# MDCSG 23rd October 2024
## 11:00- 13:00
## Roscoe 4.9

## Notes

**In Attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Alex Hinchliffe, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Amy Smith, Admos Chimhowu, Scott Heath, David Bechtold, Anne Marie-Walsh, Jessica Bowler, Tanya Luff, Adil Ashraf.

**For item 7i:** Ruth Norris.

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:** Apologies from Richard Cotton and Ruth Whelan.

2. **MDCSG**

   i. **Notes from the previous meetings**
   **Agreed:** that the notes were an accurate record of the July and September meetings.

   ii. **Matters Arising**
   **a. EDI Application Questions**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that Fiona Eccles had responded to emails stating that the PGR Admissions Officers Group discussed our requirements and were surprised about this requirement and suggested that it would be a challenge to implement any changes in time for 2024/25.
   **b.** that the development and implementation would require 4 stages:
   - Adding the questions to the application form
   - Creating fields in Campus Solutions to hold the data
   - Building an ETL to make the data available to PowerBI
   - Build/amend of PowerBI reporting

   **Agreed**: that JL would set up a meeting with FE and Faculty PGR Managers and the CS team to discuss a way forward and timeline for implementation **(ACTION – JL).**

   **b. Bicentennial Researchers**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that it was likely not possible to collect and assess EDI data in relation to every project put forward prior to the report deadline of 19th November.
   **b.** that it was preferable to report / analyse the EDI data after recruitment to the projects and this could then be used to establish and embed a transparent EDI review and approval process for the next recruitment cycle.
   **c.** that information in relation to the recruitment of fellows in HUMS and FBMH would need to be added via the central comms team. The message at this stage could simply say 'fellowships details to follow.'
   **Agreed:**
   **a.** that Helen would report MDCSG feedback in relation to EDI to Colette **(ACTION –HB)**.
   **b.** that FBMH contacts for the central comms team re fellows comms are Jo Dumville and DB.

   **c. Overdue eProg Attendance Milestones**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the data had seen much improvement in all areas but that some schools (SEED, Engineering and Natural Science were still showing higher levels of incomplete

milestones.
**b.** that there were some instances in HUMS where data was being affected by a technical fault resulting in the duplication of attendance milestone forms and an IT ticket had been raised.
**Agreed:** that AH would provide FSE with more detailed department data **(ACTION AH).**

**d. Conference Support for PGR Carers**
**Noted:**
**a.** that at a meeting with P&OD it was agreed that in HUMS and FBMH successful PGR applications would continue to be funded from the School budget. FSE would seek approval to do the same from the FLT.
**b**. that at the meeting it was also agreed that the application process should remain at the school level, but each faculty would need to determine if any appropriate additional approval is to be included in the process e.g. PGR Director.
**c**. that local and central policy / procedure would need to be updated with relevant new processes / links to information.
**d**. a further meeting with P&OD was scheduled for mid-November.

**3. Planning and Quality Assurance**

**i. SLT PGR Report**

**Agreed:** that AA would return his comments on the draft paper to HB **(ACTION – AA).**
*Discussion continued under reserved business.*

**4. Recruitment and Admissions**

No items

**5. Funding**

**i. Bid Updates**
**Noted:**
**a.** that the NERC DTP bid had been unsuccessful but the outcome was still under embargo.
**b.** that the BBSRC DTP bid had been funded and DB is planning a follow up meeting with BBSRC to better understand how funding decisions had been made.
**c.** that HUMS were still waiting for an outcome of the AHRC bid but that they had been successful in securing landscape funding for 15 scholarships over 5 years.

**6. Progression and Assessment**

**i. MSc Regulations**

**Noted:** that the MSc by Research regulations had been reviewed and restructured as part of an ongoing review of all PGR regulations.

**Agreed:** that the regulations were approved by MDCSG and could be prepared for submission and final approval at the next Senate meeting **(ACTION – AH).**

**7. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

**i. Team Research Programme**

**Noted:**

**a.** Ruth Norris provided an overview of the UoM Team Research Programme (training and resources in the principles of interdisciplinary collaborative working).

b. that the programme has been running for 2.5 years and is funded until July 2025.

**b**. that there was scope within the project to provide training sessions to particular cohorts of PGRs.

**Agreed**:

**a**. that the training and resources were essential for PGRs and it would be good to find a way to continue after funding ends in July 2025.

**b.** that Ruth would check and let AH know if the Micro catalyst funding was available to PGRs as well as staff and share slides and link to website and mailing **(ACTION – RN)**.

**c.** that AH would provide RN with more information in relation to MDCSG and the structure of PGR at UoM **(ACTION – AH).**

**d.** that AS would contact RN to arrange a follow on meeting to discuss the scaling, sustainability and funding of the initiative after July 2025 **(ACTION – AS)**.

ii. **Simon and Hallsworth Endowment Fund Allocation**

**Noted:** that PGR had been awarded £50k to be used towards PGR community initiatives and the paper suggested possible ways that the fund could be used.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that it would be good to use the funds on social / community building initiatives and that we should get feedback directly from PGRs on the type of initiatives that they would like to see.

**b.** that we should avoid using the funds on initiatives that repeat activity already happening in schools/faculties.

**c.** that funding could be used to establish an ongoing working relationship with external training providers such as VOX Coaching **(ACTION – AS to get quote from VOX).**

**d.** that conference attendance funds were always needed and that where possible it would be good if Faculties could match the funding being provided by the endowment fund for this purpose.

**e.** that all members would think more about how funding could be spent in this first year and AH would add it to the agenda for further discussion at November MDCSG **(ACTION – MDCSG / AH).**

**8. Careers and employability**

No Items

**9. Activity Reports**

i. **RDRD/SU/Library Reports**

**Noted:** that eThesis eProg functionality was now in place and tested but that the team were still working through the complexities for those PGRs who might be part way through the submission / examination process at the time when the new eProg functionality launches.

**10. Any Other Business**

**Noted:**

**a.** that FACs had requested additional award criteria in the call for the MDC Excellence Awards 2025 and a draft had been included in the paperwork for MDCSG comment / approval.

**b.** that the SU PGR Officer role would be part-time (20hrs per week) from the 2025/6 academic year and that the money saved would be redirected to other SU PGR initiatives.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that the award criteria could be included in the MDC Excellence Awards call but that any comments should be submitted to AH before Friday 25 Oct.

**b.** that it was strongly recommended that PGRs taking on the part-time SU PGR Officer role should be required to apply for a change in mode of attendance to their research programme from full to part-time.

11. **Date of Next Meeting**

    Wed 27 Nov 2024, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**Reserved Business**

12. **SLT PGR Paper**

**Noted:**

**a.** that the headings used in the paper were requested by Colette and the content under these headings was not yet finalised.

**b.** that the purpose of the paper was to raise the profile of PGR at a senior level.

**c.** that the early draft of the paper did not accurately reflect the remit of MDC and that some of the work done by Faculties was missing.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that recognition for PGR at a senior level would be better served with the appointment of a PGR representative e.g. a VP for PGR.

**b.** that AH would share a copy of the draft paper via Teams for members to suggest content to be included under each section ahead of redrafting. Deadline Friday 1 Nov **(ACTION – MDCSG / AH).**

# MDCSG 27th November 2024
# 11:00- 13:00
# Roscoe 4.9 / Teams

## Notes

**In attendance**: Elizabeth Cartwright, Alex Hinchliffe, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Admos Chimhowu, Scott Heath, David Bechtold, , Jessica Bowler, Ruth Whelan, Adil Ashraf.

