# College Forum Meeting Minutes

## ***PGR Cross College Forum***

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| **Date:  04/12/2024** | | **Time:  15:00-16:30** | | **Location: Teams** |
| Chair: | Micaela Panes – VP Postgraduate | | | |
| Minutes: |  | | | |
| **Apologies:** | | | | |
| Staff: | | | Student reps: | |
| Liz Wren-Owens – PG Dean for AHSS | | | Aaron Thomas – CARBS  Sasha Eykyn – GEOPL  Alhanouf Almutairi – HCARE  Amber Li – MEDIC  Yannan Yu – MEDIC  Shenae Jonas – SOCSI  Kathryn Johnstone – SOCSI  Ilid Haf - WELSH | |
| **In Attendance:** | | | | |
| Staff: | | | Student reps: | |
| Sian Lewis – AHSS College Education Manager  Amanda Tonks – PG Dean for BLS  Eliska Zidova – BLS College Education Manager  Julie Gwilliam – PG Dean for PSE  Kath Evans – PSE College Education Manager  Julie Primon -  James Farror -  Jane Harding – Deputy Head of Student Advice  Zoë Hayne – Academic Representation Coordinator | | | Izaak Morris – PHYSX  Betsi Doyle – SOCSI  Di Ye – MUSIC  Liam Billingsley – ENCAP  Rhianedd Collins – SHARE  Thomas Burgess – LAWPL  Daniel Hambly – MATHS  Sheridan Clements – SHARE  Abbey Rowe – SOCSI  April Talbot – BIOSI  Holly Quinlan – ENCAP  Aparna Venkateshwaran – PHYSX  Dilara Yaratgan – ARCHI  Yongdong Ma – ARCHI  Siobhan Hayes – SHARE  Alexandra Cusmano – PHRMY  Ella Beavington – MUSIC  Jack Morewood – ARCHI  Stephen Miles – COMSC Rhys James – MATHS  Juliana Reimberg – CARBS  Ghada Jameel – MATHS  Ola Gorecka – CHEMY | |
| **Update on Actions from the Previous Panel:** | | | | |
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| **Rep Feedback: CARBS** |
| 1) Juliana Reimberg raised that students who are self-funded are struggling to find funding opportunities for field work and conferences.  2) Juliana Reimberg said that the research office is currently understaffed, meaning that it is now taking a long time to answer emails, which is impacting the PHD students in CARBS. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: James Farror When: January 2025** |
| Sian Lewis said that they are in the process of recruiting new staff members for the research office to stop them being understaffed. Sian Lewis explained that the process is longer than usual due to current restrictions on recruitment.  James Farror responded to Juliana Reimberg’s point on funding opportunities by mentioning the Doctoral Academy’s development funding program launching in January, which students can use to apply for up to £750. Fieldwork is ineligible, but this applies to funding for conferences. |
| **Rep Feedback: ENCAP** |
| 1. Holly Quinlan gave feedback from a dyslexic student on the Research Integrity Training Module: he found it difficult to navigate as slides often included many layers of dense wording. 2. Holly Quinlan said that on the contracts for the PGR Teaching Staff, students feel that their pay does not reflect the difficulty of work they are doing; they are paid the same amount across the three years, but the work is more difficult in the first year. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Sian Lewis When: n/a** |
| Sian Lewis said that there have been surveys for tutors using the contracts, as well as school-based surveys and meetings with graduate tutor coordinators to take forward and act on feedback. Sian Lewis shared her email address in order for Holly Quinlan to contact her via email for a more in-depth response. Sian Lewis also said that she will take the feedback on the Research Integrity Training Module into account.  Micaela Panes suggested that the reason why work is found the hardest in the first year for PGR Teaching Staff is because they are not initially taught how to do things effectively, making tasks more time-consuming. Micaela Panes mentioned that a feedback survey showed that there was an inconsistency with the quality of training across schools.  Amanda Tonks suggested that PGR Teaching Staff should push back and ask to be reimbursed if tasks are taking a longer time than expected.  Julie Gwilliam expanded on Sian Lewis’ point on survey collection by saying that it is important for students to know that staff are trying to understand the situation and how things can be improved. Julie Gwilliam highlighted that things improve with feedback, and that students should contact key contacts and other staff about their issues. |
| **Rep Feedback: LAWPL** |
| 1. Thomas Burgess mentioned how the university did not communicate with him that his secondary PHD supervisor was leaving Cardiff University, instead finding out through word-of-mouth. Thomas Burgess said that this is panic inducing, especially when students have niche topics, making it difficult to find a suitable replacement supervisor. 2. Sheridan Clements (SHARE) added that there have also been major issues regarding this within SHARE; there is no system to ensure that the PGRs are being communicated with effectively. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: When:** |
