

Postgraduate Research Representative Forum

Minutes

Wednesday 27 April – 4J – 1pm

In Attendance: Katie Kelly – Vice President Postgraduate Students (Chair), Professor Patricia Price - Pro Vice Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Standards, Bethan Foweraker - Student Engagement Team Manager, Andy Lloyd - Assessment and Feedback Project Manager, and Steve Ralph – Student Voice Manager (Secretary)

PGRs: Beryl Noe (COMSI), Gwen Williams (PHYSX), Camilo Penaloza (PHYSX), Brad Hardy (MATHS), Amy Sparkes (EARTH), Jac Larner (LAWPL), Steffan Evans (LAWPL), Rachel-Ann Russell (MEDIC), Sarah Orwig (WELSH), Sam Parker (SOCSI), Jack Midlane (SOCSI), Luke Bratton (PSYCH), Hayley Moulding (MEDIC), Nicholas McDermott (SHARE), Jeremy Smith (BIOSI), Kyle Henry (SOCSI), Bethan Copp (PHRMY), Lara Groves (CHEMY), Nicola Casseles (OPTOM), Jennifer Owen (CPLAN), Andrew Jones (ENCAP), Diana Beljaars (CPLAN), and two additional representatives that did not provide school or name.

1. Welcome and introductions

Welcome from Katie Kelly

2. Approval and amendment of minutes

Several amendments were noted and the Vice President Postgraduate informed the forum that the Students' Union will make amendments to the minutes before they are circulated more widely.

3. Postgraduate Researcher Pay for tutoring and demonstrating

i) Update on the consultation

Professor Patricia Price provided an update on the consultation around Postgraduate Researchers' Pay for tutoring and demonstrating. The project is attempting to create fairness and parity across the institution.

With all factors considered the proposal is that: new students next year will be on a new contract, continuous contracts will continue on their current pay scale with the option to move to the new contract if that preferred.

Root causes of this inequality were investigated, one such cause is difficulty in recruiting PGRs as tutors, which has led to an increase in wage to make the offer more attractive in some Schools. Another cause noted was how the opportunity to teach or demonstrate is advertised as well as how new recruits are supported and trained. Some researchers are not provided the opportunity to teach as they are required to be in labs, this is a further inconsistent opportunity for researchers if they wish to take advantage of developing some teaching skills.

For the rest of the academic year rates of pay will remain the same, and this will be a protected through the transition. The incoming Postgraduate Researchers will receive the new rate of pay.

Professor Price then asked the forum about their feelings around the proposed changes and the opportunity for equality regarding pay and workload.

ii) Discussion and questions around fair pay and workload

For the purpose of clarity:

- Teaching pay will increase to Grade 5.23 (£15.82 per hour)
- Demonstrating pay will increase to Grade 4.16 (£12.89 per hour)
- Those who are on a higher grade will remain on said grade for the next academic year
- Those who are on a lower grade will have their pay increased to reach the minimum for the next academic year
- Consultation is still required around the duties needed to fit both the demonstrator and teaching roles
- With regards to Marking and feedback: Marking 4,000 words or 3x 2 hour papers will be paid at £15.82 per hour

The discussion followed around specific Schools and how the implementation would affect them. Concerns were raised around the differences in pay, and questions relating to medical councils, the differentiation around intellectual input and relaying pre-created material was also noted.

Action: Professor Price to take these concerns back to Professor Elizabeth Treasure (DVC) and Ms Liz Connolly (HR lead) for further clarification

4. Giving and receiving feedback

Andy Lloyd (Assessment and Feedback Project Manager) thanked the forum for the invitation and outlined the university assessment and feedback project, that it is designed to help ensure that the university can improve the assessment and feedback across the university. As recipients of feedback (progress monitoring) and a provider of feedback. The University is keen to work in partnership with PGRs. This was seen as a key opportunity to learn about what is concerning PGRs. The three main questions that were asked of PGRs were:

- 1) What's going well?
- 2) What's not going well?
- 3) How would you suggest we work better with you?