**For Item 3i and 4i:** Catherine Schofield and Emma Dickson

**For Item 5i:** Jane Mooney

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:** Apologies were received from Richard Cotton and Anne-Marie Walsh.

2. **MDCSG**

   i. **Notes from the previous meeting**

   **Agreed:** that AH would update the notes to reflect that FSE were also experiencing data quality issues due to the duplication of attendance milestones forms and that HB would check with Anthony Doherty to see if any progress had been made resolving the problem **(ACTION – AH / HB).**

   ii. **Matters Arising**
   **a. EDI Application Questions**
   **Noted:** that JL will schedule a meeting with Fiona Eccles before Christmas.
   **Agreed:** that Catherine Schofield would check with Fiona Eccles if any progress had been made **(ACTION CS)**

   **b. Bicentennial Researchers**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the paper had been presented to SLT and no issues had been raised.
   **b.** that FMBH and HUMS had already confirmed their approved projects while the closing date in FSE was 26/11.
   **c.** that the comms were ready to go and the website would be launched at 11am tomorrow (28/11).
   **Agreed:**
   **a.** that HB would request EDI data in relation to both the approved and unsuccessful projects and the academic population of the organisational unit (academic = lecturer and above)

   - What proportion of the teams include colleagues with disability
   - What proportion of the teams all male
   - What proportion of the teams all female
   - What proportion of the teams BAME members
   - What proportion of the team are all white
   - What proportion of the main supervisors have a disability
   - What proportion of the main supervisors are male
   - What proportion of the main supervisors are female
   - What proportion of the main supervisors are BAME
   - What proportion of the main supervisors are all white

**b.** that there would need to be further consideration at MDCSG of the EDI data and how it might be used to inform the selection process at the next round to be reported to SLT in the Spring 2025.

**c. SLT Paper**

**Noted:**

**a.** that the draft paper was now approved and could go to Colette for any additional comment. Further comments would come back to MDCSG before the paper is shared with SLT.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that FSE would double check the list of CDT/DTC/prof docs/charity funded in appendix 4 (**ACTION – RW).**

**b.** that drafting the paper had been a worthwhile exercise in helping to define MDC and that the agreed wording could be used to update any existing websites or documents that refer to MDC.

3. **Planning and Quality Assurance**
   i. **SEP Transition**

**Noted:**

**a.** that TLSE had produced comms announcing changes to SEP.

**b.** that TLSE projects would in future be delivered around themes (rather than through SEP) - four themes – student intake, student administration, student wellbeing, teaching and learning.

**c.** that demand for future change projects would be driven by engagement with staff and students and run through a product management approach.

**d.** that the remaining active SEP work would continue as stand along projects (My Manchester/portal platform; assessment and progression; mitigating circumstances; eProg and student hubs).

**e.** that the eProg project will be overseen by new project board reporting in to Research Infrastructure Change SC (RICSC).

**Agreed:** that there should be a PGR reporting line back to MDCSG in each of the remaining SEP projects. HB / PGR OMG to identify who should sit on each project board and report to Emma Dickson **(ACTION – HB)**.

4. **Recruitment and Admissions**
   i. **My Manchester Admissions Feature – Comms Plan**

**Noted:**

**a.** Catherine Schofield presented an update on comms plan for the release of the PGRA.

**b.** that the launch date of March 2025 would need further consideration as it would not be feasible to switch systems mid recruitment cycle and run 2 separate systems at the same time.

**c.** that Faculty PGR officers have identified a set of academics to invite to the show and tell but that there would be further opportunity to add to this list of invitations.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that Catherine could look at the eThesis comms plan to refer to when planning, but that supervisors would be best reached via the Faculty DAs.

**b.** that Catherine would address the issue of where the 8 additional admissions officers who are in Faculty DA posts until July 2025 will be going after their current assignment ends via a meeting with HB and PGR managers **(ACTION – CS)**.

5. **Careers and employability**

   i. **LinkedIn Learning**

   **Noted:**

   **a.** Jane Mooney attended to present the launch of the LinkedIn learning pilot that will run until June 2026 to support staff and students to get the most out of the platform.

   **b.** that Jane has been working with Sarah Ashworth (Researcher Development) on mapping the relevant PGR learning paths to the new Vitae framework.

   **c.** that 50 PGR Microsoft Fundamentals Certifications had been set aside for PGRs in each Faculty from January. Researcher Development will circulate details to Faculty DAs for cascade.

   **Agreed:**

   **a.** that Jane would contact Admos and Scott and arrange to attend FSE and HUMS faculty meetings to present the pilot **(ACTION – JM)**.

6. **Meeting with President January 2025**

   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the meeting with Duncan to discuss PGR and research staff was scheduled for January 29th 2025.
   **b.** that the meeting will be for 1 hour with half the time dedicated to PGR / MDCSG and the other half to RS / RSSG.
   **c.** that initial ideas for suggested areas for discussion at the meeting were PGR growth, outputs / impacts and research and that PGR SLT / FLT representation could be included under one of the themes.
   **d.** that the focus should be about showcasing how PGR fits into the vision of 'One University' and interdisciplinarity whilst also highlighting the barriers or challenges.
   **Agreed:** that discussion would continue at the MDC Exec meeting next week.

7. **Funding**

   i. **Bid Updates**

   **Noted**: that the call for BBSRC IDLA projects had been circulated. The internal deadline is 09/12/24 with a cross-Faculty panel set to review all submissions on 13/12/24. A single UoM led bid will be selected with final submission to UKRI on or before 17/12/24.

   ii. **PDS Award Allocations**

   **Noted:** that RDRD had calculated the Faculty PDS allocations for 2025/26 and HB would share them by email with Faculty PGR managers **(ACTION – HB)**.

8. **Progression and Assessment**

   i. **Third-Party Proof-Reading Guidance**

   **Noted:** that guidance had been drafted via PROG giving more detail around what was acceptable and unacceptable in relation to the use of third-party proofreaders (including AI tools).

   **Agreed:**

   **a.** that the footnote in relation to Journal Format thesis should be made clearer **(ACTION –AH)**.

   b. that the general tone should be less formal and policy like **(ACTION- AH)**.

9. **Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

    i. **Simon and Hallsworth Endowment Fund Allocation**

    **Agreed:**

    **a.** that further PGR consultation on how to allocate / use the funds was required via PGR reps.

    **b.** that MDCSG would revisit the fund following further PGR consultation and make a final decision in the new year. AH will add it to the January MDCSG agenda **(ACTION – AH).**

10. **Activity Reports**

    i. **RDRD/SU/Library Reports**

    **Noted:** no comments on the Library / RDRD reports.

11. **Any Other Business**

    i. **Fee Waivers**

    **Noted:** that FSE would like some written formal guidance on the principles and process of applying fee waivers for international PGRs.