| Amanda Tonks said that staff are definitely aware of this issue and understand how important this is, but that it has not yet been operationalized and acted on.  Julie Gwilliam added that a policy was circulated to all schools that ensures a set of processes follows when a supervisor leaves the University, but some schools have not responded to this. Julie Gwilliam urged students to reach out if they need further support.  Jane Harding highlighted the role of Student Advice in providing independent and confidential advice for students.  Amanda Tonks added that if there is no available support within your school, get in touch with the PGR Quality and Operations team.  Julie Primon echoed Amanda Tonks’ point and added that if a student does not have a supervisor to sign their supervisor form, that the Director of Postgraduate Studies can sign the form as a backup option. |
| **Rep Feedback: MUSIC** |
| 1. Ella Beavington gave feedback from PGR and PGT students that there has been a lack of communication due to MUSIC losing their education manager, PG Illustrator, and Student Support Officer all within a year. Ella Beavington added that two out of three of these roles have been filled now, and so hopefully this issue will be improved. 2. Di Ye highlighted feedback from PGR students who would like more opportunities to teach. Di Ye said that he is a second-year PHD student and that he has seen no teaching opportunities come up as of yet. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Sian Lewis When: n/a** |
| Sian Lewis said that this feedback would be passed onto the Director of PGR and the DLT for MUSIC. Sian Lewis highlighted that if there are fewer classes in a school, less graduate tutors are needed. Sian Lewis said that despite this, staff will investigate how to increase the number of opportunities for teaching in MUSIC. |
| **Rep Feedback: SOCSI** |
| 1. Betsan Doyle said that there are absolutely no PGR teaching opportunities in SOCSI, without clear reasoning why. 2. Betsan Doyle added that this contradicts the PGR Opportunities in Social Sciences webpage, which says that PGR students will be given the opportunity to get involved with training and teaching. 3. Betsan Doyle also said that students have given feedback that there is a lack of spaces for private meetings for PHD students. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Sian Lewis When: n/a** |
| Sian Lewis said that the incorrect information on the website will be removed, and that the DPGR will be spoken to about improving communication with incoming students. |
| **Rep Feedback: SHARE** |
| 1. Sheridan Clements said that the forms for claiming the teaching hours do not reflect the assignments that are being given at the school or department level. Processes often include mathematics, are time consuming and complex, such as students being allocated assignment and feedback together, which then needs to be claimed separately. 2. Via the Teams Meeting chat, Sheridan Clements said that there has also been an issue with teaching opportunities that schools are being allocated PGR hours based on student enrolment rather than actual module needs, leading to other modules being heavily under-staffed or not getting the correct number of hours. 3. Via the Teams meeting chat, Sheridan Clements enquired about why ID cards expire the day after submissions are due, as January-starters who have a December 31st submission date have to wait until the University re-opens in order to resolve any issues. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Sian Lewis When: n/a** |
| Sian Lewis responded by saying that a colleague is contacting the finance department to resolve this issue. Sian Lewis asked Sheridan Clements to contact her via email in order to have the issue in writing to take forward.  Julie Gwilliam responded to Sheridan Clements’ message in the Teams Meeting chat in saying that there used to be a system in place where students can apply to be part of a post-study allegiance for a year, but that this is no longer used. Julie Gwilliam said that she will ask about this being promoted and advertised.  Via the Teams meeting chat, Sian Lewis replied to Sheridan Clements’ third point by saying that she will take this forward and discuss it with the REGOPS. |
| **Rep Feedback: BIOSI** |