Through consultation it was raised that there is a large inconsistency in practice around progress monitoring. Those who undertook progress monitoring gave mixed reviews on how it is implemented. There was further discussion around the training aspects of providing feedback to undergraduate students. Some PGRs provided feedback to students and taught students without any training, and due to there being a lack of negative comments, their performance has been considered acceptable. Relating to feedback, many schools noted that academics provide moderation for marking and feedback as expected. There was also discussion about the training provided by the University through the Undergraduate College with some PGRs being provided training from Bristol University.

Finally, a discussion around mentors and how a system could be implemented to support PGRs, a system where by a third year who has been marking for some time could mentor a new

academic who is marking for the first time. However, this would need to be considered in workload models.

For more detail on which representatives noted they receive progress monitoring, please contact studentreps@cardiff.ac.uk

5. Chairs updates

CHEMY representative noted a few complaints from the spreading of the work load across different sections, as there is a difference in the number required for the discipline and the numbers of PGRs for said discipline. Positive comments around the introduction of PGRs who teach wearing name badges.

COMSI representatives informed the forum that they are looking to improve professional development for PGRs. Noting that the UGC courses are good, but don't always fit. Proposed to develop alumni talks to inform current students about those that have come before.

PHRMY representative noted the enrolment issues faced by PHRMY students. Enrolment is taking too long, especially for those who have been staff and now coming onto the course. SIMS shows them as staff and not students this in turn leads to problems with university accommodation, and also missing welcome material as well.

PHYSX representative asked about Marking and demonstrating – there is currently not enough PGRs available for demonstrating and asked whether it was possible for there to be the ability for PGRs from other schools to be recruited to teach i.e. ENGIN.

Vice President Postgraduate noted that this had already been raised in the last PGR Forum and that Professor Price is investigating however it is a logistical problem, and will raise it again.

MATHS representative raised no concerns.

EARTH noted field work and how PGRs who attend field work are not paid, however PGRs do provide two hours of tutorial at the beginning and end of the day. Further explaining that the tutorial rate is higher than field work rate. The concern around the imbalance between male and female, it is more difficult to recruit female demonstrators, this could be exacerbated with the new pay scale as they would be earning less. It was noted the school will need to work on recruitment and equal pay. CPLAN noted disparity, as CPLAN PGRs are paid for field work.

Vice President Postgraduate noted that this will feed this into the relevant people.

SHARE representative raised no concerns.

LAWPL – meeting with the school and things are positive

MEDIC representative raised no additional concerns

WELSH representative noted that things were well, however the PGR community could be more vibrant.

SOCSI – improvements made to the office.

PSYCH representative raised positive engagement with the head of research for psychology with a student-run day. The want for this was echoed by COMSI and asked how to have a large number engaged, advice around free food was given by the PSYCH representative.

CPLAN – Currently not enough PGRs to fill teaching spaces there is a plan to have reciprocal arrangements with SOCSI around this issue.

OPTOM noted there are three pay scales, and there was confusion around certain teaching and why it is paid at a different rate. Vice President Postgraduate agreed it needed to be transparent.

6. Any Other Business

COMSI representative asked how Speak Week progressed, the Vice President Postgraduate updated the forum about the 2000 speak week cards, and informed the forum that as soon as the stats are ready they can be disseminated. Thank you was given to all those who have submitted and helped.

Vice President Postgraduate told the PGRs that this would be the last forum before the incoming Vice President Postgraduate (Alex) will take over in June. Further noting the want to run a PGR forum during the summer, any feedback on this, please do engage via VPPostgraduate@cardiff.ac.uk

The Vice President Postgraduate thanked all PGRs for their work over the last year and at this particular forum.

7. Next meeting will be scheduled by the student voice team and the incoming Vice President Postgraduate.

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