



Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Department Leadership Team Meeting

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 8th September 2021

Part 1 Attendees;

Mike Burton (Head of Department)
Ann Webb (Deputy Head of Department)
Helena Gittins (Deputy School Operations Manager)
Cathy Walton (Chair of EDIA committee)
Katie Joy (Chair of Widening Participation committee)
Bart Van Dongen (Discipline Head of Education)
Gemma McCabe (PS Teaching and Learning Manager)
Gordon McFiggans (Discipline Head of Research)
David Polya (Line Manager)
Mads Huuse (Line Manager)
Scott Heath (Line Manager)
David Topping (Line Manager)
Jon Pittman (PGR director)
Sonya Kewley (PS Safety)
Lisa Jameson (PS Technical)
Rob Gardham (PS PA)
Rob Sansom (Forum Chair)

Apologies; David Schultz (Line Manager), Russell Garwood (IT Director), Rhian Jones (Admissions) Luis Garcia-Carreras (Employability)

Summary Actions

ACTION (rolling item): Report on progress with Departmental Forum discussion on sustainability (MB/SK)

ACTION: Send reminder for contributions to blog re sustainability (MB)

ACTION: Plan Departmental Celebration for late afternoon on Friday of Reading Week (Nov 5th) (RJG/HG)

ACTION: Liaise with Vicky Cooper and Jillian Yeow and devise a plan going forward. Also raise at T&L (CW, BVD)

ACTION: Include in budget: Departmental equipment for WP students for fieldtrips (HG)

Matters Arising

The minutes from the previous meeting were confirmed.

HoD Introduction and report

Mike Burton (MB)

FSE, and EES, has over-recruited with 140 UG students after a target of 120. Slightly less overseas students but overall good position without requiring Clearing and a competitive-looking year. PGT also better than expected after recruitment of 150 students after target of 134.

We have £1 million in credit in the budget, cash that after contributing to centre can be used to invest to set us up for long-term activity, in areas such as: refurbishment of Dept. teaching spaces, infrastructure work on Isotopes laboratory, setting up of Simon workshop for thin sections.

A huge area of growth is Data Science. Should existing students be reregistered with FSE rather than Humanities, this pathway/degree could be expanded, with greater student numbers and a new teaching position created to hire for.

NCAS has also provided scope for 2 new appointments for a FT Research Scientist and a 50/50 funded Lecturer in Air Quality/Data Science. Further areas for growth/recruitment include Geoscience/Data Science pathway, and the Global Ecology Lecturer position.

Steve Boulton has requested to step down as ProgDir of NPEC. The proposal is to recruit ASAP for overseeing Director and individual pathway tutors in time for Welcome Week.

A big piece of work going on is developing useful risk assessments for face-to-face teaching. We are limited in what we can do, but suggestions include making it cultural to wear masks, confirming if we can mandate their use, using Airborne.cam, and establishing a level of acceptable risk.

Recognising retirement during COVID

After the retirement of quite a few colleagues during the pandemic, it was discussed about having a celebratory event to recognise these and also other recent successes, as well as simply having a Department get-together.

ACTION: Plan Departmental Celebration for late afternoon on Friday of Reading Week (Nov 5th) (RJG/HG)

More generally, there was an appetite for more social events, especially in research groups, to build community and relationships across the Dept. It was suggested to use the November event as a pilot for this.

This led to a discussion about online vs in-person meetings. There were advantages to both but it was agreed that hybrid meetings (incorporating both elements) didn't work. The next DLT (13th Oct) will be scheduled provisionally as in-person, in a bigger venue than normal.

Tagging SDGs to Units - pilot

The Dept. has been invited to take part in a pilot in FSE for tagging SDGs to our units.

Whilst important the timing should be considered so as not to interfere with delivering teaching and H&S which should be prioritised in the coming term.

ACTION: Liaise with Vicky Cooper and Jillian Yeow and devise a plan going forward. Also raise at T&L (CW, BVD)

Reports – please refer to grouped reports copied at end

Recruitment & Admissions Update

Rhian Jones (RJ)

Report submitted

Please see report for further details.

Teaching and Learning

Bart Van Dongen (BVD)

Report submitted

Please see report for further details.

PGR Report

Jon Pittman (JP)

Report submitted

We received a 76% satisfaction score on the PRES 2021 survey from PGR students. This is a low figure but has to be taken in context with the circumstances of the previous year.

