Present: Professor J Masthoff (convener), Dr C Bestwick, Dr B Gorgoni, Professor R Evans-Jones, Dr K Kiezebrink, Professor C Montagna, Dr B Lord, Professor A Lumsden, D Stewart (PGR LLMVC), Professor C Secombes, S Dropulijc (PGR Law), Professor T O’Donaghue, S Sarica (PGR SMSMN), Dr Andrew McKinnon, O Ajala (PGR Engineering), Dr A Hunt, P Spence, E Forster, Dr C Calder, Dr R Shanks, Dr L Leiper (clerk).

Apologies: Dr A Cuesta Ciscar, Dr L Phillip, R Findlay

Professor Masthoff welcomed all to the first meeting of the new PGR committee and introduced Dr L Leiper as Manager of the Graduate School.

COMMITTEE REMIT AND MEMBERSHIP

1. The Committee remit and membership were agreed. P Spence requested that the Centre for Academic Development was listed in the membership rather than Researcher Development.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL STRUCTURE

2. The committee received a verbal update from Professor Masthoff outlining the proposed structure, core functions and phased implementation plan of the Graduate School that was approved in principle by the Professional Services Review Board at a meeting on 3 May 2017. It will be discussed at UMG on 7 June 2017. Professor Masthoff provided an overview of the functions highlighting four streams of work including: Recruitment and Admissions, Scholarships and Partnerships, Support, Monitoring and Progression and Training and Development. Professor Masthoff then outlined the consultation process including detail of the Steering Group, Heads of School discussions and the Professional Services Review board.

3. It was noted that the inclusion of RD function in the GS raised concerns about capacity to deliver staff RD and that those conversations were ongoing.

4. There was some discussion about the most appropriate name for the Graduate School with some raising concerns about Graduate School as this may suggest inclusion of all postgraduates and school could cause confusion with academic schools. Several options including Doctoral College, Postgraduate Centre or Unit were discussed and the committee agreed the most appropriate name would be Postgraduate Research School going forward.

5. This lead to discussion about the function/purpose of the Postgraduate Research School (PGR School) and the division of activities between the PRS and academic schools. The core functions of the PGR School had been discussed and agreed through the consultation process, and a detailed division of activities between the PGR school, academic staff and professional service staff in schools has been developed. The committee noted the benefits of more standardised policies and procedures particularly for students with multi-discipline supervision arrangements.

6. The committee requested details of upcoming induction plans and dates to support school level planning. Dr Leiper agreed to circulate the October date for induction and schedule (once finalised) together with PGR Committee dates for AY 17/18. ACTION: LL
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY

7. The committee received a verbal presentation on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) from Dr C Calder. Dr Calder informed the group that the Centre for Academic Development was now responsible for the administration of all student surveys. He also informed the committee that from this year (2017) PRES would run yearly, rather than biennially, and that the survey was confidential rather than anonymous as pre-population data from registry had been used to build the survey. Dr Calder highlighted the importance of achieving a response rate that would enable meaningful subsampling with robust confidence intervals. He informed the group that the current response rate was 16% and requested that PGR coordinators contact PGRs in their schools to encourage participation. The committee noted the value of this data set particularly for planning and reporting purposes including for Athena Swan action plans. The PGR students present suggested that some students may not be willing to respond due to potential to be identified. Dr Calder confirmed that under data protections terms all data was confidential and that no details of respondents would be shared.

8. Dr Calder and Dr Leiper agreed to forward an email template for circulation to students and the PRES template to committee members. **ACTION: LL, CC**

PGR COMPLETION RATES

9. The committee received the paper PGR 16:03, PGR completion rates. Professor Masthoff introduced the paper and noted that this paper had been received by Senate and that Schools had the opportunity to respond to the data through Senate.

10. The committee raised some concerns about the message the data presents and recommended that future completion rate data should emphasise the positive actions already being undertaken from which to build on. Concerns were also raised about differences with school data that had been presented to external funders (e.g. RCUK) and how this may be received. Professor Masthoff noted the concerns, and explained that some of the differences could be due to inclusion of students who withdrew in the first year of study and differences in the definitions used.

11. The committee were encouraged to discuss the detailed examples of potential supportive actions described in the paper. In particular the committee welcomed the suggestion to explore more structured training including options for taught study for PGR students. The committee noted the importance of language support for some international students.

12. The committee agreed to explore completion rates, and actions to support improvement through establishing six working groups.

13. Dr Leiper agreed to circulate information about the working groups and to invite committee members to nominate themselves and /or colleagues to participate in relevant groups. The committee agreed that the working groups would be short-term meeting no more than three times before reporting to the next PGR committee meeting in September. **ACTION: LL**

14. The committee agreed to the establishment of the following working groups:

   **Group 1. PGR generic skills training and development.** To explore current provision, gaps in provision, opportunities for PGRs to participate in structured development programmes, teaching opportunities for PGRs.

   **Group 2. PGR research training and development.** To explore current provision, gaps in provision, opportunities for PGRs to participate in taught courses, and if this could be
developed into a more structured programme (e.g. certificate in research methods, MRes provision aligned across the university, etc).

**Group 3. PGR progression and monitoring.** To explore current monitoring and progression processes, consider good practice and challenges, and produce proposals for improvement and where possible alignment.

**Group 4. PGR students’ and supervisors’ expectations.** To develop more detailed statements of expectations for PGRs and supervisors.

**Group 5. Academic decision making for PGR admissions.** To explore current processes, and discuss ways in which we may improve the process for deciding on candidate quality.

**Group 6. Support for PGR admissions.** To explore requirements for service level agreements regarding admission processes, manuals for these, and admission data reporting. It will also explore a way to provide cover between Schools and Graduate School for admissions during times of absence.

**PhD TIER 4 VISA EXTENSIONS**

15. The committee received for information the paper 16:04 on PhD Tier 4 visa extensions. Professor Masthoff introduced the paper noting that this paper had been approved by the Student Recruitment and Admissions Committee. The committee noted the information provided and welcomed the change.

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

16. The committee discussed the importance of training and development for research students and that this must be a core function of the new PGR School. Discussions also centred around the need (partly driven by emerging Research Council expectations for core skills training) for a more structured approach to skills training. Professor Masthoff suggested that the committee should take an active role in defining institutional requirements and provision.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL INITIATIVES**

17. The committee received the paper and noted the information provided.

**AOCB and DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

18. Dr Leiper agreed to circulate the committee dates for AY 17/18. The next PGR committee meeting will take place on 6 September 2017, 14:00-16:00. **ACTION:** LL

LL 19 May 2017