    **Agreed:** that JB would ask FBMH Faculty finance colleagues to document their process in bullet form to share with FSE counterparts **(ACTION – JB).**

    ii. **Distance Learning PhDs**

    **Noted:** that although the University does not offer a 'PhD by Distance Learning' certain programmes do operate via the principles of distance learning and the regulations were written to allow for remote study e.g. '*PGRs must be present on the University campus as required by their programme and/or any visa terms and conditions.'*

    **Agreed:** that JB would share details of the BMH distance learning programmes with SH **(ACTION – JB).**

    iii. **COVID Expense Fund**

    **Noted:** that the PGR COVID Expense fund could be closed. A total of £158,292.40 had been awarded leaving £41,707.60 to be given to the Living Cost Support Fund.

12. **Date of Next Meeting**

    Wed 22 Jan 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**MDCSG**
**22nd January 2025**
**Notes**

**In attendance**: Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, Alex Hinchliffe, David Bechtold, Jessica Bowler, Admos Chimhowu, Anne-Marie Walsh, Scott Heath, Ruth Whelan, Adil Ashraf, Richard Cotton.

**For Item 6vi:** Aline Miller

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:** Apologies from James Lalic.

2. **MDCSG**
   i. **Notes from the previous meeting**

   **Noted:**

   **a.** that EDI data regarding Bicentenary scholarships will return to MDCSG in February for broader discussion before UE presentation.

   **b.** that the notes were an accurate record of the meeting.

   ii. **Matters Arising**

   **a. EDI Application Form Questions**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that a meeting to advance this work is scheduled for Monday 27th January.
   **b.** that UKRI had not documented their request for us to provide the EDI data but that AH and MW had met with UKRI who confirmed that the proposed questions were in line with what will be needed.
   **c.** that it is a high internal priority to be able to report on PGR EDI.

   **c. Simon Entertainment Fund**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that £25k would be allocated for a PGR Festival and £7.5k would be allocated to each Faculty and the SU for local initiatives.
   **b.** that PGR feedback had placed emphasis on using the money for both social activities and conference travel support if possible.
   **c.** that it would be important for the SU and Faculties to work together on how to best allocate the funding they receive and that the PGR festival could be a launch for the annual fund and set a tone for the future use of the funding.
   **Agreed:** that RDRD would report outcomes to Colette **(ACTION – HB)**

   **d. Meeting with Duncan**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that Faculty ADs would meet in advance to finalise slides and align their messaging.
   **b.** that at the meeting Elly will introduce PGR structure and focus areas.
   **c.** that Adil would attend and could contribute as required during the meeting.
   **Agreed:** that HB would forward the invitation and slides to Adil in advance of the meeting. The location is likely to be Ken Kitchen meeting room.

3. **Planning and Quality Assurance**

i. **Review of Central PGR Webpages**

**Noted:**

**a.** that central corporate webpages have broken links and outdated information; a full review is needed.

**b.** that Faculty marketing teams had already prepared some 'quick win' updates that could be shared with the central web team for action pending a full content review.

**c.** that input is needed from Colette on the purpose and content of the pages.

**AGREED:**

**a.** that RDRD would seek some input from Colette **(ACTION – MW).**

**b.** that AH would reach out to Helen Pearce in central comms to get an understanding of the approval process for updates to the central webpages **(ACTION – AH)**.

4. **Recruitment and Admissions**

i. **Registration Data**

**Noted:** that it was too early to consider the data.

**Agreed:** that AH would update the MDCSG schedule so that the data comes back to the group in November 2025 **(ACTION – AH).**

i. **Applications / Admissions Report**

**Noted:**

**a.** FBMH reported increases in home and overseas applications; impact on high-quality admissions under review.

**b.** that the growth was a direct result of having dedicated PGR marketing support and massive team effort.

**c.** that there hadn't been a noted increase in MPhil applications as a result of new UKVI visa rules for PGT.

**d.** that although it would be useful it was not possible to get data that situates / benchmarks the data against competitor HEIs.

**f.** that there were no areas of concern in the data.

5. **Funding**

i. **Bid Updates**

**Noted**:

**a.** that for the BBSRC ILA UoM would be submitting a bid as lead HEI with Anthony Green from FSE as lead working with a consortium of companies. UoM would also be a collaborating HEI on a bid led by Kings and Unilever.

**b.** that there are 2 open calls for the BBSRC AI and Digital Technology and the MRC, NERC, BBSRC in Engineering Biology. There will only be one or two awards made in the country (up to 20 PGRs per year). The BBSRC AI bid has a lead and it has been recommended that FSE/FBMH pick a single lead academic to manage the bid.

**c.** that FSE had been awarded the FOSTER fusion DTP in collaboration with Birmingham, Liverpool and Sheffield which will recruit from September. Up to 150 PGRs over the lifetime of the DTP.

**d.** that FSE had also been awarded the Plutonium Ceramics Hub in collaboration with Sheffield. Funding via the NDA and recruiting from September - 20 PGRs over 5 years.

ii. **PGR Standard Funding Terms and Conditions**

**Noted:**

**a.** that the PGR admissions group were seeking MDCSG approval of the standard PGR Funding Terms and Conditions.

**b.** that it was unclear from the document who it was aimed at e.g. UKRI and/or UoM funded? Clarity is needed in the document as to which PGRs will be governed by these T&Cs.

**c.** that there are elements of the document that are redundant e.g. reference to academic progression.

**d.** that some PGRs had raised concerns about financial hardship when stipends end early due to thesis submission but the group felt that it was fair but that it should be made clear to PGRs early on that this would happen so they can make an informed choice about when to submit.

**Agreed:** That faculty colleagues would send additional comments on the document to AH to feedback to PGR admissions colleagues. A further draft would be required before MDCSG could give approval **(ACTION – FACS / AH)**.

6. **Progression and Assessment**

   i. **Presentation of theses policy - Requirements for revisions (8.1h)**

   **Noted:** that the policy currently forbids PGRs from submitting a resubmitted thesis with tracked changes or highlighted text.

   **Agreed:** that the stipulation should be removed from the policy **(ACTION – AH).**

   ii. **PGR Exit Surveys**

   **Noted:**

   a. that work was underway via PROG to draft a standardized PGR exit survey.

   b. that FBMH were supportive of creating an Exit Survey and keen to provide input as required.

   iii. **Supervision policy with regards to ECRs (PDRA/Fellows) acting as Main Supervisor**

   **Noted:**

   **a.** that there have been questions raised in FBMH around the appointment of postdoctoral researchers as main supervisor.

   **c.** that the policy should be clear that post-docs without independence e.g. independent fellows should not be permitted as main supervisor and can only act as a co-supervisor.

   **b.** that the definition of post-docs / fellows is often confused and blurred and the policy would need to be carefully worded.

   **Agreed:** that AH would revisit the wording and bring the draft back to MDCSG **(ACTION – AH)**.

   iv. **PGR Carers Policy**

   **Noted:**

   **a.** a proposed policy update in relation to the availability of funds for PGR carers who incur caring costs due to conference attendance.

   **b.** that the funding sits within school budgets and are currently widely available to staff but agreement was made to extend to PGRs.

   **Agreed:**

   **a.** that the update could be approved and that AH would provide further details on the scheme to DAs when the update to policy goes live **(ACTION – AH)**.

   v. **Third-Party Proof-Reading Guidance (paper attached)**

   **Noted**: that the guidelines had been updated following feedback at the last MDCSG meeting.

   **Agreed**: that the guidelines could be added to the RDRD website **(ACTION – AH).**

   vi. **PhD by Enterprise Proposal**

**Noted:**

**a.** the proposal to introduce a new PhD by Enterprise.

**b.** that the programme would be 4 years in total, progression would mirror that of a standard PhD programme with some additional enterprise and innovation training and the PGR would be examined partly on their thesis / contribution to original thought and on their business model.