It was asked what the position was on getting matched funding from FSE for studentship applications on BBSRC DTP. There is no requirement and a Faculty policy on this is not known about.

Director of Research

Gordon McFiggins (GM)

Report submitted

The 50% target to reduce CO2 emissions was considered impractical. MB suggested examining the ways in which we can reduce those emissions linked to non-contractually obligated activities, as these will have less impact on our funding.

It was reported that the Wellcome Trust requires justification for international travel in grant applications, and evidence of offsetting this.

Margherita Polacci has achieved a UKRI FLF Fellowship.

EDIA

Catherine Walton (CW)

Report submitted

ACTION: Include in budget: Departmental equipment for WP students for fieldtrips (HG)

PS Update

Sonya Kewley (SK), Helena Gittins (HG)

Please see report for further details.

AOB

None.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday 13th October 2021, 2pm.

DLT Grouped Reports September 2021

5. Recruitment and Admissions

Admissions and Recruitment Staffing

New staffing of the Admissions Office started on 1st September. Suzi Wright and Olivia Tansey have now left the team. Lauren Davis is now the overall manager for EES, Physics, Chemistry, (partially) CEAS, as well as Foundation Studies for these departments. Michael Atherton is back in the team and will now be the main EES contact. There are also several new staff. This should be the last major reorganisation, and hopefully this team will now stay in place for some time.

In Marketing, Bee Mistry-Budhia and Joe Phelan are our main contacts. Jemma Stewart has now resigned from the university as of the end of September.

Admissions, 2021 Entry

Undergraduate

Undergraduate admissions for 2021 are high throughout the university as a result of the high teacher-assessed grades awarded to A level students this year. In EES, we admitted students up to our capacity (140) during Confirmation, and the whole university did not go into Clearing. Numbers have since adjusted up and down slightly for several reasons, but we are currently still around the 140 mark. Numbers for Overseas students still have some uncertainty because of travel and Covid considerations.

A breakdown of some of the numbers is as follows (from a summary with 139 total):

112 Home, 27 Overseas

54 Earth & Planetary (includes 4 Overseas), 85 Environmental (includes 23 Overseas)

Of the above, 12 MEarthSci students and 17 MEnvSci students (29 total)

The above numbers include 12 progressing from Foundation Studies (although 3 are contingent on resits). There are also 7 transfers from other departments, all coming into our first year. These are students who have already completed a year in Biology, Pharmacy, Chemistry, Physics and EEE and who have decided to change their course.

There is at least one EES student who interrupted or is repeating the first year.

A relatively large number of students (7) completed the MDAS programme this year. The WP committee is discussing how to follow up and support them as undergraduate students.

Postgraduate

At the time of writing, there is still some uncertainty around PGT numbers. This is because there were a significant number of students who needed to complete English language requirements, and also a number who had not taken up the CAS paperwork for visas. The numbers should be clearer by the time of the DLT meeting and an update will be provided.

We held conversion events for 2021 intake onto PGT courses on 26th and 27th August (Energy Geoscience and MPEC / Data Science) that were quite well attended.

2022 Recruitment and Admissions

Open Days: There is a university open week, 6-9th October. This will include centrally organised campus tours and virtual sessions on 6-8th, and a virtual event with a one-hour EES subject talk on Saturday 9th.

Production of University and Department level brochures are in progress.

Offer-holder days: There are plans for at least two Offer-holder open days during the academic year, probably December and early March, both on Saturdays. There might possibly be another in April. These events will include centrally organised introductory presentations and department taster events. It is a good opportunity to get students onto campus, but at present it seems that numbers might be quite limited.

UCAS interviews: All interviews will be held on zoom. We are currently discussing the calendar for these days, particularly so that we can take advantage of the Offer-holder days. We are considering running the interview days on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays, and increasing the number of students at each (50 compared with 40 last year) so that there are fewer events (6 compared with 8 last year). We are working on the basis of 300 interviews, similar to last year. Any feedback on a Tuesday / Thursday afternoon format is welcome. The driver for this is that a lot of committees meet on Wednesday afternoon, which limits staff availability, and we also want to avoid a clash with the Colloquium.

2+2 programmes: We plan to have a meeting soon, to discuss the strategy for marketing these programmes this year.

