



Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences  
Department Leadership Team Meeting

**Minutes**

Date: **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

Zoom meeting; <https://zoom.us/j/94400292520>

**Attendees;**

Mike Burton (Head of Department)  
Ann Webb (Deputy Head of Department)  
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)  
David Schultz (Line Manager)  
Rhian Jones (Admissions)  
Luis Garcia-Carreras (Employability)  
Carl Jackson (PS Safety)  
Lisa Jameson (PS Technical)  
Rob Sansom (Forum Chair)  
Russell Garwood (IT Director)

**Apologies;** Jon Pittman (PGR director), Helena Gittins (Deputy School Operations Manager), Cathy Walton, Rob Gardham

**Summary of Agreed Actions**

**ACTION:** Include Departmental WP fieldtrip equipment as a line item for the budget each year (MB).

**ACTION:** Forward a discussion on capacity issues for microprobe for the next DLT meeting.

**ACTION:** MB to contact Ian Cain to have a follow-up discussion on EES advisory board.

**ACTION:** PRDA's mentor role to be discussed in the next DLT meeting.

**ACTION:** Interview committee to be discussed in the next DLT meeting.

**ACTION:** RG to ensure both MB and DT have access to HR recruitment pages.

**ACTION:** SH to follow up on HR guidance for super GTAs pension.

**ACTION:** GM, MB and JP to meet ASAP to give guidance to staff on how to get best students come March and discuss the process of super GTA advertisement.

**ACTION:** All line managers need to email MB to know who has gone on strike before 4<sup>th</sup> January.

**ACTION:** DT to send MB more information on the suggested topics for the graduation speech.

**ACTION:** Need a discussion on how to advertise for volunteers for recruitment (RJ and MB).

**ACTION:** RJ needs to make the material of the Explore Your Planet presentation online.

**ACTION:** Hold meeting with staff and overseas universities to see how students get their information on the programme RJ.

**ACTION:** RJ to look into doing something similar to a virtual open day for 2+2 programme.

**ACTION:** Further discussions on the refurbishment needed (BVD).

**ACTION:** Staff have not received timetabling information yet, GM to follow this up with Tom.

**ACTION:** JP to send an email to all staff to remind them to participate in the Policy Review Consultation.

**ACTION:** BVD and MB to include message in introduction to students at the start of the year that F2F and online lectures are not a repeat.

**ACTION:** GM to devise a survey to better capture what happens in Earth Science as they are going for a Centre of Excellence bid.

**ACTION:** GM to contact Daniel T on the feedback from the University panel.

**ACTION:** RS to discuss with CJ on the Health and Safety procedure for the conference. If more complex, include MB.

**ACTION:** CJ to see if it is possible for security staff to enforce mask wearing in buildings.

#### **Review of Actions and Previous Minutes (Mike Burton)**

**MB:** For December or early January a system for Departmental WP student fieldtrip equipment is needed so students can enter requests. It is believed that there is the budget to do this.

**ACTION:** Include Departmental WP fieldtrip equipment as a line item for the budget each year.

**MB:** After discussions last week with John Fellows on capacity issues, entering a bid for a new microprobe is being considered. However, there are space and FT support issues.

**ACTION:** Forward a discussion on capacity issues for microprobe for the next DLT meeting.

**MB:** Stated a need to compile list of people to approach involving the EES advisory board. MB has agreed to BvD's suggestion to merge Ian Cain's system.

**ACTION:** MB to contact Ian Cain to have a follow-up discussion on EES advisory board.

**MB:** After a series of meetings with Margaret Hartling it has been decided that Stephen Covey-Crump with support of Mike Turner will become new student welfare officer. Therefore, re-advertisement of role is unnecessary.

**MB:** **ACTION:** PRDA's mentor role to be discussed in the next DLT meeting.

**MB:** Expressed need to arrange an interview committee for Data Science lecturer positions.

**ACTION:** Interview committee to be discussed in the next DLT meeting.

**ACTION:** RG to ensure both MB and DT have access to HR recruitment pages.

**MB:** On review MB was unable to understand previous action of: MB to email MH and CW on opportunities for collaboration and therefore agreed that he would need to review the intention.

