



Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Department Leadership Team Meeting

### **Minutes**

Date: Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022

#### **Part 1 Attendees;**

Mike Burton (Head of Department)  
Ann Webb (Deputy Head of Department)  
Helena Gittins (Deputy School Operations Manager)  
Bart Van Dongen (Discipline Head of Education)  
Mandy Edwards (Discipline Head of Education)  
Mads Huuse (Line Manager)  
David Topping (Line Manager)  
David Schultz (Line Manager)  
Jon Pittman (PGR director)  
Rhian Jones (Admissions)  
Luis Garcia-Carreras (Employability)  
Carl Jackson (PS Safety)  
Rob Gardham (PS PA)  
Romain Tartese (Forum Chair)  
Russell Garwood (IT Director)

**Apologies;** Gordon McFiggans (Discipline Head of Research), David Polya (Line Manager),  
Katie Joy (Chair of Widening Participation committee)

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#### **Summary Actions**

**ACTION – reach out to Kevin Jackson to get further clarity on teaching technician role and remit (MB)**

**ACTION: Distribute to all staff spreadsheet of first aiders and date of expiry, with recommendation to renew (CJ)**

#### **Matters Arising**

The minutes from the previous meeting were confirmed.

### **HoD Introduction and report**

**Mike Burton (MB)**

MB proposed the following discussion guidelines for future DLTs:

1. Sensitive issues should be flagged as not for minuting.
2. All discussions in DLT are not for discussion outside of the Department.

The UG degree has successfully concluded. We have lost staff in the TLSE area so if problems arise this needs flagging for extra resource to be allocated.

Department admin roles for a number of staff are coming to an end and MB extended thanks to all those who have done a great job in those areas. New appointments will be made shortly to take over and keep those going.

Brian O'Driscoll and Patricia Clay are both leaving the University to new roles in Ottawa.

New hires are ongoing, updates include approval for a potential new Chair in a Met Office Association agreement. The Chair in Sustainable Environment position will be interviewed on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July. The NCAS Lecturer is now advertised as permanent and an offer has been accepted by the appointee for the NCAS Research Scientist.

Two Dept. events are coming up: an EES drinks reception following the graduation ceremony on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July, and the staff summer party on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July.

### **New Data Science UG programme**

There is a proposal to offer a subset of currently undersubscribed second and third year EES units on the Data Science programme as optional units, which would increase student number capacity without any additional increase in workload.

The DLT raised no objections and so this was greenlighted.

### **Update on Technical support in EES**

Please see reports for further details.

**ACTION – reach out to Kevin Jackson to get further clarity on teaching technician role and remit (MB)**

**Reports – please refer to grouped report handout**

### **Recruitment & Admissions Update**

**Rhian Jones (RJ)**

**Report submitted**

Further details in report.

### **Employability Update**

**Luis Garcia-Carreras (LGC)**

Some further details to be finalised and then the first meeting of the External Advisory Board will take place probably at the beginning of next academic year. The list of members looks strong with a range of disciplines.

### **Teaching and Learning**

**Bart Van Dongen (BVD)**

**Report submitted**

BVD reported that we will be asked to complete a TEF return next year at University level, probably 50% metric and 50% statements including from the Student's Union. EES will be grouped with Geography/Humanities.

The 4<sup>th</sup> year field trip to the Canary Islands is being worked on.

NPEC scalable projects will be replaced next year with a new project led by Andrew Lowe, James Allan and Dave Topping.

### **PGR Report**

**Jon Pittman (JP)**

**Report submitted**

It has been discussed to draft a service level agreement for TLSE, based on PS support, to ensure PS is aware of what the Dept. needs and allow it to retain control.

This could also be done for PGR.

### **Director of Research**

**Gordon McFiggins (GM)**

**Report submitted**

MB had approached Helen Taylor to ask how to reach out to Research Finance, and received an answer to escalate any queries to her.

MB reminded everyone of the staff event on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> July, to come along and celebrate end of year.

### **EDIA**

**Catherine Walton (CW)**

**Report submitted**

Further details in report.