An International Student Diversification Strategy task-and-finish group is going to meet this semester, chaired by Wayne Keating. Rhian Jones and Dave Polya are on the list for this group.

Student Ambassador recruitment is now being handled centrally by Bee Mistry-Bhudia. This will take place in September. We are hoping to recruit 17 new SAs, so please encourage students to apply.

Explore Your Planet: Katherine Harrison is leading on the EYP programme for the coming academic year. This is aimed at showing Year 12 students (first year of A levels) how various science A levels are used in Earth and Environmental Sciences. We plan to hold two virtual events that are followed up with an on-campus event in June. We will have a structured format, and tie content more closely to the A level curricula than we have done in the past.

PGT: 2022 marketing

There is a PGT virtual Open Week, the week of 18th October. We are currently determining what sessions to present.

The two Petroleum courses are going to be combined, and we will be changing marketing materials accordingly.

PGR: 2022 marketing

We are working on clarifying the website information for research masters degrees, to remove inconsistencies and to explain the differences between MPhil and MResearch.

Rhian Jones, Admissions Tutor

6. Employability Update

No updates.

7. T&L Update

Discipline head of education report for DLT Sept 2021

Resit exams, start of year and timetabling. Resit exam period is closed and no major incidents to report. Mitigation meeting and resit exam board will be on Thursday and Friday. All Assessment pledge cases have been dealt with. Planning for start academic year is on track. As reported earlier, in welcome week 1 (w/c) 13th September, everything will be online and mostly run by the University. Welcome week 2 (w/c) 20th September is when departments are arranging their WW activities. Plans are in place and discussed with all.

Timetables are (should) now be available and as reported earlier we will start the semester using the no social distancing timetable (Plan B; Turing timetable). To be clear, in this plan it is anticipated that all synchronous activities originally planned online will now occur on campus with asynchronous sessions (videos etc) still being delivered online. However, we need to be ready to go back to the time table with social distancing in place (Plan A; Lewis timetable) at short notice.

To help to explain to prospective students and returning students a bit more about flexible and blended learning we have contacted all students and to show a typical study plan for a week for the discipline, the example for the returning undergraduate students (showing a typical first semester week for the second year on the Pollution and Environmental Processes pathway for both plans) is attached. The important part is that we do not overload the students. We should aim for 36 hour weekly workload for students, which considering that we are normally teaching 60 credits per semester, would come down to a workload of approximately 6 hours per 10 credit unit per week. Critical for this is that we assume that a student will be spending approximately 2-3hrs per week on 1hr of asynchronous material (e.g. videos). We will keep monitoring the situation and plan to have a student-staff liaison meeting early on in the semester to discuss the situation with the students.

More effective study habits may also help to prevent overloading. We are currently considering how best to direct the students to the set of videos developed by the faculty, project led by James Brooks, to help them study effectively and how to best combine these resources with the existing information. It is likely that these will be discussed in welcome week, used in first year teaching (maybe via the PASS system), hosted in the virtual common room on blackboard and highlighted in the departmental 'Monday-must-read' email. Vicky is leading this process.

Remaining dates and timelines for information

- Resit Exam Boards will take place between 6th September – 13th September 2021.

- Resit decision outcomes will be communicated to students from the 16 September 2021.
- Welcome and the start of academic year 2021/2022 from Monday 27th September 2021
- PGT final exam board will take place on the 5th October 2021.

Fieldtrips. The replacement fieldtrip for the second year students on the Earth and Planetary Science programmes (led by Steve CC) is currently on its way in Scotland. Other fieldtrips planned to go ahead for this semester, besides a number of one day fieldtrips, includes the second year fieldtrip (led by Julian) to Wales and our first overseas fieldtrip to Spain for the 4th year MEarthSci students (led by Stefan and Rhodri). The latter have been moved to reading week. The majority of fieldtrips are planned for around Easter time and, at the moment we assume that all fieldtrips will go ahead, and plan accordingly.

Strategic meeting. In line with earlier discussions there will be a strategic departmental teaching planning this week. The purpose of this meeting is that the extended teaching team (discipline head of education, programme directors, pathway cohort leaders, assessment lead, teaching and learning enhancement lead, support staff) discusses what discipline teaching related topics we want to focus on in the next year and how we are going to handle these. This can be anything from planned changes

on units and pathways/programmes to discussions around moderation of units and the delivery of teaching outside term time. The idea is that for all topics we plan a route, set the basic principles and make sure that we are ready for a series of departmental teaching meetings in January (like 2 years ago) during which final decisions can be taken. This will give use enough time to deal with the outcomes through unit/programme amendments, budget planning etc.