**Review of Previous Minutes:** No comment.

### **HoD Update (MB)**

MB and Andrew Low has found steady progress with the new programme on MPEC distance learning and projects, they will reach the first stage of approval shortly. This will enable advertisement for the DL in 2022.

#### DL+MPEC Group Project

Impact on workload across the department has been seen by MB. MB has stressed to Chris Hardacre and Andrew Horn how imperative obtaining a significant number of super GTAs is for group projects within master's delivery programme. It is suggested that the structure of the group projects are similar to an extended practical with guided and individual work to support master's thesis.

#### Super GTAs

Advertisement of the roles will be advertised ASAP, but likely to be after Christmas. 3 super GTA's is the ideal. However, the process of obtaining them is not yet clear. Discussion on this process highlighted to necessities: that the posts need to be research led and need to be first year PhD's. SH has suggested to advertise similar to the Dean's awards. Chris Hardacre's view is that they complete research first and then teaching. The process needs to be signed off by SLT.

It has been decided that the new offer is £21,500, 60-80% part-time with length adjusted pro-rata along with stipend funding. Issue raised by KJ of pension, SH stated they have contacted HR.

**ACTION:** SH to follow up on HR guidance for super GTAs pension.

MB raised a discussion on advertisement for the role, SH stated that interviews will be around March at faculty level but need to set up a job description.

**ACTION:** GM, KJ, MB and JP to have a discussion on how to advertise the super GTA roles and agree on a checklist for applications.

**ACTION:** GM, MB and JP to meet ASAP to give guidance to staff on how to get best students come March and discuss the process.

#### FCM

MB stated that these concluded this week and will give staff their personal FCM next week.

#### Strike

LGC questioned the impact the strike will have with staff hybrid working and mentioned the gaps in student receiving material. BvD raised the issue with exams, how staff will need to assess the fairness of including certain exam questions.

**ACTION:** All line managers need to email MB to know who has gone on strike before 4<sup>th</sup> January.

#### Graduation Speech

Chris Hardacre has requested positive stories over the past year in the department by the 15<sup>th</sup> December. GM suggested funding successes but thought not of interest to students. DP mentioned James Allan in atmospheric sciences achieving the CSC award in his work on black carbon. BvD suggested MB's PhD student's work on La Palma volcanology work. DT highlighted that all the inaugural students on the data science pathway all passed.

ACTION: DT to send MB more information on the suggested topics for the graduation speech.

### **Recruitment & Admissions Update (RJ)**

MB shared screen showing the Group Reports.

Rhian Jones (RJ) report submitted. See report for details.

MB raised the need to advertise for volunteers for recruitment as a package for 20 hours. ACTION: Need a discussion on how to advertise for volunteers for recruitment (RJ and MB).

ACTION: RJ needs to make the material of the Explore Your Planet presentation online.

RJ raised issues with the 2+2 Program in the need to get more engagement and not being able to visit potential student abroad.

ACTION: Hold meeting with staff and overseas universities to see how students get their information on the programme RJ.

ACTION: RJ to look into doing something similar to a virtual open day for 2+2 programme.

### **Employability Update (LG-C)**

No report submitted for December

### **T&L Update (BVD)**

Report submitted, however document updated during the meeting.

### Discipline Head of Education

Final exam timetable released this week, need to submit paperwork by Friday. BVD mentioned the possibility of a Plan B coming into effect based on Omnicron.

Semester 1 timeline is very tight, therefore if internal moderations and marking is late it will delay the process.

Timeline for Semester 2 exams are more complex, based on a previous discussion with Julien, Gemma and Mike T with BVD cooperation with the department is needed as it would affect graduation.

BVD mentioned that they are still looking for 1 more external examiner.

BVD expressed that there is uncertainty with upcoming fieldtrips, but the current plan is still in effect until early February. BVD mentioned that the Geography degrees have altered their fieldtrips to Wales instead. MB agreed with this decision.

The QAA will be released tomorrow (9<sup>th</sup> December).

BVD has received a quote for refurbishment of G/1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> floor teaching facilities.