### **IT Report**

**Russell Garwood (RG)**

Please see report for further details.

### **PS Update**

**Carl Jackson (CJ)**

CJ issued a reminder to send back tissue returns, including nil returns.

Training courses coming up include ones on compressed gases and first aid and details will be emailed out.

**ACTION: Distribute to all staff spreadsheet of first aiders and date of expiry, with recommendation to renew (CJ)**

It was agreed it should be strongly recommended that Unit Coordinators take the mental health first aid course.

**Helena Gittins (HG)**

Please continue to send all fieldwork enquiries to EES-Ops.

The G33/2.79 room swap has been completed and Dover St is currently being cleared until the end of July.

### **AOB**

None.

### **Date of next meeting**

2pm, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

## **DLT Grouped Reports July 2022**

### **5. Recruitment and Admissions**

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

Forecasts for the September intake estimate that we will have around 120 students. This excludes students we accept through Confirmation and Clearing (C&C). We are close to the target for Home students, but below the target for Overseas.

There are many uncertainties around these estimates. It is difficult to know how teachers' estimated grades (on which we base offers) will translate into students meeting the A-level grades required. We also have quite a high number of students who have us listed as their insurance choice. We will have a clearer picture of the situation at Confirmation (13-14<sup>th</sup> August) and we will then know our position for Clearing. Clearing begins on 18<sup>th</sup> August, the day A-level results are announced.

The Foundation Year Exam Board was held on 6<sup>th</sup> July. We have one EES student confirmed to progress to our first year, and one who is likely to progress following a resit. We are making offers of a place on EES courses to Foundation Year students who have not been successful in progressing to their intended course of study, but who meet the EES requirements. These include students from Chemical Engineering, Computer Science, Mathematics and Physics.

We are expecting a maximum of two 2+2 students in September.

#### **2023 Entry, Undergraduate (UG) Recruitment**

Two University-wide Open Days were held on Saturdays 18th June and 2nd July. We had a stand in the Schuster building, and presented two talks in Schuster. We also had an interactive EES display in Williamson. Everything ran well and we had a lot of good conversations with visitors. Many thanks to all those who participated, including staff from Admissions, Marketing, and Academic staff. We also had excellent help from our newly recruited team of Student Ambassadors who were essential in helping with setup and taking down the displays, as well as talking to visitors.

There was a general feeling among Natural Sciences that visitor numbers were significantly lower than pre-pandemic. The University capped registrations for these Open Days to avoid problems with managing more popular courses, accommodation tours, etc. The need for this had already been identified prior to the pandemic. The caps meant that visitors to smaller courses like ours were deterred. For future Open Days, the University is looking at ways to limit caps to only events that are likely to be over-subscribed. The next Open Days will be on Saturdays 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October.

The Explore Your Planet on-site event, planned for 30<sup>th</sup> June, was cancelled because of very low interest. We are discussing the best approach to this programme for next year.

Zabina Kosar-Ahmed, FSE Student Marketing and Recruitment Manager, has left the University after 17 years, to take up a role at Manchester High School for Girls.

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

Forecasts for the September intake estimate that we will have around 114 students, broken down as follows:

MESPOM: 12

MPEC: 85

MSc Petroleum Geoscience: 11

MSc Geoscience for Sustainable Energy: 7

MSc Subsurface Engineering (which is based in Chemical Engineering, but which overlaps with our Geoscience courses): 10

Overall, for EES courses, this is 26 lower than target.

Online conversion events in June, for MPEC and Geoscience offer holders, were well attended.

There are still a lot of unknowns for Chinese students. Localised lockdowns are affecting multiple cities and districts across the country with implications for exams, completion of degrees, and English language tests. There is also disruption with visa applications, and problems with international travel.

Rhian Jones, Admissions Tutor

## **6. Employability Update**

No updates.