Fieldtrip compensation. All EES students who missed the same GEOG fieldtrips for which the School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED), has offered their students a financial compensation for cancelled field trips, have now been contacted and offered a similar compensation. For the EES fieldtrips the schools policy remains to not provide any reimbursement. This since in all cases, using significant additional resource the school arranged alternative provision to deliver content broadly equivalent to that which would have been delivered during the physical field trip, to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the unit.

Attendance monitoring. The University has developed a new attendance monitoring system, 'My Attendance'. It's a simple online system where all taught students 'check in' at the beginning of timetabled activities and have a view of

their attendance history. From the 20th September we will be adopting this new system on our programmes. This is a great opportunity to collect better attendance data, improve student support and reduce the time colleagues spend on attendance administration. The advantages are that academic staff involved in teaching can easily see attendance reports for individual students and their programme cohort, and for certain activities staff can record attendance on the system as well, for instance, to do a spot check. In addition, academic advisors will be able to view the attendance history of their advisees. The attendance, monitoring and reporting task and finish group has been created to support the implementation of the system (with Vicky Coker and Thomas Sharkett representing EES). EES have asked for all timetabled activities (except fieldwork) to be monitored, which will be evaluated at the end of the first semester. We are discussing the process for contacting students with unsatisfactory attendance. All academics are asked to visit the Student Attendance StaffNet site, watch the short training videos and read further information about what the system does and how it works before the start of the next academic year. There is a presentation pack which has some useful information in terms of the aim of the project, feedback from staff and students, and roles and responsibilities. This is a big change, so the faculty are running a drop-in Q&A session on Friday 10th September 2021 at 2pm for all staff. Either Francesca Moss, Louise Walker or a member of the project team will be there to answer any questions you may have about the system and its functionality.

Proposed changes to MSc's Petroleum Geoscience for Exploration and Petroleum Geoscience for Development and Productions. Following on from the start of the new EES taught MSc in Sustainable Subsurface Geoscience, proposed amendments related to the two existing MSc Petroleum Geoscience programs are now submitted to the school (Andrew Horn) for consideration. The changes are relatively minimal and only affect units in the second semester. They include renaming/adjustment of 2 units in MSc Petroleum Geoscience for Exploration (EXP), which will be renamed Petroleum Geoscience MSc and the cancelling of MSc Petroleum Geoscience for Development and Production (DEV). The changes are required since contact with industry recruiters informs us that students with a broad skills base will be targeted in the future rather than specialists in 'Exploration' or 'Development and Production'. The proposed changes will not only decrease the teaching commitment in DEES (removal of 2 units, see below) but also decrease the reliance on external teachers and consultants. Currently EART60282 is 50% taught by an experienced external consultant.

Detail of the changes:

- DEV program will be cancelled.
- EXP program will continue with a name change to MSc Petroleum Geoscience. Some content of DEV units will be incorporated into EXP.

- EART60282 (Reservoir Depletion Planning & Petroleum Economics) and EART60112 (Development Group Project), will be cancelled and a selection of the ILOs related to reservoir management will be incorporated into EART60402 and EART60162 to transfer this knowledge to the combined degree.
- EART60162 (Prospect Evaluation and Petroleum Economics) will be renamed to “EART60162: Prospect, Field Evaluation and Petroleum Economics”.
- EART60402 (Field Appraisal and Development) will be renamed to “EART60402: Field Appraisal, Development and Reservoir Engineering”. ILOs have been expanded to cover management of reservoir depletion.
- EART60102 (Exploration Group Project) will be renamed to “EART60102: Energy Group Project”. While the delivery and teaching ILOs on this unit will remain the same, the dataset used will be updated to incorporate a Development and Production element. This modification will allow students who lean towards the Development and Production side of the course to play to their strengths and the common interests of their group.

Attachment

What does a typical week look like in Earth and Environmental sciences?

Year 2-4 on the undergraduate BSc and integrated MSc programmes

In each year you will be studying 120 credits of taught content. Usually you will do 60 credits in each semester. Most course units are either 10 credits (for undergraduate programmes) or 15 credits (for Level 4 MEEarthSci course units), although some Geography units are 20 credits each.