ACTION: Further discussions on the refurbishment needed (BVD).

DS questioned when timetables will be released for Semester 2, GM responded that they should be available for staff next week.

ACTION: Staff have not received timetabling information yet, GM to follow this up with Tom.

#### **PDR Update (John Pittman-ABS)**

Report submitted, in JP's absence MB delivered the report.

ACTION: JP to send an email to all staff to remind them to participate in the Policy Review Consultation.

ACTION: BVD and MB to include message in introduction to students at the start of the year that F2F and online lectures are not a repeat.

#### **Research Update (Gordon McFiggans)**

Report Submitted.

ACTION: GM to devise a survey to better capture what happens in Earth Science as they are going for a Centre of Excellence bid.

ACTION: GM to contact Daniel T on the feedback from the University panel.

#### **EDIA (Cathy Walton-ABS)**

CW absent so report not included and will be mentioned in the next meeting.

#### **IT Report (Russell Garwood)**

No report submitted for December

#### **PS Update (Carl Jackson/Lisa Jameson/Helena Gittins-ABS)**

CJ addressed to COVID changes where masks are now mandatory inside buildings and has requested staff to remind students of the changes.

RS mentioned the intention to hold a conference at the university in a few weeks' time, questioned health and safety procedure and risk assessments with the Omnicron variant emerging.

ACTION: RS to discuss with CJ on the Health and Safety procedure for the conference. If more complex, include MB.

BVD mentioned Scotland implementing work from home, and questioned if England will follow as staff need to ensure it doesn't affect teaching. CJ stated that any event arranged can go ahead with masks and to wait for updates.

RS stated that the response to mask wearing has been positive but raised issues with students moving between lecture spaces. MB responded that it is difficult to enforce mask wearing.

ACTION: CJ to see if it is possible for security staff to enforce mask wearing in buildings.

#### **AOB (Any other business)**

MB has decided that the Christmas party is cancelled due to COVID, but has suggested to either postpone or use zoom.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022, 2pm, location TBC

## **DLT Grouped Reports December 2021**

### **EES DLT, December 2021: Admissions and Recruitment**

#### **2022 Entry, Undergraduate (UG) Recruitment**

Current application numbers are up compared with this time last year, mostly because of an increase in overseas applications from 94 to 101. Home applications are very similar to the numbers at the same time last year (164 vs 163). There are 20 deferrals from the previous cycle.

UCAS interviews: We held the first UCAS day on 18<sup>th</sup> November, with 35 applicants interviewed. The format on zoom was successful. Some staff had problems accessing the UCAS forms in Campus Solutions, but in general the new system worked well. The next UCAS day is 14<sup>th</sup> December and we have invited 44 students. A flurry of applications in late November means that we already have about 50 students to invite for the first UCAS day of semester 2, in February.

Offer-holder days: We are planning two offer-holder events, to be held on campus, at the Department level. We have now set dates of 9<sup>th</sup> February and 30<sup>th</sup> March (both are Wednesdays). All students who have been made offers following interviews in Semester 1 will be invited to the 9<sup>th</sup> Feb event. The level of uptake is uncertain. We are planning a programme that includes tours and a taster-style introduction to our degrees. (And a free lunch.) Volunteers are welcome and I will be sending out a request for academic staff to participate.

Student Ambassadors (SAs): SA recruitment is now being handled centrally by Bee Mistry-Bhudia. We do not currently have many EES ambassadors. There is supposed to be a further call this semester and we need to work on recruiting more students, particularly since we will be having on-campus events in semester 2.

Future Open Days: The Student Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Management Group (SMRAMG) is discussing the format of future on-campus undergraduate Open Days. The current proposal is to hold events on two Saturdays in June in addition to the two Saturdays in September / October. A Virtual Open Day would also still be held, timing to be determined.

Explore Your Planet (EYP): Katherine Harrison is leading on the EYP programme. This is primarily aimed at showing Year 12 students (first year of A levels) how various science A levels are used in Earth and Environmental Sciences. We will hold two virtual events that are followed up with an on-campus event in June. The first event will be held on 8<sup>th</sup> December. Presentations will include Chris Jackson (discipline overview), Katie Joy (Moon), Brendan McCormick-Kilbride (Volcanoes), Rob Sansom (Dinosaurs) and Simon Hunt (Plate tectonics).