## **7. T&L Update**

### **Discipline head of education (DHoE) report for DLT meeting July 2022**

**Semester 2.** Semester 2 has now been completed. We have had all exam boards and have (almost) finalised all paperwork for the faculty. This was a major task and not without its challenges/issues (see below). Big thanks to all involved but in particular those in the office (Mike, Carol etc.), Steve and Julian. We are continuing the regular weekly meetings that have been set up last month that with PS (Francesca Moss, Eleanor Hough and Naomi Burke) and academic colleagues (Julian and Bart) to make sure the final items are properly dealt with. Attention is now focusing on the resit exam period in August.

We have reported the following to the faculty in the DHoE report of good practice:

#### **Examples of good Practice**

The data dashboards worked well for moderation. Staggered marking deadlines for units based on date of exam worked well and allowed some flexibility when setting deadlines for colleagues with higher marking loads. Only worked for units with exams early in exam period. Most marks were in on time including marks from other faculties. A lot of effort was put in by academic and support staff enabling us to deliver examination results and award degrees in the timescale. The diligence of staff in Earth and Environmental sciences (EES) in the way mitigation is handled in the department is admirable. Intern provided by school and Graduate Teaching Assistants used to check scripts was useful this year.

## Issues

Loss of staff through Student Experience Programme and resignations has added to workload of remaining staff, putting undue additional stress on both academic and PS staff. Some support has been provided by the school but staff at school level also seemed heavily overloaded. This resulted in a number of things falling through the cracks. We, for instance, only found out very recently (since we had missing credits on the grids) that a number of academic malpractice cases from students on first semester BIOL units, including those in their final year, were not being followed up/forwarded to the EES malpractice officer. This means that it is very unlikely that these will be dealt with prior to Faculty Exam Board. In addition, the appointment of new external examiners was not completely handed over when staff left, causing considerable delay in getting them access to our units on blackboard etc. There is a need to go back to having all levels of support staff at discipline level as this is where teaching/assessment occurs and where interaction with students occurs so where the support staff are needed.

The attendance monitoring software is so flawed that the attendance data could not be used in any meaningful way to compare attendance with attainment which we have done in the past with departmental generated attendance data.

A huge amount of time was wasted and potential errors created by systems not being fit for purpose. For example, information from the mitigation forms had to be copied and pasted into an excel file to be used in mitigating circumstances panels. Cases from other departments and faculties ended up on our lists and parts of mitigation forms for some of our students got missed off. We are pretty certain we managed to capture all our cases, although there is some concern that potential cases may still be missing, as the mitigating circumstances lead cross checked the list provided with auto notification email sent when students submit the form. However this was relatively time consuming, e.g. a huge waste of energy, and caused additional delays in the process. If the whole form was sent to mitigating circumstances lead when it was submitted by students rather than just the conditions, more action could be taken earlier.

Our degree grade point averages were coming out wrong from campus solutions, an overly complex and not user-friendly system, and it took considerable effort within the discipline to work out that this was caused by the fact that our programmes were set up incorrectly in the system (Weighting across years was incorrect and the first year was not included in the calculations). There was no one within the discipline with high enough level access to campus solutions that this error was not fixed sooner. The problem was finally solved less than 24 hours before the exam award board and a huge amount of editing of grids was needed.

**Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) and Assessment Calendar.** Rhodri has earlier this week send out the information of how to request GTAs for semester 1 units. Please make sure that all requests are made as soon as possible to allow enough time to allocate GTAs. In addition, plans are in place to set up a new assessment calendar for 2022/23 academic year. This will hopefully guide students in

planning their own time/workload and help us to identify any problematic periods with too high workloads. This year particular attention will be paid to the second semester of the second year since from feedback, the relative high amounts of fails and mitigation cases, this seem to be a problematic period, particularly after Easter.

**Pathway numbers 2<sup>nd</sup> year 2022/23.** Most students have made their choice but we are still following up a few. Pathway numbers are listed below. Once the new pathway cohort tutors have been appointed we can finalise tutorial groups for next academic year.

