

Meeting: **Doctoral Council**

Date & Time: Wednesday 3rd March 2021, 12:30 – 13:30

Fritz Ho (Chair)	SU Postgraduate Officer (PGO)
Lorenzo Giunta	Department of Mechanical Engineering
Ashley Smith	Department of Education
Patrick Prince (Doctoral Exec Chair)	Department of Mechanical Engineering
Jelena Lagger (Faculty Rep)	School of Management
Niamh Leaman	Department of Chemistry
Alessandro Lucini Paioni	School of Management
Amine Moussa	School of Management
Chloe Burke	Department of Psychology
Anabel Burnley	Department of Psychology
Jonathan Dempsey	School of Management
Dan Bowen	Department of Mechanical Engineering
Daniel Warner	Department of Education
Jon Noble	Department of Chemical Engineering
Fadoua Govaerts	Department of Education
Izzy Fitton	Department of Computer Science
Jose Muniz Martinez	School of Management
Kai-Cheng Yan	Department of Chemistry
Katharina Hug	School of Management
Pooja Anil Kumar Nair	Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Rachel Dere	Department of Health
Taghried Abdelmagid	Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering
Adam Khan	Department of Chemistry
Margaret Duff	Department of Mathematical Sciences
Rosa Kowalewski	Department of Mathematical Sciences
Thomas Williams	Department of Computer Science
Lukas Ohnoutek	Department of Physics
Soo-Hwa Kim	Department of Mechanical Engineering
Stephanie Hall	Department of Mechanical Engineering
Masha Remškar (Faculty Rep)	Department of Psychology
Tim Stoneman (minutes)	Postgraduate Coordinator, SU (PGC)

Agenda

1. Matters arising

1.1 Training Support Grant: in our recent discussion with Jeremy Bradshaw (PVC International & Doctoral) and Cathryn Mitchell (Academic Director, Doctoral College).

They were supportive of improving transparency of the accounts, but as supervisors will have a range of perspectives on this matter, felt it was appropriate to take to UDSC for discussion. It will be included in the March UDSC.

Action: PGO to update on discussion of Training Support Grant at UDSC, and decisions

1.2 Updates on funding extension: PGO noted that in the last meeting we discussed the funding available for URSA-funded PGRs. There is not any further information available extensions for URSA-funded doctoral students, but discussions are continuing and more information should be forthcoming soon. As can be seen, there is another item in this Council on UKRI funding extensions. The PGO noted that the University is hoping to use funds to provide support for non-UKRI funded students.

2. PG Officer's update

2.1 Research involving human participants

PGO relayed that he has received an enquiry from a PGR concerned that they are unable to conduct their research with human participants, as it does not fit within exemptions for medical-based research. The Government has not provided any further guidelines on research that would be permissible, so the University is unable to provide any further guidance at this stage. The PGO noted that he is working with the Doctoral College to find external support that may be available. At this stage departments have full authority to decide whether research can continue or not.

Action: PGO to report progress on discussions on human participant research

2.2 Start-up Conference

The PGO explained that this was seen as a community-building initiative that would also have real benefits for gaining entrepreneurial skills. The SU is gauging interest among doctoral students in a conference for developing start-up businesses. It is hoped that as well as a platform for developing entrepreneurial skills, the event would also offer a means of finding more information on existing start-ups within the University.

2.3 Doctoral employability

The PGO noted that as mentioned previously, he is a member of the Doctoral Employability Working Group. Currently their 3-year strategy is:

- i. Working with industry to help them recognise what skills PGRs have.
- ii. To find out what PGRs need to be successful in industry. This will involve a review of Doctoral Skills and sessions that could be usefully added.
- iii. Helping PGRs recognise the transferable skills they are developing in their own research.
- iv. Holding a careers fair for doctoral students, with employers who recruit PGRs.