2+2 programmes: Dave Topping has discussed a visit to NUIST, but current covid quarantines in China are prohibitive and this is not going to be possible. We are looking into online alternatives for recruitment. Kevin Taylor is in discussions with Jilin University regarding a new 2+2 agreement.

Scholarships: The agreement for the new Graham McKenna Mayes scholarship for WP students (in EES and Law) is now completed. Discussions on the details of how it will be advertised and implemented are taking place.

An FSE scholarship ceremony for all award holders from this year and last year was planned for 15<sup>th</sup> December, but it has been postponed because of Covid concerns.

#### **2022 entry, Post-graduate Taught (PGT) Recruitment**

Implementation of the new SEP system has resulted in delays in the admissions process that has particularly affected PGT applications. Earlier problems with communications have been resolved. The main problem is now with uploaded documents. Several additional staff are being appointed to help clear the backlog and support admissions teams. The current status of applications shows numbers significantly down from last year (MPEC: 226 vs 176; Petroleum Geoscience: 94 vs 38). The impact of the SEP on these numbers will be discussed at DLT following discussion in the Recruitment and Outreach Committee on 07/12. There are 14 applications to date for Geoscience for Sustainable Energy.

An on-site Open Day for PGT programmes is planned for 16<sup>th</sup> February.

Rhian Jones, Admissions Tutor

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### **Discipline head of education report for DLT meeting Dec 2021**

**Exams and Strike.** We have received request from students to do the exams remotely. This is not possible since we will have invigilated on-campus exams in January 2022. Students will be reminded that they have to be back on campus on time to do these exams. As a reminder we ask all unit coordinators to (i) make sure that there is enough practice available for all units that have such an exam and (ii) that all students are informed what is going to happen. Unit coordinators have been reminded to:

- put (detailed) information on the unit blackboard site of what kind of exam it will be (expectations, number of questions, style/type of questions etc.). It also advised to discuss this briefly during one the synchronous sessions.
- provide enough exam practice via the blackboard site, which could be by making a previous exam available. However, considering that there are quite a large number of new units these may not always be available. As a minimum it is expected that there is at least 1 typical exam style question available (+an indication of how long it should take to do this question) for the students to practice. It is also expected that feedback needs to be supplied, which can for instance be done by making a model answer available or holding a question and answer session.

In case we cannot hold on-campus invigilated exams during the pandemic, we have developed a plan B (see last month's report). Evaluation of the impact of the strike on the teaching (exams) is ongoing but to date no major impact has been reported.

**External examiners.** Tim Jones (Cardiff) has agreed to become the new external examiner for the UG Environmental Science degree and Domenico Chiarella (Royal Holloway) for the MSc Pet Geo programmes. However, we are still looking for an external examiner for MPEC. If you know somebody who we could approach please let me know asap. We acknowledge that there is a gender balance of our external examiners so we are particularly looking for female academics that we could approach. Considering that the new external examiners are not in place yet, our three previous external examiners Jackie Pates, Andy Morse and Andrew Hursthouse have agreed to look at our semester 1 exams.

**Semester 2 and fieldtrips.** It is expected that all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students return to on-campus study for Semester 2, unless there is a major change in UK government guidance. Planning for the April/spring fieldtrips is going on as planned. However we have started to analyse the impact of the most recent Covid measurements/restrictions but considering the constantly changing landscape we will wait with making some decisions until the start of the second semester.

**Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) draft subject benchmark statement.** The QAA for higher education has published the draft subject Benchmark statement for Earth Sciences, Environmental Sciences and Environmental Studies for consultation on the first of November ago and wish to gather feedback from the higher education community and stakeholders in order to further shape the drafts prior to their final publication in spring 2022. For your information this benchmark will be used to review the UG programme level ILOs on both programmes in the near future. We have until midday on Thursday 9 December to submit our response.