For a typical 10 credit course unit, a typical week might comprise:

- Around 60 minutes of material on the course unit Blackboard page. This is known as the asynchronous component and will be a combination of videos recorded by the lecturer and others teaching on the course unit and (possibly) some directed reading. This material is often broken up into individual topics (short videos) and it is designed so that you can watch and re-watch it at your own pace. For each course unit, we expect that you’ll be spending approximately 2-3hrs per week on this material to give you time to re-watch parts and to take notes. This can be complemented by a small number of short formative quizzes or short exercises. These are not for credit: they are for you to check that you have a basic understanding of that week’s material. If this is not the case you can go back and re-watch the videos or you can ask the lecturer to clarify in the live classes. The number and type of these quizzes/exercises varies from one course unit to another,

but typically one might expect to spend up to 30 minutes per course unit per week on these.

- A 50 minute (interactive) lecture (also often referred to as seminar or workshop), which combined with the practicals (see below) are known as the synchronous components. A short Youtube explainer by Steve Pettifer of how synchronous and asynchronous components can work can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsLBimW-zEI>. It is assumed that you have watched and/or read the asynchronous material prior to the lecture. The lecturer can then summarise the content and go into more detail on this material in this class, perhaps providing additional context or new examples, or demonstrating how the material links with other parts of this course unit or others. The lecturer can also address common misunderstandings that have been highlighted in the short quizzes. The lecturer will be leading the discussion, but there normally will be enough opportunity for interaction and for you to ask questions.

- A 50-110 minute practical. Here the emphasis is on applying the concepts learned etc. There will be some more challenging exercises or problems for you to work through either

individually or in small groups, or other interactive tasks. Teaching staff will be on-hand to help you with these. The teaching staff will often spend part of the class going through the solutions to some of the problems with the class.

- Self-study. You will need to put a considerable effort into studying the techniques and concepts that you have learned. You should also be continuously revising material from earlier in the course unit so that you can understand how the content of the unit fits together.

Please note that not all units follow this exact schedule. Some units are, for instance, more lecture based and do not (or have less of) the practical based sessions. Instead there will be more asynchronous material and/or more (interactive) lectures. There are also some course units that do not fit into the above model. For example, the fieldwork units – where the emphasis is on developing field skills etc – follow a different model and the emphasis will be on field based exercises/observations. Other units may be focussed more on project work or on small group teaching (tutorials) such as, for instance, the Professional Development and Project Preparation unit in the second year or delivered through using a traditional lecture model. Most Level 4 MEEarthSci course units are 15 credits. They typically run in the same way as above and the amount of material each week is increased pro rata.

During the taught part of the semester we expect a 10 credit course unit to comprise around 6 hrs of total study time per week (total of asynchronous, synchronous and self-study; pro rata for 15 or 20 credit course units). This gives

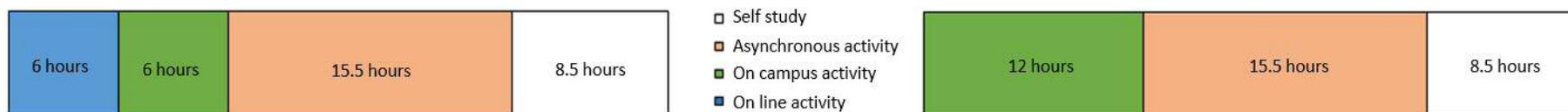
around 36 hours of studying each week during the taught part of the semester. To give you an idea how a typical week looks like we have included an example below. This is for a typical week on the Pollution and Environmental Processes pathway on the 2nd year in the first semester for a student that has chosen to do EART26001 (Energy and Resources) as an option (draft version only; other pathways/year groups will vary). For semester 1 there are currently 2 timetables developed; Plan A and B. Plan A assumes that there is still 2m social distancing and as a consequence we will not be able to do all synchronous activities on campus (these are highlighted in blue). Plan B assumes no social distancing and all synchronous activities will be on campus (highlighted in green). Please note that even under Plan A there are still a substantial number of activities planned on campus. We also highlighted in light brown when you could plan to do the asynchronous components (indicative only). We are currently anticipating that for semester 2 we return back to normal teaching, using a blended teaching approach (e.g. using the synchronous and asynchronous components), and a typical week will look like Plan B.