Programme/Pathway	students
Environmental sciences	
POLLUTION & ENV. PROCES.	38
ATMOSPHERIC & CLIMATE SC.	7
ECOL. EVOL. & CONSER. BIOL.	21
Total	66
Earth and Planetary sciences	
ENERGY & RESOURCES	4
GEOCHEMISTRY	6
GEOLOGY WITH PHYS.GEOGRAPH.	1
GEOLOGY	6
PALAEOBIOLOGY	5
PLANETARY SC.	24
Total	46
Undecided/still need to confirm	7
Total	119

**Nation Student Survey (NSS) Scores.** We have received NSS results and as Mike emailed us all recently the major outcome is that the overall student satisfaction for our degrees has increased from 66.7% in 2021 to 78.6% this year, which is good news. We know that that NSS is far from perfect, and we can all find flaws in it. The response rate, for instance, was above 50% but in reality only 28 of our students completed the survey (15 on Environmental Sciences and 13 on earth and planetary sciences). We do need to recognise that potential applicants and parents do look at NSS scores closely so thinking of ways of increasing our NSS results will provide very positive outcomes for us in student recruitment. We'll be developing some actions



over the coming months for how to help further improve our NSS performance, and when the 2023 survey opens we may be asking staff to help in comms to students on this subject. To help with this process I have listed below the breakdown numbers on each category for across the whole discipline.

Category	Agree (%)	
	This year	Last year
The teaching on my course	79.46	77.08
Learning opportunities	77.38	71.76
Assessment and feedback	57.14	62.85
Academic support	73.81	68.06
Organisation and management	52.98	66.67
Learning resources	75	68.52
Learning community	78.57	68.75
Student Voice	59.52	66.2
The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.	34.62	50
Overall satisfaction	78.57	66.67

**First year review.** A series of meetings were organised last week to discuss/evaluate the integrated first year. Overall, the team was pleased they finally got to run the whole year for the first time with face to face teaching, a residential field trip and on campus exams. It was considered that there was a good range of assessment types across the integrated year. Going forward there will be some minor changes within units and there will be three separate Blackboard sites set up, one for each unit, to help with unit evaluation. It was decided that the field trip will be run as two separate trips, one for each program, next year to be able to deal with the large numbers (see my last report). Both trips will offer a similar student experience and go to Wales but the Earth and Planetary Sciences programme

will be going to the Pembrokeshire area while the Environmental Sciences programme will visit northern Wales. Entry numbers will be used to plan both trips but students will be required to choose their programme (not Pathway) before the Easter break to finalise final numbers on each fieldtrip. Finally, the aim is to address attendance drop off in the second semester by using the integrated structure of the first year so that we encourage attendance in each unit with the same message and include it in the Professional Skills classes.

**4<sup>th</sup> year External Examiner (MEarthSci/MEnvSci).** No update from last report. We have approached the first candidate(s) but are still waiting on a response.

**Teaching budgets.** In the last months we have tried to spend as much of the remaining teaching budgets as possible on improving the teaching facilities across the discipline. Including a separate budget for AV equipment for Room G33, this included payments for software licenses in advance, new microscopes for the student resource centre, new departmental (field) computers/laptops, filtration kits, a new drill core from the North Sea area, weather stations, XRF consumables, meteorites and minerals, camera and visualiser, an auto sampler for the scalable water related MPEC projects, new eboards (with Wifi built in) and electronic screens (+ wall brackets) for most (all) of the disciplined owned teaching rooms in the Williamson building. In addition, we also bought new human ageing casts and cupboards to hide the skeletons.....

## **8. PGR Update**

### **Admissions and recruitment:**

Updated application numbers for July were not available at the time of writing this report although I can report that we have had small increases in numbers of offers sent and accepts made since last month, and so we are close to matching last year's numbers of September starters – I will aim to update at the meeting.

Two EES candidates were successful in gaining two more Dean's Doctoral Scholarships from the second round of the competition and so in total have gained 4 awards from this year's competition alongside 2 President's Doctoral Scholarships. It has also been confirmed that 4 of the Chinese Scholarship Council studentship candidates were successful following the CSC second stage evaluation.

Candidates who applied for the PGR Teaching Associate Scholarships are being interviewed now and outcomes will be announced by next week.