**Student staff liaison committee (SSLC) meeting.** We had a SSLC 2 last weeks with some useful discussions and feedback from the students. No major items to report.

**Strategic departmental teaching planning document.** As explained earlier this year we will have a series of strategic departmental teaching meetings in early January (starting at Monday the 10th of January) to continue the ongoing discussions and make some final decisions (draft schedule below). This will give the department enough time to deal with the outcomes through unit/programme amendments, budget planning etc. An itemised list of the topics that will be considered is attached and it is expected that reports/list of recommendations will be available for each discussion item ahead of the meetings. Interim progress reports on all these points will be discussed during the next departmental Teaching and Learning (T&L) meeting (Wednesday 15th of December 14:00-16:00). Considering that a hybrid model will be difficult to manage it is proposed to have these discussions partly via zoom/teams (Monday and Tuesday's meetings) while the final day (Thursday) will be an on campus meeting only (location to be confirmed).

### Attachment

**January strategic departmental teaching meetings (Draft; Week 2 Monday 10<sup>th</sup> of January to 14<sup>th</sup> January)**

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> (zoom/teams):

- 10:00-11:00 Item 12 Teaching out of term time.
- 11:00-12:00 Item 3 First year assessment discussion and 10 moderation process.
- 13:00-14:00 Item 4 Geology with physical geography and 5 new 4th year.
- 14:00-15:00 update on item 6 Petroleum Geoscience MSc's, 7 MPEC remote, 8 Data science, 9 projects, 11 units with a single academic coverage (part 1; continue on Tuesday)

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> (zoom/teams):

- 10:00-11:00: update on item 6 Petroleum Geoscience MSc's, 7 MPEC remote, 8 Data science, 9 projects, 11 units with a single academic coverage, 13 Accreditation, 14 sustainable development goals in teaching and 15 fieldwork inclusivity (Part 2).
- 11:00-12:00: Any other business/items not listed on the original plan.



- 13:00-16:00 Item 1 and 2 Changes in unit specs and pathways.

Wednesday 12th

- School of natural sciences board and DLT

Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> (on campus):

- Continue discussion of item 1 and 2 if needed and make sure that it is clear which specs/documents need to be updated and who will do this.

Topic list:

- 1) Changes in unit specs. All. Unit coordinators may want to make changes related to their unit specs. These should be proposed/discussed with the relevant pathway cohort tutor and checked if this means a major or minor change (Bart and Gemma will provide the relevant information to the pathway cohort tutors and Tucker and Brian will make sure that it is which pathway cohort tutor is responsible for which unit). All major changes need to be proposed/discussed by the end of January to allow programme changes to be implemented on time. This deadline is for all units, irrelevant if these are first or second semester units.
- 2) Changes on pathways. Pathway cohort tutors, Tucker and Brian. Although there are no major changes on the undergraduate pathways/programmes expected, new units can be considered. It is not normally expected that the overall number of EART units will increase since this would increase the overall workload and can cause problems with timetabling etc. This indicates that when considering a new unit there is a need to carefully consider if/which unit this will replace on the curriculum, for which pathways this new unit will become core, and what the impact will be across both programmes (particularly related to programme level intended learning outcomes). Proposals for any units therefore need to be discussed with the relevant programme directors, in the first instance. There is also a need to carefully look at the provision of UCIL units to make sure that this is as comparable as possible across all pathways.
- 3) First year assessment discussion. Mandy, Julian, David T. and Rob. Considering that the current regulations around the first year 40 credit units and assessments is causing problems, particularly if a student fails a unit and has a combination of deferrals and referrals. We are urged by the school/faculty to reconsider this carefully.
- 4) Geology with physical geography. Neil, Brian, Bart, representative from Geography. Considering the relatively low number of students and ongoing challenges with this pathway a review of this pathway is needed. Possible outcomes could be that we attempt to fix issues arising and continue the pathway or that we discontinue the pathway.
- 5) New 4th year. Tucker, Brian, Bart and Rhodri. Developing/checking/implementing the new final year that will be introduced for all of our undergraduate programmes in the next academic year. This includes a complete new, student led, fieldtrip.
- 6) Petroleum Geoscience MSc's. Rufus and Jonathan. Merging of the two MSc's into a single programme. This task is already underway and paperwork has recently been submitted to faculty.
- 7) MPEC remote. Andrew, James and Steve B. Development of a remote version of the MPEC MSc. This is an ongoing task and NPP1 needs to be submitted as soon as possible.
- 8) Data science. David T., all programme directors, Paul, Bart and Mike B. Data science is considered to be a growth area within the faculty meaning that there is a need to consider what can/should be done in our discipline. Discussions should include potential expansion of the existing