Most course unit normally has some form of coursework. This might be one or more tests/assessments that take place during the semester or a form of project work. You will get feedback on your coursework so that you can understand why you got the mark that you did and how you can improve in the future.

There are plenty of other activities for you to get involved in. In your first year as an undergraduate, you will be assigned to a PASS ('Peer Assisted Study Sessions') group where you will have the opportunity to gain support, advice and help with your studies from higher-year students who will be able to share their experiences and help you with your studies. In later years, you might volunteer to be a PASS leader and run one of these groups yourself! You will also have the opportunity to engage in Stellify (<https://www.stellify.manchester.ac.uk>), voluntary work, or participate in clubs and societies run by the Students' Union.

Plan A: Social distancing requirements in place						Plan B: No social distancing requirements						
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday		Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	
9:00-10:00	EART26001 Lecture (online)	EART27001 Asynchronous Content	EART27001 Asynchronous Content	EART25001 Asynchronous Content		9:00-10:00		EART27001 Asynchronous Content		EART25001 Asynchronous Content		
10:00-11:00			EART27001 Lecture (online)		EART22001 Practical (on-campus) Room: Simon 6.004	10:00-11:00	EART26001 Lecture (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.47	EART27001 Asynchronous Content	EART27001 Lecture (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.47		EART22001 Practical (on-campus) Room: Simon 6.004	
11:00-12:00	EART26001 Practical (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.12/G.14/G.16			EART23001 Lecture (online)		11:00-12:00	EART26001 Practical (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.12/G.14/G.16			EART23001 Lecture (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.47		
12:00-13:00		EART29200 Tutorial (on-campus)	EART23001 Asynchronous Content			12:00-13:00		EART29200 Tutorial (on-campus)	EART23001 Asynchronous Content			
13:00-14:00	EART22001 Asynchronous Content		Reserved for extra-curricular activities		EART25001 Lecture (online)	13:00-14:00	EART22001 Asynchronous Content		Reserved for extra-curricular activities		EART25001 Lecture (on-campus) Room: Williamson 2.05	
14:00-15:00		EART22001 Lecture (online)				14:00-15:00		EART22001 Lecture (on-campus) Room: Williamson G.03				
15:00-16:00	EART23001 Asynchronous Content				EART27001 Practical (on-campus) Room: Williamson 2.45		15:00-16:00	EART23001 Asynchronous Content				
16:00-17:00	EART29200 Asynchronous Content	EART25001 Asynchronous Content				EART26001 Asynchronous Content	16:00-17:00	EART29200 Asynchronous Content				EART26001 Asynchronous Content
17:00-18:00					EART25001 Asynchronous Content		17:00-18:00					EART25001 Asynchronous Content

Average time spend on each activity (total = 36 hours)



Typical Semester 1 Timetable for Pollution and Environmental Processes Pathway 2nd year. Plan A: Social distancing requirements in place. Plan B: No social distancing requirements. Blue = online activity; green = on campus activity; light brown = asynchronous activity (indicative only). Units in this example include EART26001 (Energy and Resources), EART25001 (Ecology and Conservation), EART29200 (Professional Development and Project Preparation), EART27001 (Environmental Chemistry 1; Water-Solid-Air Interactions), EART23001 (Atmospheric Physics and Weather), EART22001 (Environmental Modelling). Note this is still a draft version and exact timeslots are likely to change and time/activities on other pathways/year groups will vary.

8. PGR Update

Admissions and recruitment:

Current admissions numbers at the start of September for the 2021 cycle are: 297 applications, 86 offers made, of which there are 63 acceptances. We are expecting 38 PGRs to start this month.

Focus of attention is now on recruitment for the 2021/22 academic year. Some funded calls have already started and details have been distributed. This include the BBSRC and MRC DTP (including CASE) studentships (proposal deadline Monday 13 September 2021). There is an information session for the Synthetic Biology Manchester-Tsinghua Dual PhD Programme on 15 September (see emailed details). We are awaiting details for this year's EPSRC DTP studentships.

EES will be one of the departments to pilot the new PGR Admissions software system. This system should be a substantial improvement to applicants, supervisors and PS staff compared to the previous processes and will hopefully address the numerous issues we have had with PGR admissions processes for many years. The system will go live in October and information with regard to how to use the system will be made available shortly.

