologies

- 1.1. Attendees: Daniel Pedersen (DP), Archie Graham (AG), Rhona Gibson (RG), Lucy Leiper (LL), Rhiannon Thompson (RT), Stuart Piertney (SP), Peter Cserne (PC), Isabella Kasselstrand (IK), Steve Tucker (ST), Sam Miller (SM), Johannes Heim (JH), Kate Smith (KS), Robert Findlay (RF), Brian Hussey (BH), Jason Bohan (JB), Patric Bach (PB), Rhona Gibson (RG), Audrey Paterson (AP), Charlotta Hillerdal (CH), Claire Ransley (CR)
- 1.2. Apologies: Ekke Ullner, Mehmet Kartal, Sanni Ahonen
- 1.3. Brian Hussey attending in place of Ashar Ehsan and Daniel Pedersen in place of Ben Marsden.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

PGR 25_07

- 2.1. Minutes of previous meeting approved.

3. Action Log

PGR 25_08

- 3.1. BH noted that recruitment marketing for PGRs is lacking at an institutional level and should be a wider focus for the university outside of specific projects.
 - 3.1.1. LL emphasised promoting the quality of research as part of this.
 - 3.1.2. SP noted the committee could consider marketing/recruitment as a standing item.
 - 3.1.3. JH suggested targeting of specific markets e.g. Gaelic connections could be developed wider in the university and capitalise on markets that have been successful so far.
 - 3.1.4. SM highlighted the importance of developing opportunities for graduates.

Minute Point		Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
7 th October	4.1	Ashar Ehsan’s role title to be updated and define input required for committee.	SP	Ongoing - awaiting consultation on updated title and discussion on input.
	6.2	SP to follow up more detailed PRES data from Jason Bohan.	LL/SP	JB provided update on PRES in December meeting.
	6.8	All School Directors to discuss PRES report with schools to establish action points.	All committee	Complete
	8.2	Robert Findlay to update on regulation omnibus timings.	RF	Complete – update on regulations omnibus provided in December meeting.
	8.7	SP to circulate paper via email to formalise discussions and changes to review and progression processes.	SP	Update provided in December committee meeting.

4. Regulations Omnibus Update

Oral Update

- 4.1. Minor changes have previously gone forward to omnibus and approved. The current pending update is the move from bi-annual to annual reports on progress and development (change to reg 27). This will be pending review at QAC.
CR to circulate regulation updates with tracked changes to committee.
- 4.2. JH highlighted the importance of using 6M reviews during discussions of next steps/progression and the committee then discussed the importance of ensuring issues are flagged as soon as possible rather than waiting until 6/18/30 month points. It was also highlighted that the RDA and wider resources will provide ongoing support for students (agenda item 5).
- 4.3. JB queried if student feedback has been considered and SP highlighted this takes on board feedback from students to reduce monitoring while ensuring availability of support resources/clear routes to flag issues.
- 4.4. ST indicated that the timeline for implementing proposed changes would be discussed with SP and LL as it is dependant on QAC and Senate processes.

5. RDA Update

Oral Update

- 5.1. LL provided an overview of the proposed resources students would have access to throughout their research outlining the PGR Roadmap and associated documentation.
- 5.2. SM queried if the RDA resources can be adapted for masters and LL confirmed they would be built into something specific for them.
- 5.3. PC queried if all resources would be month specific relating to student's start dates and LL noted some events would be in line with the majority intakes but most resources should be accessible on demand.

6. PGR Community Update

Oral Update

- 6.1. RT provided an overview of community events for the previous and current academic year including changes to Orientation this year, the PGR Communitia Series, That's Not Real! Research and Winter Warmers. Feedback from PRES and input from students has been considered to select topics for PGR Communitia sessions (including feedback from distance students). The ongoing schedule of community events has been funded by the Development Trust.
- 6.2. LL highlighted the importance of supervisor's prioritising PGR involvement in community events.
- 6.3. PB acknowledged that Aberdeen remains around the 60% sector wide average for community and that there will be a level of difficulty to raise past this.

