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**Meeting:            Doctoral Forum**

**Date & Time:    Thursday 17 December 2020, 12:30 – 13:30**

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10 doctoral students attended the forum. Fritz thanked doctoral students for attending, and invited comments verbally, in chat or in Jamboard, with link posted.

**1. PG Officer's Update**

Fritz noted the University is creating a new role of Student Communications Manager, who will be responsible for all student communications, including doctoral communications. Kate, the outgoing Doctoral Communications Manager in the Doctoral College was a dedicated doctoral role.

**2. Home workstations**

Fritz noted that he would be chasing the Doctoral College for an update on this. They have collected feedback from directors of studies in each department about how workstation assessments are managed. The SU has asked for a University-wide policy, and Fritz hoped to be able to update before Christmas.

**3. Doctoral employability**

Fritz explained that he was looking for a University strategy on doctoral employability. The University has now set up a working group on this issue. Partnerships and connections are also needed with employers who are interested in recruiting doctoral students for non-academic work.

It was noted that most doctoral students will not go into academia, as the limited number of academic positions are far exceeded by doctoral graduates. Fritz invited comments on what skills are needed by doctoral students in their careers, and what employers would be interested in recruiting doctoral graduates.

Lorenzo commented that it would be useful to get focused doctoral careers advice.

It was observed that networking opportunities are more useful than trying to make doctoral students 'Jacks of all trades', but this is what Doctoral Skills sets out to do. It would be useful to know which employers recruit doctoral skills in a way that differentiates from undergraduates, and understand the additional value that doctoral graduates offer.

Lorenzo added that there should be better transferability of doctoral students' and employers' understanding of what the advantage of hiring doctoral students is. He commented that many companies do not 'need' a doctoral graduate, but it would be useful to know which do.

**4. Funding extensions**

Soo-Hwa Kim asked if fee-free extensions could be clarified at the next forum. She commented that different students she spoke to in different departments had different understandings of schemes. It

only later became clear that students could access at end of funding, not registration. Some students had already paid out of their own pocket.

Fritz agreed that more clarification is needed.

It was noted that self-funded students are in a difficult position even if extensions are granted.

**Action:** Fritz to invite Simon Gane, Doctoral College Head of Doctoral Programmes, to clarify the different schemes.

Lorenzo agreed that a Q & A with Simon Gane would be very helpful.

## **5. Postgraduates Who Teach**

### **5.1 Zero hours contracts and fractional contracts**

A doctoral student from Mechanical Engineering noted that communication of this had been very patchy, and the Department of Mechanical Engineering did not implement fractional contracts although it had been approved by HR. He commented that in a pandemic, some doctoral students are doing multiple teaching to cover outgoings.

Tim noted that some departments do not have GTA Coordinators for their GTA schemes, and this may be a factor in communication of the new contracts.

## **6. Any other business**

Fritz highlighted that PGA social events are taking place tonight, with more details at [What's On \(thesubath.com\)](http://thesubath.com).