**c.** that the proposal was viewed as a potentially exciting opportunity to do something new and innovative in the sector but that there were concerns raised about the programme as presented, including:

- The radical shift away from the traditional thesis format and the assessment and awarding criteria.
- The time/weight given to the thesis and business plan throughout the programme and crucially at examination.
- How progression will be judged and managed throughout the programme.
- The potential dropout rate or conversion rates should PGRs find it difficult to progress their business plan.

**d.** that given the differences with a standard programme, successful completion should result in an award other than a PhD, something akin to the Engineering Doctorate (EngD) in FSE or that it could be structured as a standard PhD with an additional 1- year fellowship.

**Agreed**: that James Lalic would arrange a meeting with Aline and faculty ADs to discuss and work through the concerns raised **(ACTION – JL)**.

**7. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

No items.

**8. Careers and employability**

No items.

**9. Activity Reports**

**i. RDRD/SU/Library Reports**

No comments received.

**10. Any Other Business**

**i. SU AQSRC Research Paper**

**Noted:** that Adil would be presenting a paper at the AQSRC (Research) meeting**.** Melissa Westwood would also be in attendance.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wed 26 Feb 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**RESERVED BUSINESS**

**12. MDC Excellence Awards (PGR of the Year)**

**Noted:** that MDCSG were impressed with and happy to approve the nominations.

**MDCSG 26th Feb 2025**
**11:00 - 13:00**
**Notes**

**In attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Alex Hinchliffe, David Bechtold, Jessica Bowler, Admos Chimhowu, Anne-Marie Walsh, Scott Heath, Ruth Whelan, Tanya Luff.

**For item 3i:** Sami Karamalla-Gaiballa, Sylvia Masters
**For item 4i:** Cathal Rogers

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:** Apologies from Amy Smith, Richard Cotton and Adil Ashraf.

2. **MDCSG**
   i. **Notes from the previous meeting**
   Noted: the notes were confirmed as an accurate record.

   ii. **Matters Arising**
   **a. Review of Central Web Pages**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the central content team has confirmed that they will be undertaking a redevelopment project of all the pages (including PGR) and will keep MDCSG informed of the timeline so that we can feed into this work.
   b. that prior to the project Faculty marketing officers had created a set of 'quick win' updates that have been sent to the content team for action.

   **b. PGR Standard Funding T&Cs**
   **Noted:** that MDCSG feedback on the draft T&Cs had been returned to Fiona.

   **c. PhD by Enterprise**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that JL, EC and ADs had met with Aline to discuss how to progress the proposed PhD by Enterprise and Aline is now working on a revised proposal document incorporating the discussion had at that meeting.
   **b.** that it would be good to assign an AD as sponsor / partner on the programme (FSE would be the best fit).

3. **Recruitment and Admissions**
   i. **EDI Data – Bicentenary Researchers (Paper attached - Sami Karamalla-Gaiballa and Sylvia Masters to attend)**
   **Received:** the key insights from the EDI data they had gathered in relation to the supervisory teams in the recent call for Bicentenary research projects.
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the data had been broken down by EDI characteristic and by Faculty / School, Main / Co Supervisors and by approved and rejected projects benchmarked against the general academic population.
   **b.** that the data showed that there were more male than female supervisors (particularly true for approved projects), significantly more white supervisors than their representation in the academic population (particularly in FSE), there was a low proportion of disabled supervisors (no approved supervisor shared having a disability), supervisors were typically older than the average academic, nationality of

supervisors was representative of the population, there was not enough data to draw any observations on sexual orientation or religion.

**c.** that further analysis showed that professors were overrepresented as main supervisors for approved projects.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that it would be good to get further EDI breakdown of the successful professorial main supervisors e.g. gender and ethnicity.

**b.** that the original mandate that was given when devising the call would always have resulted in a high proportion of professorial staff being successful and this should be considered in any analysis.

**c.** that for FSE, who did not have an open call and whose projects were pre-selected a lot of the analysis for FSE is redundant.

**d.** that MDCSG should be proactive in putting forward how we think future calls should run and be clear what we mean by research excellence.

**e.** that the data now needed to be refined in relation to supervisor occupancy data for presentation to UE at the end of May **(ACTION - Sami / Sylvia by mid-March).**

**f.** that data relating to the breakdown for the selected applicants would need to be included at a later stage along with the MDCSG recommendation for the cohort 2 call.

**4. Planning and Quality Assurance**

**i. PGR support for REF**

**Received:** an insight into the potential ask for PGR in relation to reporting for the upcoming REF.

**Noted:**

**a.** that for the next REF the PGR outputs will be similar e.g. no sole-authored outputs by PGRs will be eligible (only those co-authored with a supervisor) and PGRs can't lead an Impact case study but work can contribute towards it.

**b.** that the biggest change is the expansion of Environment into 'People, Culture and Environment,' data requirements for this category look similar e.g. PGR completions but narrative reporting is due to change with weighting increased to 25% (from 15%) with reporting on what is being done for culture and environment at a central level.

**c.** that there is a pilot underway at the moment with UoM representation on 6 of the 8 areas and a framework that asks institutions to report on 5 areas…strategy, responsibility, connectivity, inclusivity and development.

**d.** that institutions will be expected to provide evidence on how they have supported PGRs in these areas and the institution can choose how they report on this with no mandatory indicators at this stage.

**e.** that the pilot will run until June with a report released in September with final guidance released in 2026.

**f.** that the ask to report/contribute to REF will be managed by the associated deans for REF in each faculty.

**g.** that the REF board is likely to be established in May 2025, chaired by Colette.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that Cathal would provide MDCSG with a 'cautionary note' on what we might be required to report on so that Faculties might distribute and ask areas to start looking and thinking about what is being done currently and how they might report it **(ACTION – CR)**.

**b.** Cathal will update the group after the pilot report is released in September. **(ACTION – CR)**

**ii. Annual Monitoring Actions**

**Noted:**

**a.** that work with **DASS** to improve level of support for PGRs was ongoing but had stalled slightly due to staff sickness in DASS**.** JL has reached out to DASS to meet in

regarding UKRI T&Cs updates that require us to have in place a policy for PGR reasonable adjustments.
**b.** that work to establish ways of reporting on PGR **employability and destinations** was on-going with REF colleagues.
**c.** that work on a PGR comms framework had stalled since Georgina Dalton had left the role but JL to pick back up.
**d**. that the PDS review was now underway with JL to meet with EC and start discussion ahead of further discussion with MDCSG.
**e**. that work continues to resolve the issues with the **PGRA** system ahead of re-launch in spring 2025. The PGR Admissions working group met to discuss staffing and to look at how the different activities change across the academic year and will be conducting a formal impact assessment of business readiness.
**Agreed:** Review new actions at the March MDCSG meeting **(ACTION – AH to add to the agenda for March.)**