| April Talbot said that some students have said that they would benefit from a formal HR system for PGRs for booking holidays and time off.  April Talbot mentioned that the first payment is given late depending on a students’ start date. April Talbot said that this delay in payment can be difficult for new PHD students in terms of housing, paying for food, equipment needed for studies etc. Additionally, April Talbot enquired about whether there is a reason that payments are given quarterly rather than monthly. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Amanda Tonks When: January 25** |
| Amanda Tonks said that staff are working out a system to record absences in general. This will allow for multiple short durations off to be totaled for students to be given the extra time at the end, without having to apply for that time. Amanda Tonks said that Cardiff University attended a meeting with Bristal University and Bath University about tackling this issue.  Amanda Tonks said that tracking finances is currently being looked at by staff. Amanda Tonks clarified that the reasoning for quarterly payments has not been given but said that she will enquire about this. |
| **Rep Feedback: HCARE** |
| Michaela Panes relayed feedback from HCARE in saying that there is a lack of teaching opportunities and opportunities to develop elsewhere. Additionally, Michaela Panes said that HCARE also mentioned a lack of money available for conferences and research trips. There has been cases where money has been taken away after it was allocated, as well as difficulty in access to apply for receiving money. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Amanda Tonks When:** |
| Amanda Tonks said that previously there were no opportunities for teaching, and that they are working to ensure that there are more available. Despite this improvement, Amanda Tonks said that she will bring this feedback to the upcoming PGR Forum. |
| **Rep Feedback: PHRMY** |
| Alexandra Cusmano echoed the issue with contracting: PHRMY students can only work within their school. Alexandra Cusmano enquired about whether PHRMY can work across schools and tackle this issue.  Alexandra Cusmano also mentioned that PHRMY are interested in collaborating with other schools in BLS and enquired about whether there is a distribution list to contact regarding ideas to create a STEM Exchange. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Amanda Tonks When:** |
| Amanda Tonks responded that this is definitely possible and that there have previously been students working across schools. For example, SHARE students teaching in JOMEC.  Julie Gwilliam added that students must have more than one contract – students must have a contract for each of the schools they work within. Julie Gwilliam also stated that some schools are unaware that this is possible, so if needed, staff should be contacted to let these schools know that it is possible.  Regarding Alexandra Cusmano’s second point, Amanda Tonks said that PHRMY’s PGR Lead has access to a PGR Directors list to be distributed. Amanda Tonks added that there has previously been a successful collaboration event between MEDIC and HCARE, and these schools are looking for funding to do this event again. Amanda Tonks suggested enquiring about whether more of these events can go ahead across different schools. |
| **Rep Feedback: ARCHI** |
| Jack Morewood said that a number of students have raised the issue of flooding, causing students to be displaced.  Jack Morewood added that there should be more marketing and incentivizing PGRs becoming Reps and communicating the benefits of Reps. Jack Morewood said that this kind of marketing can be seen for undergraduate students but not for post-graduate students.  Jack Morewood also mentioned the change in rule around using publications in theses.  Yongdong Ma added that there has been a growth in the number of students this year, meaning that there are less study spaces available for students to use. Yongdong Ma also raised the issue of struggling to encourage PGR students to get involved in social events. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Micaela Panes When: January 25** |
| Michaela Panes mentioned an upcoming meeting about how the Rep role can be shaped to appeal to more PGRs. Michaela Panes suggested carrying out a focus group in the New Year where PGRs can discuss what the Rep role should look like for PGRs.  Julie Gwilliam responded to the issue about flooding in saying that despite it not being ideal, there is space in the Doctoral Academy to attempt to claim an ARCHI room. |
| **Rep Feedback: COMSC** |
| Stephen Miles enquired about whether feedback on the new review forms will be collected and acted on. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Julie Gwilliam When: n/a** |