There have been some on-going challenges and delays with processing admissions offers and associated paperwork due to the admissions team being severely short-staffed for various reasons. They are prioritising urgent cases and needs, and other admissions staff are helping to clear the backlog. Supervisors and students should be assured that all admissions needs will be addressed, but if there are any urgent concerns please contact myself, Claire Erskine and/or Sandra Kershaw (Faculty Admissions Manager).

**STFC Facility-UoM joint studentship calls:**

The ISIS Neutron and Muon Source facility has announced a joint studentship call and a similar call from Diamond Light Source facility is expected soon. These require 50% of matched funding from the university so interested applicants should speak with HoD and SHoR about opportunities for matched funding.

**Welcome week and new starter plans:**

Claire Erskine will be sending details of PGR programme starts to new PGRs during the next month including details of PGR induction events during Welcome Weeks. There will be a Faculty induction on the Tuesday and department presentations on the Thursday and Friday (22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September) including an induction for supervisors of new starters. These will all take place in person.

**NERC DTP plans:**

Dave Johnson recently had a meeting with Colette Fagan, Melissa Westwood and others with regard to some of the proposed ideas for a Manchester-led NERC DTP. There was general support for the proposals and agreement that some PS support and other resources will be made available to help a DTP bid development. An unknown factor is with regard to the news that future DTP calls will be via UKRI rather than individual councils (NERC) and what this means for a 'NERC' DTP call.

**PGR conference:**

Following discussion with PGR reps and other PGR committee members regarding this year's PGR conference, the preference for majority of the students is for an event to be held in Semester 1 (e.g. during Week 6) rather than just before the start of the academic year (September). This would be an opportunity for existing PGRs to present their work through presentations and posters and for new starting PGRs to discover the research activities that are on-going. We are now checking options for venue/room booking and funding available in the budget.

**Diversity training for PGRs:**

An online Diversity in the Workplace course is now available to all our PGRs, who have all been provided the details, and we will tell all new starting PGRs that they are expected to complete the training (which is via Blackboard).

**University Research Development training for 2022/23:**

Claire Faichnie (Researcher Development Manager) is putting together plans for the PGR training programme for 2022/23 and would very much appreciate academic co-delivery and input into a small number of core sessions. The researcher development team develop, plan and prepare the content for the session and share this with the academic for any comments or feedback in advance of the session. The academic will be asked to attend the session and their role will most likely be to take part in a Q&A interactive element of the workshop. I will distribute this information to staff but if line managers know of any staff who might be interested in this, please ask them to contact me and I can share more details.

Jon Pittman

## 9. Research Update

### DHoR Report July 2022; 13/7/22 Gordon McFiggans

#### UKRI news:

Mike Burton attended NERC Heads meeting. Many of the messages from Hugh's previous intel (see last month's HoR report) reinforced and some new news; key points:

Sustained rise in NERC budget from the spending review - 3 year budget fixed; pa values: Discovery: £59m (up by £15m), Strategy: £57m, Talent and Skills £35m, Urgency grants are now £100k, but inflation will eat into this, salaries likely biggest bite.

Diagnosis in NERC remit, Solutions in UKRI's. Cross-disciplinary work across UKRI will be primary growth area e.g. thematic area "Building a Green Future", solutions focussed, £185m (all wrapping up SPFs and National Capability funding). Also a "Resilience" theme

Likely we fall out of Horizon: UK funding will not reproduce EU themes

NERC headcount reduction by 17% - leaner system.

Strong NERC focus on EDIA in future – new plan being rolled out.

All training (DTP/CDT) budgets held at UKRI not in individual RCs. Doctoral training likely decoupled from research councils allowing more multidisciplinary – impact on DTP3. Higher stipends for PhDs are being looked at.

GCRF or similar to return – Govt shift to 1.7% GDP in development

Pushing and exploring frontiers grants assessed by two criteria: Research excellence and team-based capability to deliver- excellence double-weighted. 400 EtF applications and only 40 to be funded. Panels will review and select (no external reviews) – random allocation of funding across high scoring "fundable" proposals – likely rolled out more widely as pilot.

Highlight Topics: Bottom up, budget around £20m pa, about 20% success rate

Reviewer shortages – academics encouraged to engage; new call to be in the panels assessing proposals.