New starters:

We are expecting 38 new PGR starters to come this month. Welcome emails and some pre-attendance information are being sent out. In-person induction activities for our new PGRs will take place during Welcome Week on the Thursday 23 and Friday 24 September. This will include Department-specific and Faculty induction activities. For PGRs who are unable to attend Welcome Week in person video recordings of presentations will be made available online.

We are aware of some delays with ATAS applications for some International PGRs, which might delay their start. We have reassured these PGRs that registration and starting in October (or later if necessary) is allowed.

PGR working arrangement:

Advice to PGRs has now been updated such that face-to-face meetings (including supervisory meetings/vivas/annual reviews etc.) as well as attendance at UK based events/conferences can take place where appropriate.

The guidance on remote vivas has also been updated to incorporate a potential hybrid approach (see [here](#)). Vivas can now be held either entirely in-person, remotely via video link, or a hybrid approach can be adopted whereby one or more members of the examination appear via a video link.

Our PGR Administrator Claire Erskine will return to on-campus working from 13 September on specified days in the Williamson building. She will also be present in the FSE South Campus Student Hub in Engineering Building A (MECD) every 3 weeks, and on some days will be present in the Sackville Street Admissions Office. For all face to face non-academic PGR queries, the FSE South Campus Student Hub is encouraged to be used but in the first instance PGRs should contact Claire by email.

NERC DTP scoping discussion:

This week a panel of representatives from each Research Group will be meeting for an initial discussion for the NERC DTP3 bid. We will discuss and recommend broad options for a preferred research and training vision and potential partnerships, and the process going forward. These recommendations will then presented to DLT and to department staff.

2021 PRES:

Results of the 2021 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey were released this summer. An overview presentation of the results is [here](#) and a summary of results are [here](#). We had a final response rate of 45% by our PGRs (the overall university response rate was also 45%). Overall, we had a headline PGR satisfaction score of 76% for EES (in comparison to 75% across the Faculty and 76% across the University). The results indicate things that we do well, such as the quality of supervision, but also indicate where improvements can be made.

In addition to the numerical data, we have the free text anonymised comments from EES PGRs, and together we are reviewing these to develop a Department action plan. We will shortly arrange a meeting to invite PGRs to discuss the PRES results with us and allow their input into the development of this action plan.

Jon Pittman

9. Research Update

DHoR Report Sept 2021; 7/9/21 Gordon McFiggans

Faculty Research Centres: Discussions ongoing following circulation of the draft “Governance” document for internally funded research centres. Feedback was mixed – particularly in light of a) the lack of clarity of the benefits of being a Centre and b) the missing Appendix A describing the Faculty Research Strategy since all Centres are expected to contribute to “implementation of particular areas of Faculty research strategy”. Which brings us to...

Departmental Research Strategy: We have been asked to come up with an overarching DEES 20 year research strategy to see us through the next decade or two – i.e. the longer term view of what and who we are. In particular there was a perceived need to identify what we should stop doing since there is an understanding that we cannot be all things to all people. Thoughts and comments required. It will likely form much of the shaping of a Faculty / Institutional research strategy and so is important in defining where investment will go. The SoNS research priorities have been stated as:

- i) Sustainable futures and net zero
- ii) Integration of natural sciences with healthcare including environment
- iii) Modelling and the broad area of digital data science

We have been asked for a similar DEES-focussed set of 3 (maximum 4) research priorities.

Technical Review: a full update of the cohort 2 recruitment and of technical review activities (in both research and teaching) over the summer can be found at

https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/fse/faculty-structure/technical-review/latest-news/?gator_td=5KI8ENIgytIM7WhqXF%2f7qr%2fPX%2b%2f5IQN4pk06mid83wicZ1bQBSun97S6glrB4cJR3rCmBopUaUHIsM22ChImO3FNnNPvRIachBsAqX6Qn7rRWI929eZjp0l4h3%2fX%2fPOCTnJZZ7FGc dyRhpQFNpByPA%3d%3d

CO₂ emission targets for research (and other operational activities): commitment (without consultation, so far as I know) to reduce FSE CO₂ emissions from travelling by 50% compared to 2018/19. DEES identified as 2nd highest (to Physics) in FSE – need to work out how we will do this and consider the impact on our research.