5. **Funding**

ii. **Bid Updates**

**Noted:**

**a.** that the BHF bid is ongoing. The likelihood is partnership with Liverpool and one other.

**b.** that the 2 focal awards are progressing well. 1 in Engineering Biology split between MRC, BBSRC and NERC and another in Data/Digital Technology in Biology, BBSRC (partnering with Liverpool and Lancaster)

**c.** that HUMs have been invited to apply to a northern training hub for up to 10 Universities.

6. **Progression and Assessment**

i. **eProg Thesis submission update**

**Noted:**

a. that the launch of the thesis submissions in eProg was on track with a system / submission pause starting 3rd March and launch on 11th March.

b. that the first training session for PS staff had been completed.

c. that there would be 2 more training sessions on the 25th/26$^{th}$ and a 'mop up' training session and drop-in sessions for any that couldn't attend

d. that a comms plan was in place – there would be a further communication end of this week as reminder about the submission pause and then another communication at launch.

ii. **Supervision Policy – Exceptions to Main Supervisor Criteria – ECRs / PS Staff**

**Noted:** that following discussion at the February MDCSG meeting, AH updated the policy to make clear the supervisor appointment criteria and the exceptions to the criteria currently allowed.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that the supervisor criteria was clearer, but that AH could look again at the wording - suggestion to organise sections into - who can supervise, who might be able to supervise and who can't supervise **(ACTION – AH)**.

**b.** that relationships between members of the supervisory team could be allowed with the appointment of an additional 'neutral' co-supervisor **(ACTION – AH to update).**

**7. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

i. **PGR Voice**

**Noted:**

**a.** that MDCSG had previously agreed the core themes and question sets to allow for year-on-year comparisons. However, the topical questions provide an opportunity to explore emerging issues relevant to the PGR community. Suggestions from PRG have included:

- The Use of Generative AI: PGRs' perspectives on AI tools in research, and what additional support may be needed
- PGR Feedback on Doctoral Academies: Awareness, accessibility, and the perceived impact of Doctoral Academy support services.
- PGR Community Building: Feedback on PGR community building within the University and suggestions for building PGR community.

**b.** that for future surveys we could look at surveying other specific populations other than just disabled PGRs in order to track progress across different EDI groups.

**c.** that there was some budget available to Faculties to run events to encourage PGR engagement (preference for a PGR culture event with survey not the focus).

**Agreed:**

**a.** that RDRD would engage with DAs and DSE to update on action plans following the last PGR Voice Survey and support communication efforts **(ACTION – JL)**.

**b.** that the finalised survey question set and communication plan would come to MDCSG for approval in March **(ACTION – JL)**.

**ii. Exit Surveys**

**Noted:** that PROG had begun work developing a standardised PGR Exit Survey.

**Agreed:** that MDCSG endorsed the project but suggested being mindful not to replicate the work done by PGR Voice and that there could be a question included about optional exit interviews.

**8. Careers and employability**

No items

**9. Activity Reports**

**i. RDRD/SU/Library Reports**

No comments

**10. Any Other Business**

No further business raised

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wed 26 March 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**MDCSG 26th March 2025**
**11:00 - 13:00**
**Roscoe 4.9 / Teams**
**Notes**

**In attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Amy Smith, Alex Hinchliffe, Ruth Whelan, Jessica Bowler, Anne-Marie Walsh, Adil Ashraf, Admos Chimhowu, David Bechtold, Tanya Luff, Carlos Avendano.

**For Item 3**: Zhongdong Wang

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:** Apologies from Scott Heath and Richard Cotton.

2. **MDCSG**
   i. **Notes from the February meeting**
   **Agreed**: that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.

   ii. **Matters Arising**

   **a. Bicentenary Data**

   **Received:** further EDI data in relation to occupancy type of approved and rejected projects.

   **Noted:**

   a. DB had done some further breakdown of the data for FBMH and would share with HB. The data had revealed that in FBMH they had attracted a broader demographic but that approved projects matched the general demographic of the population according to occupancy type (so female supervisors were slightly over-represented in rejected projects).
   b. The next call would be an open one in all Faculties that should improve the numbers in FSE.
   c. For the next round (2026-27) Faculties can adopt differing project call and recruitment timelines (not tied to a coordinated approach as they were this year).
   d. In HUMS there has been a marked decline in home PGRs across all funding calls.

   **Agreed:**

   a. DB to forward additional data analysis to HB for her paper to UE in May (ACTION – DB).

   **b. PGR Support for REF**

   **Noted:**

   a. that Cathal has set up a meeting with the Faculty REF managers (early April) to discuss PCE and how they are going to approach this. He will get the 'cautionary note' over to MDCSG after they have agreed a coordinated plan.

   **c. eProg Thesis Submission Update**

   **Noted:**

   a. The thesis submission functionality launched on 12/03/25.
   b. Of 62 'problem' records, 59 were fixed and 3 are being investigated.
   c. A problem limiting file size to 20mb had been fixed.
   d. There was a remaining issue with some admin staff in FBMH losing access to 'e-thesis tasks – for all PGRs' that should be fixed on 27/03/25.

e. There was a known issue with advisors/tutors being copied into FTS supervisor task notifications and the team are looking at options to resolve this.
f. Feedback has been positive and 59 supervisors have been in to the system and approved access settings.
g. A lessons learned exercise would take place including stakeholder perspectives.
h. The integration between eProg and Pure is yet to be set up but this will be the next functionality to be launched.
i. The eProg team are now working on a full set of requirements and draft priorities for the April eProg board meeting.
j. As we look at requirements going forward, it would be good to include the submission/checking of Aii revisions/minor corrections as a step in the system as it is currently handled offline and can result in delays.

**d. EDI Questions on Application Form**

**Noted:**

a. that admissions were reluctant to undertake the work without detailed guidance from UKRI.
b. that further guidance was expected from UKRI in April.

**Agreed:**

a. that if further guidance from UKRI did not give the detail admissions are asking for then the work should still go ahead based on our submitted requirements as this isn't just about UKRI it's also about our ability to strategically report on this data and its now coming as a request from Colette as well.

**3. Recruitment and Admissions**

**i. Peking University Dual Award**

**Received:** Peking University / University of Manchester Dual Award Approval Paperwork

**Noted:**

a. Duncan had signed an agreement in principle for dual awards with China's major institutions.
b. Approval for the award at this stage was in FSE (Chemistry) only for a September 2025 intake and that further discussions would take place in FBMH and HUMS before paperwork would come back for approval of the award in those Faculties.
c. The number of PGRs quoted in the paperwork is aspirational and discipline agnostic.
d. There was some financial risk involved for PGRs required to apply for funding from the China Scholarship Council to attend in Manchester e.g. potential for funding to be refused and PGRs would need to be effectively supported and risk should be built into the financial model.
e. Payment of the NHS Health Surcharge and visa would be paid for the candidate only (not dependents).
f. UoM could not recruit Chinese PGRs at this end (they would need to be international when attending Peking).

**Agreed:**

a. The paperwork should be updated to state 4 year programme (rather than 3.5) (ACTION – ZD).
b. The paperwork should indicate recruitment would be via an open call (ACTION – ZD).

c. The paperwork should make it clear that it is for FSE only and that there will be another stage of approval before expanding into FBMH and HUMS (ACTION – ZD).
d. AC would invite ZD to a HUMS PGRC meeting (ACTION – AC).
e. The dual award can be approved for FSE and JL would contact ZW to arrange final approval signatures in paperwork (ACTION – JL).