7. PRES Survey (Jason Bohan)

PGR 25_09

- 7.1. JB updated that PRES has been run twice and is about to run it's third cycle with engagement a little below sector averages and mostly first year students completing it.
- 7.2. Following discussion on whether to run annually or biennially, JB recommended continuing with annual completion to keep dialogue with students open and in line with many UK institutions.
- 7.3. JB acknowledged difficulties in collating/integrating feedback and importance of having this data distributed as soon as possible going forward. It was also noted that after getting 3 years of data, access to a Power BI dashboard will be provided which will assist with this.
- 7.4. It was highlighted newsletters will be utilised to communicate changes based on feedback.
- 7.5. CH voiced concerns from colleagues about small completion rates not being sufficient data to act on but JB emphasised importance of using available data to us.
- 7.6. **JB to ask Student Experience team to send PRES information directly to PGR Directors so schools can contribute directly to actions for newsletter distribution.**
- 7.7. **LL to contact Planning about sanitising school data for circulation**

8. Readmissions process

PGR 25_10

- 8.1. RF summarised need for formal policy due to increased requests to readmit.
- 8.2. LL highlighted that Head of School signature should be required due to impact on supervisor workloads.
RF to include Head of School signature on readmission form.
- 8.3. RF highlighted Immigration team have been involved in creation of policy.
- 8.4. AG queried what the process would be if supervisors are no longer at the university and RF confirmed schools would need to arrange an alternative team.
- 8.5. ST questioned if there are considerations for consistency across school decisions and RF confirmed that Dean approval would be required for all.
- 8.6. RF confirmed students would have access to appeals process as normal if required.
- 8.7. The committee approved the readmissions policy and to go forward to QAC.
RF to follow up putting readmissions policy on the next QAC agenda.

9. Doctoral Reps Group Items

Oral Update

- 9.1. CR updated on behalf of PGR reps a summary of discussions at the last meeting.
 - 9.1.1. Feedback from reps was considered for planning of Communita events in 2025 including the suggestion for supervisor's to be invited to all sessions.
 - 9.1.2. Discussions around RDA/support encouraged conversation around equality of supervision. Importance of first meeting checklist/resources for setting up supervisory relationship at the beginning of study were discussed and it was agreed this could be integrated to PGRC welcome email communications.
 - 9.1.3. Physical space for PGRs was discussed with interest voiced towards utilising the old Starbucks café. It was suggested that Stuart Piertney could be the contact person to investigate this with the Reimagining the Campus group.
 - 9.1.4. CH highlighted the value of having access to a kitchen as part of informal space for PGRs to gather and talk together.

10. Digital Storage (Simon Bains)

Oral Update

- 10.1. SB provided an update on the Digital Preservation Project to mitigate institutional risk around information security/governance and priorities over the next year.
- 10.2. A paper will come back to committee with a formal recommendation which will be budget dependant for a year on year cost.
- 10.3. It was clarified that existing paper thesis copies will remain in store.
- 10.4. SB updated that approximately 400 thesis' are received each year for context in volume of storage.

11. School/Directorate Items

Oral Update

- 11.1. JH noted following previous discussion around integrated PhDs, considerations of whether to include taught components and concerns from some institutions e.g. Saudi Arabia to include a significant taught provision within the three year structure that would make it difficult to complete all required research (noting this wouldn't be an integrated PhD). It was updated that this does seem to be an exceptional discussion for Saudi Arabia for now but other sponsors may be interested. LL noted at this point there is a DHPAH integrated programme already in place.

12. AOCB

- 12.1. SM highlighted it would be helpful to have a line for printed names alongside signatures on change of circumstance forms where names aren't clear.
RF to follow up change in circumstance forms to include line for printed name from January.

12.2. SP noted thanks to Claire Ransley as clerk for the committee prior to departure from the university in January.