#### Funding

Both EES NERC capital applications (Hugh Coe and David Neave) were successful in the last round (note EPMA being folded into a bid for 2 instruments in EPSRC capital call)

Substantial NERC grant for Julian Mecklenberg on "Hydro-Mechanics of Fluid-Induced Seismicity in the Context of the Green-Energy Transition"

NERC Advanced Training Short Course success from David Schultz

Many congratulations to all

**Upcoming calls:** Pushing the Frontiers – submission 19<sup>th</sup> July; 6 from DEES with 5 led from other Universities. Deadlines circulated by Cassy for all calls over summer

**School visit from VPR:** Input provided to School visit self-assessment, primarily focussing on REF reflection and how we embed research expectations in our processes.

**FRSG** will be disbanded. Suggestion at School Research Committee was for it to be replaced with invitations of the ADs from Faculty to attend bimonthly School Research meetings

#### Research Finance

Problems continue with Research Finance – continue to be fed back through School. No news about the “soft” rollout of initial changes that was supposed to happen at the beginning of July (with an official rollout 4<sup>th</sup> August), but the rumour is that staff are in training.

### **Faculty Research Awayday**

Still in planning. Need to come up with any “big ideas” to put to University SLT – if we don’t others will. For example, could capitalise on the UKRI “Green Future” theme.

### **Tech Review**

Cohort 3 briefing held on 20<sup>th</sup> June, structures and JDs on [Cohort 3 StaffNet pages](#)

## **10. EDIA**

**News From Cecilia Medupin on EDIA workshops.** A big thanks to Cecilia Medupin for organising a successful part 2 of the EDI workshop - Connectivity and Inclusivity in Higher Education - pilot study on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 10-3pm. The event was well attended involving attendees from across the UK as well as many of us from DEES and members of the School leadership team. Data from the events is being analysed and hopefully Cecilia will share the outputs of the workshop in due course.

**DEES success at the Better Together Awards.** The Better World Awards, which aim to recognise the contribution that staff and students make to social responsibility and equality and diversity. Amongst the prizes were some notable ones to members of EES:

- Tucker Gilman won a prize for outstanding benefit to society through research, for his great work on COVID spread in Greek refugee camps, which had major impact on how the pandemic was managed in those communities.
- Abby Raggazon-Smith was awarded the prize for outstanding contribution to equality diversity inclusion and accessibility. Abby ran a series of hugely successful workshops on trans awareness which are now being adapted to run University wide.
- Oliver Hughes was highly commended in the category outstanding community engagement initiative. Oliver has been working with UG students in reaching out to local communities, using spare greenhouse capacity to grow vegetables, which have been donated to local food charities. Oliver also gets an honourable mention for working with the wonderful PGR group Plant and Hope, who were highly commended for their work using plants to help student mental and physical health.

**Reminder of the Report Support service provided by the University:** Email sent round by Katie Joy to all members of the department to remind them of this means of reporting issues to the University.

**Response by departmental EDIA Team to Prof Chris Jackson leaving.** *Ad hoc* meetings of the EDIA Team were held to specifically respond to the issue of Chris Jackson leaving the University, the media article surrounding this and the University response. Note that not all members of the EDIA

Team were able to attend these meetings. However, a majority of the Team met (the academics) and wished to convey a response to the University from academics in the EDIA Team of the department that was directly affected by Chris Jackson (CJ) leaving. These concerns included that the University appeared not to give due weight to the issues surrounding CJ leaving as evidenced by the vacuum of information and the lack of a clear and informative response from the University. This both leads people to suspect the worst, and makes it appear that the University is not taking the matter as seriously as it should and is not recognising the impact on the wider University community. A clear statement from the University on what actions they are putting in place, and on what timeframe, to ensure that a similar situation would be unlikely to occur in the future would, (i) help to mitigate the situation, and (ii) provide confidence that actions from grievance cases involving EDIA have implemented outcomes to improve equitable working environments within the University. The concerns raised by us, together with similar comments from the BAME staff network, were conveyed by Giles Johnson (School EDIA Lead) and Mark Hughes (Faculty EDIA Lead) to Adele MacKinlay. Adele acknowledged the problem around the lack of a clear messaging and evidence of serious actions from the University and the damage that many of us feel this is doing to the University reputation and staff morale. Adele undertook to speak to senior colleagues about this and to ensure that there are communications coming out shortly, especially focusing on specific actions underway. The matter has also been discussed briefly at the Faculty EDIA committee to restate the existing concerns and report the information above.