**ii. Tsinghua Dual Award**

**Received:** Tsinghua University / University of Manchester Dual Award Programme Approval Paperwork.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that the award was approved for renewal and JL would contact ZW to arrange final approval signatures in paperwork **(ACTION – JL)**.

**4. Planning and Quality Assurance**

**i. UKRI Terms and Conditions Update**

**Received:** a paper detailing the impact of UKRI T&Cs updates and work required to ensure UoM meets the requirements.

**Noted**:

a. The main updates include an increased stipend and the requirement to have a reasonable adjustment policy for disabled PGRs, which must be clearly communicated at the point of offer rather than at registration. Additionally, EDI training is now mandatory for all UKRI PGRs, and leave types have been expanded beyond parental and sick leave to include medical, family, annual, and additional (including special) leave.
b. UKRI is also considering introducing extended studentships as a potential reasonable adjustment from the beginning of the programme but that a final decision on this has not yet been made.

**Agreed:**

a. That much of the work around reasonable adjustments has already been done and processes are already in place but that a formal document/policy is required that can be referred to and outlines procedure.
b. In addition to EDI training Bystander training would also be beneficial but capacity to deliver this to all PGRs may be an issue. DB to share information on who currently delivers this training with JL (ACTION – DB).
c. We should, wherever possible, strive to match UKRI terms for UoM funded PGRs but that this feeds into general principles about how we cost and budget for PGR across the university.
d. A full costing of a PhD/PGR would be a useful exercise and UKRI are currently working on a project to do this.

**ii. PhD with Enterprise**

**Noted:** that the item was deferred to the next meeting.

**iii. Senate Data**

**Noted:**

a. That Senate Subcommittee (AQSC Research) had asked Melissa to report on the examination outcomes of PGRs who are required to resubmit their first year annual review in comparison to those who pass first time.
b. That the data was difficult to obtain (no standard annual review form and data required from 2 systems) but that at a high level it could be said around

10% of PGRs are asked to resubmit a first year annual review and these PGRs were more likely to have a poor outcome (discontinued, withdrawn, lower award) at the final examination.

c. That the findings were not unexpected and that anecdotally it was already known and that those with annual review resubmissions are more likely to have withdrawn, discontinue, have lesser awards

**Agreed**

a. The purpose of the annual review needs to be clarified for academic staff. During the next annual monitoring meeting, we will focus on progression and consider refining the process. This includes evaluating whether the review outcomes should be more nuanced than the current options of pass, fail, or resubmit, and introducing a standard form.
b. Although academic staff sometimes feel that a resubmission will not address concerns (especially given the short amount of time permitted for a resubmission) there are often mitigating circumstances which mean we need to give PGRs a second opportunity
c. HUMS have reviewed the outcomes from annual review against the comments provided in the annual review form and there are cases where the annual review outcome does not represent or address the concerns/issues raised in the annual review form (e.g.: they pass the annual review but there are clear comments in the form which outline a number of concerns)
d. FBMH have started to track data locally for each PGR throughout their journey (to include interview feedback at admissions, annual review, award outcomes etc.)

**iv. Annual Monitoring Actions**

**Noted**:

a. Work continues on PGR Strategy by feeding in to Manchester 2035 in Phase 2 via Colette.
b. Work to incorporate updates into policy and practice in relation to the UKRI New Deal was underway (see Item 4i).
c. The PGR Voice would launch again in Spring 2025 PGR Voice Survey (see item 7i)
d. Work to embed supervisor CPD within BAU (monitor and review) and participate in the RSVP programme is in progress and RSVP would start in September 2025.
e. The Researcher Development extensive review and evaluation project has started (see Item 7ii).
f. eProg e-thesis submission functionality had launched and work continues on further development and enhancements to the system (see item 2iic).
g. Addressing resource issues via Workforce Planning continued and DAs and RDRD were currently undertaking a reviews of activity and resource across all areas to assess the ability (or lack of) to flex resource across the institution

**5. Funding**

**i. Bid Updates**

**Noted:**

AHRC NW Hub bid to be submitted end of June

BMH Focal awards with FSE – funder only want to fund 3 across all calls – need a process to coordinate these going forward e.g faculty lead etc.

BHF bid rolling along

MRC DTP renewal coming up

**6. Progression and Assessment**

No items

**7. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

**i. PGR Voice**

**Received**: the final question set for discussion / approval

**Noted:**

a. The survey would launch on May 12th for 6 weeks.
b. The main question set was the same as last year but that additional questions had been included in relation to DAs, AI and PGR community.

**Agreed:**

a. JL would add a positive question in relation to Faculty DAs e.g. what do you most value about your doctoral academy? (ACTION – JL)
b. It would be good to capture opinions on pre-arrival support and how they impacted their University of Manchester experience but that an additional question could be considered when the main question set is reviewed for the 2027 survey.

**ii. Researcher Development Evaluation**

**Received:** details of the proposed Researcher Development Evaluation project,

**Noted:**

a. That it would be good to get feedback from a PGR group who are not frequent attenders / users e.g. those who attend the mandatory training but then do not engage.
b. That there was potential to engage with PGRs as part of the Showcase event in June and JL had a list of Faculty PGR events he could share (ACTION – JL).
c. It would be useful to ask about how PGRs find Researcher Development offerings and at what stage of their research programme they are.

**8. Careers and employability**

No items

**9. Activity Reports**

**i. RDRD/SU/Library Reports (papers attached)**

<u>To receive</u> activity reports / updates

**10. Any Other Business**

**i. Meeting in April**

**Agreed:**

a. that due to the large number of policy documents requiring approval prior to senate deadline in May AH would share documents via teams and add a potential 1-hour meeting on April 30th in calendars to meet and discuss / approve **(ACTION – AH)**.

**ii. Funding Biii Research (FSE)**

**Noted:**

a. A case in FSE where a PGR was awarded Biii but that the further research would be costly to the Faculty.

**Agreed:**

a. That there was no precedent in HUMS or BMH to deny PGRs the opportunity to complete the further research based on costs and that the Faculty would need to fund it.

iii. **Visa PGRs in SubP (UKVI rules now state able to write up from home country with monthly online meetings)**

**Agreed:**

a. that there were no concerns with allowing visa PGRs to write up from overseas but that a process for identifying and reporting location to UKVI would need to be worked out.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Weds 28th May 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**MDCSG 28th May 2025**
**11:00 - 13:00**
**Roscoe 4.9 / Teams**
**Notes**

**In attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Amy Smith, Alex Hinchliffe, Ruth Whelan, Jessica Bowler, Adil Ashraf, Admos Chimhowu, David Bechtold, Richard Cotton, Carlos Avendano.

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** apologies from Anne-Marie Walsh, Jon Pittman.
   **b.** the group expressed appreciation to Scott Heath for his contributions to MDCSG during his tenure as FSE AD for Postgraduate Research.

2. **MDCSG**
   **i. Notes from the March meeting**
   **Agreed**: that the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting.
   **ii. Matters Arising**
   **a. Bicentenary Paper**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the paper had not gone to the latest UE meeting as Colette had requested a more detailed and consistent analysis of the EDI data:
   - She wanted major prizes and measures of esteem to be separate criteria rather than merged into funding/outputs.
   - She wanted the EDI analysis to be more consistent across faculties – with all criteria to be referenced.