2.4 SU Officers Election

The PGO explained that voting in the SU Officer Elections opened yesterday and voting would be open until Thursday 4th March, and suggested that reps look at candidates' manifestos and vote. The PGC added that 'Plant Your Vote' this year meant that the SU would be planting a tree for every 10 votes cast, and supporting local conservation charities as different voter targets are reached.

3. **Announcement by UKRI on Phase 3 funding extension**
<https://www.ukri.org/news/further-action-to-support-doctoral-students-affected-by-covid-19/>

The PGO outlined the latest announcement by UKRI, that the case-by-case approach has freed up £7 million to enable additional extensions to students, based on need. The page was also shared on the screen. These extensions would also apply to students who are not UKRI-funded. UKRI also suggested that universities may wish to reduce recruitment for the 2021-22 academic year. UKRI will be providing additional information to the University, and the University is currently waiting to see what is included in the detail of that further information.

3.1 Eligibility of PGRs who have not previously applied

A rep from the Department of Computer Science welcomed the announcement and the inclusion of other students. They enquired if the funding would be available for PGRs who had not applied in the earlier rounds and might not have been previously affected. The PGO responded that while it was not yet completely clear how implementation would be managed at a local level there seems to be an intention to reach students who have not benefitted from UKRI phase 1, 2 or other funding extensions. The PGO acknowledged that reps and PGRs more widely are likely to have had their research delayed beyond 3 months, and some of those whose research involves human participants are still awaiting approval to continue. Due to limitations in research funds available, further extensions may be difficult to deliver. What is available dependent on how many students apply for this tranche of funding.

3.2 URSA-funded students and application process

A rep from the Department of Mechanical Engineering asked for clarification on whether URSA-funded doctoral students would be eligible to apply for this phase of UKRI funding. The PGO noted that application is likely to be through the University as UKRI is delivering block grants to institutions, although it is not yet clear if this would be as a UKRI application. The PGO continued that in principle, it seems to include URSA-funded and other PGRs on a case-by-case basis, but the University will have discretion to identify priorities and it may be that those priorities include URSA-funded students.

The rep from Mechanical Engineering commented that at present the University of Bath does not have an application process for funding extension that would include URSA-funded and UKRI-funded doctoral students. They remarked that it would be very welcome for the University to clarify and communicate details of this process.

A rep from the Department of Psychology confirmed that there would be real value to Reps getting a clear message from the University on how people can apply for this to be able to update their cohorts.

3.3 Timeline for funding

The PGO noted that he is pressing the University to provide a funding extension for non-final year UKRI students. It seems that the University will have more information to make available to doctoral students, possibly by the end of March. The PGO expressed concern that the University had not so far been able to provide a timeline of when funding will be able to be made available to different doctoral cohorts.

3.4 Amount of funding provided

A rep from the Department of Mathematical Sciences welcomed the statement from UKRI but noted that it was important to recognise that it was not a large amount that is being made available, especially considering it would be PGRs in the early stages of their research who were most affected. The need for clarity on whether the applications for phase 2 could be used or if there would be a new round of applications.

4. Bullying and sexual harassment

The PGO acknowledged that the relationship between doctoral student and supervisor is unlike that for taught students, which can make it even more difficult to come forward. He noted that it would be welcome to hear doctoral perspectives on the issue and how the unique doctoral-supervisor dynamic can be managed in this respect.

4.1 PG Research Independent Advisor and other services

The PGO noted that in December the PGR Independent Advisor's Report was presented to University Senate, including reports of sexual harassment of doctoral students. Sexual harassment was included as an item on the agenda of the University Executive Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and made up of University senior management. The PGO expressed concern at action needed to create a safe environment for PGRs. The PGO reminded Reps that if they experience or are aware of sexual harassment, they can talk with University Student Services, SU Advice & Support, or Nightline, all of which will listen confidentially. He continued that if PGRs understandably do not feel comfortable raising concerns through their head of department or director of studies, doctoral students can contact the University's PGR Independent Advisor confidentially.