## 11. IT Report

- Last year some UG project students struggled for computer power using the computers in 2.45. These are going to be upgraded by Kofi & Emma before the start of the next academic year, but we're also sorting out so that students with computational projects can use the higher powered machines in 2.20 for next year. This will require supervisors to email to request card access at the start of the year, but should otherwise be relatively straightforward, assuming we continue to manage these machines.
- Students also have access as of this year to the computational shared facility (our HPC cluster), and I'll highlight this at the same time as emailing staff members about 2.20
- Given that many staff may not be aware of this, and other facilities, Russell and Emma are going to organize short talks from Simon Hood (head of research IT infrastructure) and Bill Ayres (Research Data Management Strategic Lead) to highlight what the University is already offering in these areas that EES staff could make use of
- New software packaging requests need to be in by July 23rd, Russell has been liaising with the "Service Relationship Manager" to find out if our experience will be any better than last year's in this coming round, and has been assured that some issues have been sorted.
- There is a new head of ITS, and the outgoing one provided an interesting insight into the issues we face, and the forthcoming "IT stabilisation process" to try and address these. A recording of this is linked here: <https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/fse/faculty-leadership/flt/open->

[meetings/](#) - it looks like there are serious structural problems that are starting to be addressed, but we can't expect a particularly quick fix.

- I've updated staff lists on the website as best I can, but have had little response to a request from research group leads for updates. I shall chase again in September

## **12. Update on Technical Support**

### **The Firs:**

Oliver Hughes has been recruited to a new Grade 6 Technical Manager (2 year Fixed Term) position at the Firs. Oliver will provide site management and also play a key role in outreach. We have two years to get the facility fully research income costed up and if successful there should no push back on making the role permanent.

### **Replacement of Abby:**

Interview for the grade 5 Senior Technician role took place week commencing 4<sup>th</sup> July. Contracts currently being drawn up by P&OD. We expect to have the new starter in post in just over a month. Abby kindly supporting the area in the interim. This post will report to Veronica given the connection to DEES teaching.

### **Rosie Replacement:**

Devyn Shaw has been recruited to a new grade 3 role. Devyn will be line managed by Chris Boothman and primarily support the Geomicro group as previously done so by Rosie. Devyn will also have approximately 0.3 – 0.4FTE time to support other groups in DEES as required.

### **Thin Sections Lab:**

Estates were in touch last week to let us know that University Projects has assigned us a project manager for the Feasibility Study. While we do not currently have the 22/23 funds to pay for the desired proposed refurbishment we will have more accurate costings. Alison working with Dave and John Farrington on the design. In the meantime we have done what we can to improve things for Dave – recirculating fume cupboards, mobile extraction, additional power provision, mobile Trespa benching, cooling water for processes, comprehensive tool kit, new jigs for Logitech machines, etc. Apparently Dave has now cleared the backlog and is up to date with requests.

### **EMPA Support:**

Alex Lincoln has been trained up by Lewis to provide a base level of SEM cover (training). Now that Lewis has returned from paternity leave Jon Fellowes and Mike Faulkner will be working on a plan for Lewis to spend more time with Jon developing his EMPA skills and ability to provide a base level of cover for Jon (annual leave, sickness, etc.). We will be formalising this arrangement via Cohort 3 of the technical review. The plan remains the same – if DEES are successful in applying for a new probe then clearly we will have to look at additional member of technical staff to help Jon run the existing and new equipment.

PS. As part of Cohort 3 Tech Review we will also be adding an additional Grade 5 Senior Technician to Veronica's DEES technical teaching team.

**(Kevin Jackson)**