Environmental Analytics pathway on the Data Science MSc (maybe reforming it to a joint Earth and Environmental Analytics pathway?), staffing (including preparation of 'business model' for appointment of new post(s)), (group) projects, involvement in a potential new faculty wide undergraduate programme and development of novel MSc pathways. Depending on developments in faculty this may be something that takes time and is likely not completed by January.

- 9) Projects. Andrew, all pathway cohort tutors, Brian, Tucker, David S, Chris, somebody from PS. Work out the final plans for scalable (cohort) project provision of MPEC projects (partly depends if the plans for super GTAs goes ahead) and considering how undergraduate projects can be delivered next academic year and in the future.
- 10) Moderation process. Julian and Gemma. Our current moderation system is not completely in line with the regulations and needs a complete overhaul. Changes need to be implemented as soon as possible and a full proposal is expected for the next T&L meeting
- 11) Units with single academic coverage. Vicky, Bart and programme directors. A number of our (regular) units are currently being delivered by a single academic member of staff. These may be single points of failures and could cause complications if a sabbatical is requested. Should the intention be that most (if not all) units should be delivered by at least 2 academic members of staff? What support should be offered by the department if this is not possible/preferred and a unit remains to be delivered by a single academic? Should there be a backup agreed/on record (through the line manager system) for all these units to be used when and if the need arises?
- 12) Teaching out of term time. Bart, Cathy W., Rhodri, Brian, Tucker, student reps, Vicky, Gemma. Currently not all teaching is done in term time and there are, for instance, a number of EART listed fieldtrips that run in the 'holiday' period. Is this fair? Should a student be able to do the full 120 credits each year in term time? What will be the impact on the delivery of all our teaching if we would move to a model that would allow this? What do our (main) competitors do?
- 13) Accreditation. Brian, Tucker, Rhodri and Bart. This academic year we will have, for the first time, students who will graduate from our new undergraduate programmes. The accreditation for these programmes is not completed yet, meaning that (i) there is an urgent need to consider which programmes/pathways will need accreditation and (ii) complete the application process as soon as possible, where possible.
- 14) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Teaching. Vicky, Cathy W, Bart, student reps. We are currently looking at how SDGs are used in our teaching for each course unit. Based on the outcomes of the survey a list of recommendations will be prepared.
- 15) Fieldwork inclusivity. Rhodri, Cathy W, Sonya, Bart, student reps. Discussions are ongoing of how we can make our field courses more inclusive. A list of suggestions has recently been proposed and will be presented/discussed during the next T&L meeting.

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**PGR report for DLT – December 2021 - Jon Pittman**

I am not able to attend this month's meeting in person but please email if there are any queries/questions.

**Admissions and recruitment:**

Current admissions numbers for 2022 entry are: 34 applications (9 Home, 25 O/S), 9 offers made (3 Home, 6 O/S), of which there are 3 acceptances (0 Home, 3 O/S). These do not include applications to BBSRC DTP proposals which is currently live and managed by FBMH. Many applications have been disrupted by the new admissions system – a combination of a 2 week delay in the system going live and some other system issues that are being addressed by the Faculty team, and so application numbers are lower across the Faculty compared the same time last year.

Some of the issues have related to some applicants reporting difficulty is using the new application form, e.g. being unable to find the exact programme they are looking for or not knowing which degree programme or plan to select. We have fed back issues to the Faculty team and some changes are being implemented.

**New PGR fee bands:**

New fee bands for all PGR programmes have been set and approved by FLT. These will now be consistent across the Faculty.