The PGC noted that the creation of the PGR Independent Advisor role was recognition that doctoral students were in a difficult position. Seeing the Independent Advisor is not a formal complaint, and remains completely confidential unless the PGR agrees to other staff being contacted. Depending on the situation, the Independent Advisor may be able to help achieve a mediated resolution if appropriate. Whatever the appropriate outcome, raising issues early means return to normal progress with research is possible sooner.

and the article on the Independent Advisor on the SU's Doctoral page
<https://www.thesubath.com/news/article/doctoral/Universitys-PGR-Independent-Advisor/>

A rep from the Department of Computer Science noted that the online reporting tool as part of the #NeverOK campaign: <https://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/get-involved-in-the-neverok-campaign/>

A rep from the School of Management agreed that I think it was important to highlight the uniqueness of PhDs' position with respect to supervisors and research teams.

The PGC noted that there are moves within the University to ensure that reporting harassment is taken seriously, and to give doctoral students the confidence in its appropriate handling of reports.

4.2 UKRI position on bullying and harassment

The PGO noted that he has just joined the UKRI Bullying & Sexual Harassment Forum. The UKRI are currently working on ensuring safe and inclusive research environments, and have created a number of policies and guidance under the heading of preventing harm in research. Some of these will be expectations for institutions, some provide models which can be adopted or adapted. The fact that UKRI have made strong policies on bullying and harassment gives institutions an additional motive to address the issue, potentially one that could affect their research funding.

4.3 Induction

The PGO explained that he is also pressing the University to include the topics in induction for both female and male doctoral students to be aware of how to raise issues. The PGO added that for international students especially, being less clear on cultural norms means there is value in clarifying what harassment and unacceptable behaviours includes.

4.4 Communication and signposting

A rep from the Department of Mechanical Engineering asked if there was an available listing of support services broken down by topic, so that students could know which one to approach. They suggested that this would be particularly helpful for victims of bullying and harassment as having to repeat a problem every time would involve reliving traumatic events. In response, the PGC mentioned the Doctoral College page on <https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/doctoral-representation/> with the Independent Advisor and different services, and that the Doctoral College also has a issue flowchart but this is more for progressing issues, through director of studies, head of department and Independent Advisor but can be bypassed when the PGR feels appropriate. The PGC noted that the Doctoral College page for the Independent Advisor has bullet points on issues covered, but that perhaps the complexity of personal and interpersonal issues has meant there has not been more simplified signposting.

The PGO noted that we will update our doctoral FAQs on the thesubath.com website to help doctoral students to know where issues should be raised.

Action: PGO to contact Doctoral College about signposting for Independent Advisor and support services

Action: PGC and PGO to update FAQs on SU doctoral page with issue signposting.

5. Research involving human participants

The PGO explained that the government has suspended research involving human

participants unless it is for medical purposes and departments agree that it is safe for them to resume. In some cases, departments at the University of Bath have made the decision that research with medical benefits should not resume. The PGO noted that he would be happy to speak out of the meeting about any concerns or questions.

6. Any other business

8.1 Ethics approval

The PGO noted that the ethics approval processes is changing across the University, and this will have different implications for different disciplines and research. He asked that if Reps became aware of ethics concerns or issues that these be passed on to him.

8.2 Doctoral SSLCs

The PGC observed that doctoral SSLCs are now taking place, much later than in a normal year. Some departments are still looking for doctoral Reps to stand as chair, and are hoping that Reps will be able to help raise issues for the meetings. Callie, the SU Representation Coordinator has provided some additional sessions on chairing and other SSLC topics which might be useful, hosted on the reps resources page, and the doctoral Reps training PowerPoint from the start of the year, which includes content on SSLCs, may be of interest and is also hosted on the page.

Action: PGC to email links and further information.

7. Time and date of next meeting:

Wednesday 21st April 2021, 12:30 – 1:30 pm