| Julie Gwilliam said that there is not currently a plan to do this, as these new review forms have only been released very recently. However, Julie Gwilliam said that staff are always open to feedback and suggested that Stephen Miles contact staff regarding any improvements to be made on the new review forms.  Julie Primon said that staff wanted review forms to be consistent across the different schools. Therefore, when COMSI requested for particular things to be added to the review form, they were not added.  Julie Gwilliam replied by saying that it was agreed that things could be added to the review form, but not taken away, and so COMSI’s requests should have been added. |
| **Rep Feedback: CHEMY** |
| Ola Gorecka raised the issue of subject-specific training for demonstrating laboratories. Ola Gorecka highlighted the importance of this as these PGT students will be responsible for the health and safety of the undergraduates using the lab. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Kath Evans When: n/a** |
| Kath Evans said that she has been speaking with the team that provides the Launchpad training about developing a specific lab-based training course.  Julie Gwilliam suggested that any good examples about the guidance that should be provided to PGT students regarding labs should be passed onto her to help develop and improve the guidance to help PGTs more.  Kath Evans added that Ola Gorecka should speak to the PGR Admin Office about redeveloping the training |
| **Rep Feedback: PHYSX** |
| Aparna Venkateshwaran raised the issue of PGR profiles not showing up in the correct departments on the university website, which has been the case for two consecutive years. Aparna Venkateshwaran explained that this is particularly a problem when individuals are applying to fellowships, as their profiles cannot be found to confirm that they attended Cardiff University.  Via the Teams meeting chat, Aparna Venkateshwaran raised the issue of the salto lock access being revoked every month. |
| **Action/Key Decision: Who: Julie Gwilliam When: n/a** |
| Julie Gwilliam replied by saying that the university are aware of this issue and that they are trying to fix it.  Kath Evans added that there have not been any updates of this yet, but that the University Communications team will be contacted to ask about updates.  Micaela Panes said that she will email the IT department to prompt this.  Sian Lewis said that this is being tackled by AHSS, who are trialing a new system and will give updates “hopefully before Christmas”.  Regarding Aparna Venkateshwaran’s second point, Julie Gwilliam responded via the Teams meeting chat by saying that cards can be held against any Salto box until it flashes red to update it, and that this can be done at any time. Julie Gwilliam suggested contacting the school and discussing the need for a Salto box on route to the building.  Via the Teams meeting chat, Kath Evans provided further information regarding he ID card building access, saying that it is advisable to keep the revalidation period at 30 days for security reasons. However, Salto locks will be installed in several locations around Queens and Trevithick in January-February. These locks are online and will update the revalidation period every time they are used – meaning that regular use of these doors or gates will eliminate the need to visit a separate point. |
| **Staff Updates:** |
| **Department/Service name: AHSS**   * Sian Lewis gave an update that AHSS are now trailing offering Masters modules for first-year PHD students to audit. Students taking part are able to sit in on the teaching and gain access to the module content on Learning Central but are not required to complete module assignments. * Via the Teams meeting chat, Abbey Rowe added that tere has been a note from students who asked that module auditing opportunities be advertised as early as possible as some courses had already started by the time students were aware of the opportunity. * Via the Teams meeting chat, Sian Lewis said that they are aiming to communicate the Semester 2 module lists before Christmas. * Via the Teams meeting chat, Aparna Venkateshwaran enquired about whether the course audit can be extended to all schools. * Via the Teams meeting chat, Sian Lewis replied to Aparna Venkateshwaran’s enquiry saying that it is only being trialled with AHSS initially, but a full review will be done at the end of the academic year and based on these results, there is a potential that course audits will be extended to all schools.   **Department/Service name: PSE**   * Julie Gwilliams said that PSE are approaching all schools to collect feedback on the student experience and on what research culture means to the different schools, so that research culture can be enhanced at the University. * Julie Gwilliams also said that in January, PSE will be meeting with all school staff who administrate the PGR tutor and demonstrator processes to get feedback on what is going well and what is not.   **Department/Service name: Doctoral Academy**   * James Farror said that the major priority is making up for lost time due to a slow start to the academic year. * James Farror said that the Doctoral Academy are currently thinking about emerging training needs that they can offer. * James Farror added that in January, the Doctoral Academy will be offering opportunities for PGRs to take part in paid training. * James Farror said that the Doctoral Academy are working to make hybrid delivery the standard mode of delivery. * James Farror mentioned that the Doctoral Academy have recently launched a peer mentoring network. * Through the Teams meeting chat, James Farror added that the Doctoral Academy will be putting on training sessions for students affected by VSS and associated supervisory changes in the new year and will be contacting schools shortly. * Via the Teams meeting chat, Abbey Rowe said that students have raised that PGR subject specific, college-specific, and school-specific training will be beneficial for certain aspects of PHDs that are unique. * Via the Teams meeting chat, James Farror replied in saying that this is something they are trying to address, that they do not have remit to deliver training in specific disciplinary skills (that sits more locally with schools) but are keen to offer more college-level provision. James Farror said that there will be a call for PGR trainers in the new year which will hopefully make improvements in this area.   **Department/Service name: PGR Operations**   * Julie Primon said that the procedures that will be reviewed this year are the policy on the submission and presentation of theses, the final deposit, the policy on progress and engagement, and the bar on access policy. * Julie Primon said that due to understaffing, it is not guaranteed that all of these policies will be reviewed but that the department will try their best.   **Department/Service name: Student Voice and Advice**   * Zoe Hayne thanked attendees for taking part in Speak Week and explained that the feedback gained will now be collected, organised, typed up, and sent to the University to be acted on. * Zoe Hayne said that herself and Micaela Panes are in discussion about what Reps should look like for PGRs and PGTs and what support there should be for them. * Zoe Hayne urged attendees to get involved with any potential future focus groups or events regarding this. |
| **Any Other Business:** |
| * Michaela Panes said that her role as VP Postgraduate is coming to an end and stressed to attendees the importance of a PHD student being in the role due to how much the VP Postgraduate supports PGR students. * Julie Gwilliam adds that the post-study opportunity to gain access for a further 12 months is live.   IT Services Update (given through a typed document):   * All University members must familiarise themselves with Information Security and we recommend you have a look at the relevant pages on the Intranet. Multi-Factor Authentication has now been implemented as part of logging in to most University IT applications (with others to follow). MFA adds an extra layer of security to your university account. * There will be an annual upgrade of SIMS from Friday 6th December, 12:00 (midday) to Monday 9th December, 13:00. During this period, SIMS will be unavailable for use. * Learning Central will be unavailable on Thursday 26th December, 05:00 – 08:00. The suppliers (Anthology) will be conducting essential maintenance on their infrastructure during this period.   Library Services Update (given through a typed document):   * The Arts and Social Studies Library and Health Library will remain open 24/7 throughout the Christmas recess – you will need your student ID card to access them. * No library books will be due for return between the 14th December and the 5th January. * You won’t be able to request books between 19th December and 1st January – you can begin placing requests again from 2nd January. * Speak to staff in libraries of use the library online feedback form to deliver comments or suggestions relating to library spaces, services or collections to prompt improvements. * The University Library Service has started a subscription to a new AI software called Elicit which all students now have access to. * The library have a video and guide available on how to easily and freely access books, journals, etc. using LibrarySearch. * Food bank donations for the Trussell Trust will be collected from all libraries until the 20th December. |