   **b.** that there was concern within the group that, following the review of the Bicentenary process, it could be regarded as the ‘gold standard’ for PGR recruitment and subsequently mandated across all programmes—potentially overlooking the need for Faculty-specific nuances.
   **c.** That the absence of a longitudinal data set created challenges in substantiating the need for process changes.

   **Agreed**: that HB/MW/EC would re-draft based on feedback and will circulate as soon as possible and finalise at the MDC Exec meeting on 3rd June **(ACTION – HB)**.

   **d. EDI Questions on Application Form**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that further guidance was expected from UKRI in April but has not appeared.
   **b.** that a requirement to report on EDI has come from the MRC-funded Centre for Research Excellence, in partnership with Oxford. It is becoming evident that we are falling behind sector standards in this area, which reflects poorly on the University.

   **Agreed:** that the work should proceed according to our submitted requirements, as it extends beyond UKRI. It is crucial for our ability to strategically report on this data **(ACTION – HB to raise with MW).**

3. **Recruitment and Admissions**
   **i. Relaunch of PGRA**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that the relaunch of PGRA is anticipated to begin mid-June 2025 (pending

successful testing and approval in the week of 9th June).

**b.** that the launch will be on a pilot basis initially, with full roll out at the start of the 25/26 academic year.

**4. Planning and Quality Assurance**

**i. UKRI Terms and Conditions Update**

**Noted**:

**a.** that a meeting has been set with DASS to discuss in detail the formalising of guidance in relation to reasonable adjustments for disabled PGRs at all stages of their programme (including assessment). The guidance will include the process for making requests and the route for approval.

**b.** that there had been sector discussion via UKCGE re: whether a viva is always required.

**c.** that participation in UKCGE discussions does not imply endorsement of any final recommendations resulting from those conversations.

**Agreed:** that the DASS guidance would come to MDCSG for discussion and endorsement in July and that AH would invite LPK to attend **(ACTION – AH to invite LPK when papers are ready)**.

**ii. Simon Holdsworth Entertainment Fund**

**Noted:** that the available budget had been reduced from £50k to £20k, likely for 25/26 and 26/27 academic years.

**Agreed:** that given the reduced budget, priority should be given to funding the PGR festival.

**iii. Annual Monitoring Questions**

**Received**: potential questions to be considered as part of the Annual Monitoring meeting in September 2025.

**Noted**:

**a.** that the actions / report produced from the MDCSG Annual Monitoring meeting would feed into RSG in January 2026 allowing the group to review census data and recruitment against targets.

**b.** that the focus of APR / RSG will be metrics while the questions in the paper are for internal MDCSG priority setting **(ACTION – HB to seek clarity on what RSG will require)**.

**c.** that the APR is just one part of the Annual Monitoring exercise and the question set presented was a way for the group to share best practice and set actions / strategic priorities for the next academic year.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that MDC Exec members would review the questions ahead of the MDC Exec meeting on 3rd June to refine the questions ahead of the circulation of papers **(ACTION – MDC Exec)**.

**5. Funding**

**i. Bid Updates**

**Noted:** that the first AHRC NW Hub bid had been unsuccessful. The next call is expected in October.

**6. Progression and Assessment**

**i. Supervision Policy – Personal Relationships**

**Noted:**

a. that the AQSR Research had not approved the update to the Supervision policy that required the declaration of personal relationships between supervisors and the appointment of an additional co-supervisor in all cases.
b. that an update was currently being prepared to the University of Manchester Consensual Relationships policy that would require the declaration of such relationships between staff members that could justify the inclusion of this requirement in the PGR policy.

**Agreed:** that the new policy requirement for supervisors to declare relationships should remain, with appropriate reference to the finalised University-level policy. Additionally, independent support for the PGR should be maintained, though this does not necessarily require appointing an additional supervisor. Where the PGR agrees, this support could instead be provided by the Advisor **(ACTION – AH to draft and bring back to future MDCSG meeting)**.

ii. **PhD by Published Papers**

**Noted:**

a. that the PhD by published papers regulations had been reviewed and updated into a single document (currently there is a separate guidance document).

**Agreed:**

a. that the advisor assigned to the candidate should be called 'supervisor'.
b. that reference to 'substantial proportion' of the research having been conducted at the University of Manchester could remain and that there was no need to be more specific.
c. that we should allow extensions to the registration period of up to 12-months with mitigating circumstances **(ACTION – AH to make updates and bring back to MDCSG for final approval).**

7. **Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

i. **PGR Voice**

**Noted:**

a. that the survey has launched, and the current response rate was 7% (hampered by several technical access issues - now resolved).
b. that a weekly response rate would be circulated and there were no big differences in response rates by school.
c. that there were several local DA initiatives and events scheduled, which could help boost the response rate.
d. that there may have been insufficient follow-up after the previous survey to inform PGRs about what impact the survey had e.g. 'You Said, We Did' but that this could be done in comms about the latest survey to boost completions.

**Agreed**: that Faculties would continue to promote the survey locally **(ACTION – FACS)**.

8. **Careers and employability**

No items

9. **Activity Reports**

i. **RDRD Activity Report**

To be circulated with the meeting minutes.

10. **Any Other Business**

i. **PhD by Enterprise**

**Noted:** that the PhD by Enterprise is still being developed and is expected to come back to MDCSG in July.

ii. **External Examiner Appointment (Melbourne Dual Award)**

**Noted:** that Melbourne policy dictates that external examiners who have published / collaborated with a PhD Supervisor within 5 years can't act as an External Examiner for that Supervisor's PGR. This is stricter than UoM policy which just advises against such appointments without a specified timeframe.

**Agreed:** that in this case the University of Manchester would need to comply with University of Melbourne policy.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Weds 25 June 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**MDCSG 25th June 2025**
**11:00 - 13:00**
**Roscoe 4.9 / Teams**

## Notes

**In attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, Alex Hinchliffe, Ruth Whelan, Jessica Bowler, Admos Chimhowu, David Bechtold, Richard Cotton, Jon Pittman, Anne-Marie Walsh

**For item 3i:** Sophie Theis, Richard Quayle and Jonathan Brown.

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted**:
   **a.** Apologies from Adil Ashraf, James Lalic and Amy Smith.
   Thanks to Adil Ashraf for his dedicated contributions and insights over the past 12 months. We wish him all the best for the future.
2. **MDCSG**
   **i. Notes from the previous meeting**
   **Noted:** that the notes were an accurate representation of the meeting.
   **ii. Matters Arising**
   **Bicentenary Paper**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that feedback had been received from University Exec (UE) and they requested that we strengthen criteria 4 (the extent to which the project fosters interdisciplinary collaboration and engagement) by including a sentence in the project call documentation to emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration.
   **b.** that UE were ok with 'relaxing' the 10% limit on the 'open' theme but stressed we need to ensure that the majority of studentships are under the 4 UoM priority themes.
   **c.** that Jessica Bowler was preparing final draft of FBMH call document (including sentence to reflect interdisciplinarity) and will circulate for HUMS and FSE to use and tweak as required (but we'll maintain the core set of questions).
   **Agreed:**
   **a.** that Faculties were now permitted to begin advertising and recruitment.
   **b.** that successful Supervisors in the first round would not be able to apply again this time.
   **iii. EDI Questions on Application Form**
   **Noted:** that UE had now endorsed the MDCSG request for EDI questions to be added to the PGR application form and Fiona Eccles would be raising it this week at a meeting with product managers as a top priority when scheduling updates to the system.
   **iv. PhD by Enterprise**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that EC, HB and AH had met with Aline to give feedback on the latest draft of the programme proposal.
   **b.** that Aline would now be updating the programme proposal and bringing a new programme proposal form to the July MDCSG.
   **Recommended:** that the programme should be titled PhD <u>*with*</u> Enterprise.