The 22/23 standardised fees are:

Band	Home	Overseas	Consumables/annum
A	Standard UKRI	£25,500	-
B	£6,000	£27,000	£1,500
C	£9,000	£30,000	£4,500
D	£11,000	£32,000	£6,500
E	£16,500	£37,500	£12,000

**PGR examination policy review consultation:**

The PGR Degrees Examinations policies and procedures are currently under review. The review has now reached the wider consultation stage. All the documents required to participate in the review can now be found on our [Code of Practice](#) website. The consultation will remain open until **Friday 28th January 2022**.

The **main updates** made to date are:

- The removal of the requirement to submit physical copies of examination theses / dissertations across all PGR degrees.
- All policies have been moved into the standard UoM policy template.
- The oral examination process has been removed from the policies into its own procedure document.
- The rules for requesting and hosting an online or 'hybrid' viva have been relaxed and guidance for how online / hybrid vivas should be held has been included in the procedure.

**IT/email account and eProg disruption for some PGRs:**

Unfortunately many of the IT issues that have affected some of our PGRs (and some academics), which have included no IT account access including email or lost eProg access, are still continuing. It has now been recognised these problems are due to a student records system integration failure due to SEP updates but seem to be challenging to solve. Due to the number of issues identified across the Faculty, these have now all been escalated to Wayne Keating to oversee.

Any PGR related IT problems should be highlighted to Claire Erskine to raise an IT ticket and log details.

I.T – no update for December

**Employability** – no report for December

### **DHoR Report Dec 2021; 8/12/21 Gordon McFiggans**

**School Research Strategy:** From the research ½-awayday we provided the following DEES strategic objectives to inform the School ones that will follow after the next couple of meetings:

#### **1. Three key strategic things over next 5 years internal to the Department**

i) Invest in our research capability (infrastructural and staff) to consolidate and expand on our fundamental earth, planetary and environmental science expertise.

we identify opportunities in two high priority science areas where this will enable development of:

ii) leadership of key areas within sustainability and the energy transitions towards net zero; ecosystems, nuclear, CCS and geothermal

iii) leadership across the theme of environmental health with foci in ecotoxicology, emerging infectious diseases, environmental pollution and health, soil health

An essential strand running through all activity will be the development and exploitation of data science including AI and ML techniques for data analysis and retrieval, measurement interpretation, visualisation and modelling.

#### **2. Three key strategic things over next 5 years Department can do with other Departments and Institutes within the Faculty.**

Engage with Departments (particularly Chemistry, MACE) and Institutes (particularly MERI, Dalton, MIB) across Faculty and beyond (e.g. key partners across all 3 Faculties and in the Digital Futures and Sustainable Futures platforms) in our areas of leadership within ii) and iii) above and more broadly in the net zero and environmental health themes.

**EMPA:** A number of productive meetings and discussions taken place with Chris Muryn and Kevin Jackson on the back of representation by the probe / e-beam user group to resolve the short- and medium-term capacity problems, resulting in:

i) assistance for our users to get time on external EMPA machines

ii) exploration of a further 0.5 FTE to the Cameca instrument to provide additional tech support and training

iii) exploration of the capacity from our EDAX instruments to reduce EMPA demands

iv) quote for new EMPA with all bells and whistles secured

v) aim for a submission to both the capital bid and the strategic equipment calls – EPSRC strategic bid (4th May)

**Other Technical:** Additional meeting with Hugh Coe, Chris Muryn and Kevin Jackson to explore optimal ways to ensure continuity of infrastructural capability across Atmospheric group.

**PGR Growth Strategy:** update from the Faculty PGR allocation: 3 Super GTAs allocated to DEES based (from the 11 across FSE) on the MPEC teaching case, not 5. Yet to be defined and advertised.

**Research Finance challenges:** a number of examples fed up through SoNS Research Group from each Department to make a case for additional central resource – 6 examples from DEES given

(though no triaged list possible despite central request for list of outstanding items). Some evidence that problems relaxing recently.

**Awards and Applications:** Departmental: currently breaking down the year-by-year, group-by-group and funder-by-funder master spreadsheet – work-in-progress

From Faculty:

