the

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

27 April 2022

TITLE: Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) Action Plan

REPORTS FROM Professor Andrew Westby, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research and Enterprise

ISSUE:

Following consideration of the report on the 2021 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee has approved an action plan for improving the University's performance.

SUMMARY:

The **Research and Knowledge Exchange Sub-Strategy** sets the target of increasing the University's PRES student experience satisfaction score to > 90% by 2030.

Specifically, we aim to develop the University's research culture to create a dynamic, diverse and inclusive R&KE environment, giving our PGR community the opportunity to participate and benefit as follows:

- Support PGRs with generic skills through RETI and specific skills and experience through faculties.
- Support PGRs through RETI with transferrable skills that will improve their employability and effectiveness in post study employment.
- Embed PGRs in the research environments offered by Centres/Institutes in which they can thrive, such as an increase in PGR student engagement in seminars, and supporting best practice in terms of research ethics, research integrity, open access for data/outputs, etc.
- Provide opportunities for the PGR professional development through PGRTA-type opportunities where possible.
- Encourage and support development of PGR societies and networks to support peer to peer learning and development.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Council to **consider** the action plan in response to the 2021 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

Action Plan to improve the outcome for a future Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

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A number of initiatives to drive an achievement of a vibrant PGR community within the university through an increase in PGR numbers, such as an increase in UKRI funding supported by increasing bidding rate, peer review; review of PGR process to ensure completion times are less than 4 years and implementation of action plans for Vitae's Researcher Development Concordat and the HR Excellence in Research Award to support PGR training, their retention, career development, recognition etc. whilst following the university's EDI principles.

The current overall satisfaction score in PRES is 72%, we aim to increase this to the current sector average of 79% within 2 years and then > 90% by 2030.

Based on the findings of the PRES 2021 and previous surveys, and further discussions with PGR students (e.g. PGR-ECR Forum), academic and professional services staff, a series of action points for the period to the next PRES survey have been developed that are in alignment with the Research and Knowledge Exchange sub-strategy. These have been discussed at the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. Implementation will be overseen at quarterly meeting of the DVC (R&KE), Associate Deans (R&KE) and the Head of RETI to ensure consistency across faculties.

Action point	Lead Responsibility	Comments
To **share areas of good practice** between faculties	Faculty Associate Deans R&KE	Cross-faculty comments and areas of good practice are outlined as follows: Resources: Survey PGRs within faculties to assess resource needs. Space permitting, to provide work spaces for PGR students set up closer to their supervisors and research groups. Library resources to be assessed. Faculty Research office/administrator to support PGR community from admission to graduation. Provide PGRs with financial support to present their research at national and international conferences and for external training (e.g. from their research support/consumables budgets). Research culture: Focus on seminars and networking events in research areas (to be organised through newly established Centres and Institutes – but coordinated to ensure consistency) – Options of good practice include: Organise Faculty Research Day. Research and Knowledge Exchange Institutes/Centres/Groups to organise cross-disciplinary seminars and networking events to improve communication and collaboration across the university. Ensure regular contact with PGRs and direct them to Faculty Research Office for any queries. Set up a dedicated Moodle site for PGRs in the Faculty with online resources, guides. Establish faculty-led writing retreat and grant writing workshops. Set up Research and Knowledge Exchange Café and Public Lecture Series. Host a PGR conference, 3 MT competition. Support PGR career path. Use social media to raise visibility of PGR student achievements and publications. Research Skills: Identify gaps in provision for further action either through RETI or at Faculty level. PGR Induction: Evaluate how to make online induction sessions more engaging, such as using more visual content. Showcase the research community better at both online and on-campus inductions.

