PGR Committee Meeting Minutes 27/03/2025

1. **Welcome and apologies**
   1.1. Attendees: Stuart Piertney (SP); Lucy Leiper (LL); Rhiannon Thompson (RT); Simon Bains (SB); Susan Halfpenny (SH); Rossana Ducato (RD); Simon Bains (SB); Ekke Ulner (EU); Rachael Gray (RG); Isabella Kasselstrand (IK); Kate A. Smith (KS); Lesley Macrae (LM); Paul Hallett (PH); Ben Marsden (BM); Johannes Heim (JH); Samantha Miller (SM); Patric Bach (PM); Rhona Gibson (RG); Freya Juul Jensen (FJ); Archie Graham (AG); Mehmet Kartal (MK); Charlotta Hillerdal (CH)
   1.2. Apologies: Peter Cserne; Jason Bohan; Steve Tucker; Robert Findlay; Brian Hussey; Audrey Paterson
   1.3. Rossana Ducato attending in place of Peter Cserne

2. **Minutes of previous meetings**   **PGR 25_11**
   2.1. Kate Smith (KM) asked for clarification on point 4.1 and if there was a timeline in place for the proposed changes to the six monthly review process. Stuart Piertney (SP) advised the new regulations should be in place for Academic Year 2025/2026. The timeline for the change for existing students is to be advised. Johannes Heim (JH) asked for clarity on the Development Needs Analysis. SP confirmed this will be part of the induction for Academic Year 2025/2026.
   2.2. Ben Marsden (BM) requested clarification on point 8. Readmissions process and asked if the Head of School signature could be Head of School or a nominee. SP agreed if the Head of School has delegated this that is acceptable, however it is important the Head of School is aware of such requests.
   2.3. The minutes of the previous meeting (04/12/2025) were then approved.

3. **Action Log**   **PGR 25_12**
   3.1 There were no outstanding previous actions.

Minute Point		Identified Action	Individual(s) Responsible	Action Status/Update
4th December 2024	**4.1**	CR to circulate regulation updates with tracked changes to committee.	**CR**	Complete
	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.	**JB**	Complete
	7.7	LL to contact Planning about school data for circulation.	**LL**	Complete
	8.2	RF to include Head of School signature on readmission form.	**RF**	Complete

	8.7	RF to follow up putting readmissions policy on the next QAC agenda.	**RF**	Complete
	12.1	RF to follow up change in circumstance forms to include line for printed name from January.	**RF**	Complete

4. Paternal leave for doctoral researchers   PGR 25-13
4.1. SP presented the cover paper University of Aberdeen policy for parental leave for doctoral researchers. The aim of the paper is to begin discussions on introducing a formal paternal policy for PGR students to reduce inequities for students which can differ depending on funding and school.
4.2. There is a possibility of a central pot of fund to cover costs across all schools.
4.3. Paul Hallett (PH) requested the policy incorporates support and guidelines for students who are parents.
4.4. Freya Juul Jensen (FJ) asked for study space logistics to be considered for students on leave.
4.5. Patric Bach (PB) requested a similar policy be implemented for student sickness.
4.6. The group was supportive of the paper however concerns surrounding financial constraints within schools and hurdles for international students were noted.
4.7. Johannes Heim (JH) noted the Scottish Funding Council revenue and SP agreed this would be an appropriate use of funds.
4.8. Isabella Kasselstrand (IK) asked for clarity on the UKRI paternity policy. **Action - LL**
4.9. SP will progress the policy with the next steps being sourcing advice from the Student Immigration Compliance Team and presenting the proposal to Head of Schools and the SMT. **Action - SP**

5. Mandating Data Management Plans (DMPs) for PhD Students   PGR 25-14
5.1. SP introduced the positioning paper Mandating Data Management Plans (DMPs) for PhD Students.   The aim of the paper is to begin discussions on mandating DMPs for new students beginning studies next academic year 2025/26 across all disciplines. SP introduced Rachael Gray (RG).
5.2. RG provided an overview of the proposal and invited the group to provide feedback and questions.
5.3. PH asked for clarity on how this would work for all disciplines and if we could ask students if the proposed software would be suitable and provide value for money and time.
5.4. BM asked about the potential workload involved.
5.5. Rossana Ducato (RD) would be interested to see an example of the software
5.6. IK and Lesley Macrae (LM) advised it would be important for students to receive training.
5.7. Archie Graham (AG) highlighted it will be important to align with the ethical approval process.
5.8. SP confirmed there would be no additional cost to schools   .
5.9. RG to share link to proposed software for the group to view and provide feedback. **Action – RG**

6. Digital Preservation of Electronic Theses   PGR 25-15
6.1 Simon Bains (SB) introduced the paper Digital Preservation of Electronic Theses and requested approval in principle from the Committee to proceed with the recommendations:

Procurement of new system

Old digital theses to be put on new system

Funding and renewal

6.2 PH asked if the proposed system will be joined up with other universities and SB confirmed it would be. The proposed system follow ISO standard.

6.3 SB will provide further update on progression at future meetings. **Action – SB**

7. **Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research**   **PGR 25-16**
   7.1. SP introduced the paper Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research and invited discussions on introducing a declaration for students on how students have used generative AI in their thesis construction alongside how it can be used or misused.
   7.2. LL presented the slides AI in Research.
   7.3. IK requested supervisor training to recognise AI and guidelines on what is permitted.
   7.4. BH raised point 4.7 focusses on scientific research and also raised concerns around recognising AI. SP highlighted the Viva is an important tool for this.
   7.5. Sam Miller (SM) recognises AI is often used as early as the application stage and in the APEs. Guidance or declaration earlier in the process would also be useful.
   7.6. KS agreed providing guidance at inductions and differentiating between university and school policies would be helpful for students.
   7.7. Rhona Gibson (RGi) asked if students will be involved. LL confirmed this will be a discussion at the next Doctoral Reps meeting.
   7.8. RG highlighted we are often unaware of using AI, for example spell check and we need to be explicit. FJ agreed a checklist system would be helpful.

8. **Doctoral Reps Group Items**   **Oral Update**
   8.1 FJ advised the last meeting was held on 10/03/2025. The main discussions were surrounding the neuro-inclusive viva suggestion papers and how to help students have a better experience. LL confirmed the paper is currently with LL/SP for review. **Action – LL/SP**

9. **Schools/Directorate Items**   **Oral Update**
   9.1. IK raised issue of students automatically becoming part-time when on extension, resulting in them being eligible for council tax. RT confirmed students in Aberdeen City Council can apply for council tax exemption for the first twelve months extension if they were full time during their supervised study period, however this does not apply to Aberdeenshire Council.
   9.2. KS asked for an update on the thesis through Turnitin trials. RT advised Robert Findlay is leading the trial. **Action – Robert Findlay to update.**
   9.3. JH raised concerns around Turnitin and academic misconduct. SP advised the proposed training on Generative AI for examiners and supervisors may help with this.
   9.4. Mehmet Kartal (MK) asked if students had to share their experimental data with the school. RT advised this is intellectual property which is owned by the university. Students are given the option to opt out of this. **Action – RT to send link**