Shape of PGR Discussion questions cascaded down from Faculty

Scott Heath has been asked by the VDR to look at the future size and shape of PGR within the Faculty as part of future planning. There is a desire to increase PGR numbers in the Faculty but it is recognised that some areas of the School already support substantial PGR numbers. We have been asked:

1. Where do we have spare capacity for PGR growth in the Departments? This needs to consider lab space, facilities, academic staff numbers etc.
2. How can we leverage more funding for studentships? Scott has mentioned trying to get companies to pay 50% of internally funded/DTP studentships for example. We also may consider building more links with foreign government scholarship schemes.
3. How can PGR fit into the University's local agenda? (e.g. growing CDTs, EngDs, fully funded studentships and studentship top ups with local companies.)
4. Is it possible to do an integrated masters/integrated PhD? If so, in which areas?
5. Can we encourage more sponsored students from the middle east to stay and do a PhD? We will need to discuss this with PGT leaders of course.
6. Can we increase our dual 2+2 PhDs to help diversify the PGR population?
7. There's a suggestion to recruit PGRs in cohorts (they can still be working in diverse but related areas) rather than as individuals. Are Depts happy with this and if so, should the cohorts be at research group, Dept, School or Faculty level?
8. Are we happy with the overall quality of our PGR and if not, how can we improve it?

Sustainable Futures platform – External launch on 20th October, incl. key external stakeholders. It will feature 'challenge area' presentations, and a panel discussion. Details and registration at https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sustainable-futures-external-showcase-launch-tickets-163610705023?gator_td=5KI8ENIgytIM7WhqXF%2f7qr%2fPX%2b%2f5IQN4pk06mid83wicZ1bQBSun97S6glrB4cJR3rCmBopUaUHIsM22ChImO3FNnNPvRIachBsAqX6Qn7rRWI929eZjp0l4h3%2fX%2fPOCTnJZZ7FGcdyRhpQFNpByPA%3d%3d

Director will be addressing the meeting – not yet in post, but advert out. Internal application has been made.

Awards and Applications: no update over the summer

10. EDIA

1. Following up from a previous DLT action CW contacted Paul Mativenga to ask how DEES could enhance our profile within the University in relation to Sustainable Development Goals. As a result of this, Jillean Yeow suggested to me (and shared now with Bart van Dongen) if we would like to be a pilot and lead within FSE for tagging our units to SDG goals. This circles back to efforts already underway by Vicky Cooper and Bart van Dongen on this. How would DEES like to respond to this request?

2. Further to July report on EDIA Team meeting with Rhodri Jerrett and Sonya Kewley to discuss undergraduate fieldcourse inclusivity in June 2021. The meeting

report (attached) has been shared with Bart van Dongen, Director of Teaching and Learning. We propose to take forward to the Teaching and Learning Committee suggestions arising from that meeting. Specifically should we:

- i. Have a generic early course (first semester/first year?) on fieldtrips with the aim of preparing the students for what is involved e.g. need for outdoor equipment, limited toilet access and how to deal with this, first aid, need for risk assessment?
- ii. Have a requirement for students to complete (partially complete?) their own risk assessment for all field trips?
- iii. Make mandatory for all field trips to have a pre-meeting with students. We would need to explore what the nature of this should be (see specific issues mentioned in meeting report). E.g. could include for example, issues surrounding personal risks for students to fill in on risk forms e.g. related to sexual orientation, gender identity. Should such meetings involve students from previous years?
- iv. Have specific information to be contained in all fieldcourse handbooks e.g. toilet access.
- v. Provide departmental equipment to WP students? E.g. have branded waterproof clothing. And/or provide student bursaries.

11. IT Report

No updates.

12. PS Update

Ops Update Sept 2021 (Helena)

Hybrid working – Ops will be in 0.4 of time each week. Room G02, will be manned most days – email address ees-op@manchester.ac.uk still in use for all Ops queries

Travel – UK travel no longer SLT approval required and generic RA need (just change names, and add pertinent things). New update sent out Tue 7/9

Overseas – still requires Mike or SLT approval for amber and red countries. No longer requires App B & C

Procurement – no SLT approval needed, staff and student must be added on Research Register for procurement

Signing (credit cards/expenses etc) – send all signing to EES Ops – signing will revert to old process of Helena’s signing Tuesdays and Thursday

GTAs – Allocation being done this week –