Action point	Lead Responsibility	Comments
		PGR Feedback loop: via Faculty PGR forum and input into the university PGR-ECR forum, faculty-led training to supplement RETI training. Monitor feedback relating to resources via the PGR representatives on the Faculty Research and Enterprise Committee and PGR reports to FRDC, and act upon the feedback. Supervisor support: Support and monitor supervisors' training, examples, PGR recruitment and selection, prep to be examiners and Chairs of examination panels, supervising PGR students. Ensure minimum expectations of contact between research students and supervisory teams are met. Establish supervisor forums for sharing good practice. Promote supervisor accreditation, example UKCGE Research Supervision Recognition Programme.
To improve PGR **response rate** to PRES	RETI, PAS	By working collaboratively between PAS, RETI, faculties, Doctoral Society, GSU. Continue: PAS to co-ordinate with Advance HE, and communicate the promotional material produced by Advance HE to the university Internal Communications for circulation. Continue: RETI to communicate and promote PRES to all PGRs and supervisors, Doctoral Society, GSU via email; to promote via PGR-ECR forum meetings, FRDC meetings, R&KEC meetings, RETI training sessions. Further: RETI to organise bespoke events to promote the survey to PGRs and supervisors, to include background, UoG survey findings and comparison with benchmark institutions, details on survey questions, and provide opportunity for Q&A.
To refresh **training provision for**	RETI	To invite new training ideas via the PGR-ECR forum, Associate Deans (R&KE), Doctoral Society, sector intelligence via faculties/GRE/RETI to address any gaps.

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PGRs and supervisors		To refresh and add new training provision for PGRs and supervisors. To deliver training via blended approaches such as on-campus, live online, non-live online, recordings, and hybrid methods. Examples for non-live online training from Epigeum on Research Skills Toolkit (new), Research Integrity (new), Research ethics (current provision), Supervising Doctoral Studies (new).
To improve PGR wellbeing	RETI	To work with different areas of the university to improve PGR wellbeing, including Wellbeing Services, faculties, GSU, Doctoral Society, PGR-ECR forum. RETI has fed into the R&KE sub-strategy and requested PGR voice to be included in the People sub-strategy. To assess the wellbeing training provision and refresh based on feedback. Current RETI training provision on mental health and wellbeing includes '7 Habits for PhD Researcher Wellbeing' (introduced 2021-22), 'Coach yourself through imposter syndrome' (introduced 2021-22), 'Academic writing reduce anxiety', 'Productivity retreat with time and stress management techniques', 'The Wellbeing Thesis', Vitae-designed and adapted for UoG 'Practical advice for doctoral candidates for developing knowledge and understanding of mental health and wellbeing'. Evaluate findings of an ongoing 'PGR student wellbeing survey' from FEHHS. RETI has promoted the survey to PGRs via emails and the Doctoral Society, PGR-ECR forum. SAS is carrying out a 'Health and Wellbeing Action Plan' scoping exercise on PGR student experience: meeting participants from faculties, Doctoral Society, GSU, RETI. To evaluate findings of the GSU's Wellbeing & Retention Project.

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To improve library resources	RETI, Library Services	RETI to work with Library Services to improve information about access to online library resources; as well as improvement in subject-specific library resources (with faculty input). RETI to discuss with ILS provision of 'premium version of Grammarly' for researchers, Turnitin software for staff. Promote current RETI training on library-related aspects to PGRs (PGR mandatory training on Library support for researchers delivered by library staff; Optional training on Scopus, Mendeley Reference Management System, Copyright and use of 3rd party content in PGR thesis). Library Services will maintain dialogue with faculties and PGRs (E.g. through PGR-ECR Forum) and are working on the following actions: - scoping out two workshops for PGRs on aspects such as library guides, formatting for journal publication, systematic reviews; - communication to PGRs inviting them to book a 1-2-1 with a tutor/librarian for quick questions/queries; - investigate reinstating the PGR lunchtime sessions, with a proposal paper to be discussed at the next PGR-ECR forum meeting in June 2022
To explore resourcing RETI to provide a more developmental role in the guise of a	DVC-R&KE	Critically assess as part of the implementation R&KE sub-strategy whether resourcing and developing RETI to provide a more developmental role (rather than its current oversight-only responsibility) in the guise of a doctoral training school type-structure would be beneficial to developing the research culture.

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doctoral training school		