3. **Recruitment and Admissions**
   **i. Relaunch of PGRA**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** that Sophie Theis, Richard Quayle and Jonathan Brown attended to give an update on the proposed soft-launch and further comms and roll-out of the PGRA system.

**b.** that it is anticipated that a final go / no go meeting will be scheduled for early July and that HB would be invited.

**c.** that it is anticipated that a soft launch would happen in mid-July with full roll-out in October. The soft-launch would be used to identify any system defects and any improvements to training etc. prior to full launch.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that Sophie Theis would check which of the recommended improvements / enhancements to the system had been implemented and report to HB **(ACTION – ST to report back to HB)**.

**b.** that once the project team disbands the escalation route for any issues would be via Faculty admissions colleagues.

**c.** that a system demo would be useful for ADs and other academic colleagues to attend prior to launch **(ACTION – HB to contact ST to request a demo session).**

**4. Planning and Quality Assurance**

**i. Student protection plan**

**Noted:** that feedback was requested on a draft update to the Student Protection plan.

**Agreed:**

**a.** that section (i) could be relevant to CASE studentships, dual awards, and collaborative PhD programmes. Suggested that the heading be updated: *"The risk that a programme taught/**delivered** in collaboration with another university or **organisation**…"* **(ACTION – AH to feedback).**

**b.** that section loss of supervision was the greatest risk to PGRs (although still low). It was suggested that we add a small update to clarify the level of support we can provide e.g. "We will support you in exploring options for continuing your research through registration at another higher education provider, e.g. by providing a list of institutions undertaking similar research." This aligns with recent updates to the PGR policy and helps manage expectations regarding institutional support and helps manage expectations (ACTION – AH to feedback).

**c.** that there was a potential additional risk for commissioned PhD programmes e.g. from NHS England and there may be a risk of these ceasing to exist if the funder pulls out/ no longer exists.

**ii. Admissions Report**

**Agreed**: that there were no concerns with the data and that it was still early in the cycle.

**5. Funding**

**i. Bid Updates**

**Noted:**

**a.** that FBMH were in the early stages of an MRC bid.

**b.** that in HUMS the Landscape Hub bid would be going in at the end of the week.

**6. Progression and Assessment**

**i. PhD by Published Papers Regulations**

**Noted:** that following feedback from MDCSG in May the role of Advisor had been renamed Supervisor throughout and extensions are now permitted with mit circs.

**Agreed:** that the new regs could be approved subject to additional updates **(ACTION AH to update)**:

- AD approval in exceptional cases where staff have been employed by the University for less than 5 years.
- Update section H so that it says a supervisor 'could' be the independent chair (not should) and delete the brackets that state senior lecturer or above).

**7. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

**i. PGR Voice**

**Noted:** that the PGR Voice Survey deadline had been extended to 27th. The response rate was currently at 18%.

**8. Careers and employability**

No items

**9. Activity Reports**

**i. RDRD Activity Report**

No comments

**10. Any Other Business**

**i. Update to Nomination of Examiners Policy**

**Agreed:** to update section 9 of the policy to make it clear that honorary members of staff can only act as an internal examiner with an independent chair.

**ii. Research Committee Away Day**

**Noted:**

**a.** The recent change in committee structure means RSG will become Research Committee (meeting monthly), reporting into UE alongside 5 other executive committees. Research Committee will have 7 delegated groups, one of which is MDCSG. There will also be advisory groups and fora to feed into M2035 strategy.

**b.** That Colette would like to invite the Faculty Associate Deans PGR to an away day with Research Committee at the start of next academic year. This will take place on 15th September 9-1 and will include lunch. Sarah Albutt will send a calendar invite.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

Wed 25th July 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 4.9

**MDCSG 23rd July 2025**

**11:00 - 13:00**

**Roscoe 4.9 / Teams**

**Notes**

**In attendance:** Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, James Lalic, Alex Hinchliffe, Amy Smith, Ruth Whelan, Jon Pittman, David Bechtold, Rachel Miller, Anne-Marie Walsh, Admos Chimhowu, Jessica Bowler.

**For Item 4:** Aline Miller
**For Item 7:** Antoinette McKane, James Lawrence

**Apologies:** Richard Cotton

1. **Welcome**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** Welcome to Rachel Miller (SU PGR Officer) at her first meeting.
   **b.** Thank you to Jessica Bowler at her last MDCSG meeting.

2. **Matters Arising**
   **i. EDI Questions on Application Form**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** UE has approved adding EDI questions to the PGR application form.
   **b.** Fiona Eccles marked this as a top priority in product management, with final decisions by TLSIG.
   **c.** Submission prioritisation status should be clarified by the end of July.

   **ii. PGR Voice**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** JL is collaborating on PowerBI reports; the initial draft was shared yesterday and is currently under review by RDRD prior to broader distribution.
   **b.** JL will bring a full PDS insight paper to MDCSG in October.
   **c.** The core question results have shown overall improvement compared to 2023, although some concerns persist within certain faculties and schools.

   **iii. Relaunch of PGRA**
   **Noted:**
   **a.** A final go/no-go meeting is expected after two earlier no decisions; the third meeting was postponed yesterday.
   **b.** The soft launch, initially planned for mid-July, will be delayed due to technical issues—mainly a 15-second page load time—that are being addressed.
   **c.** Full rollout is still scheduled for October.
   **Agreed:**
   **a.** It might be advisable to explore the development of a contingency plan (Plan B).
   **b.** PS resource issues persist and no supplementary funding has been allocated in the current budget cycle.
   **c.** A formal written communication reaffirming MDCSG's stance should be submitted to the chair of the board **(ACTION – HB/EC)**.

3. **Recruitment and Admissions**
   **No items**

**4. Planning and Quality Assurance**

i. **PhD by Enterprise**

**Noted:**

- **a.** Aline presented the most recent draft of the PhD by Enterprise programme proposal and sought feedback and approval to advance with two cohorts of five PGRs each for the academic years 2026/27 and 2027/28, with each cohort supported by a four-year studentship and an 80:20 research to enterprise allocation.
- **b.** Some members expressed a preference for the title "PhD with Enterprise" over "PhD by Enterprise"; however, Aline advocated for the latter, noting that the intent is for research and enterprise activities to be closely integrated.
- **c.** The responsibilities of Faculty DAs, particularly concerning potential administrative workload, require further clarification—specifically, whether faculty resources are sufficient and how these roles will interface with the University of Manchester Innovation Factory (UoMIF).
- **d.** Additional consideration is needed regarding progression milestones, including the evaluation process for both research and enterprise components and the involvement of supervisors in monitoring enterprise-related progress.
- **e.** Further detail should be provided on procedures for instances where PGRs may transfer to a standard PhD pathway.
- **f.** Intellectual Property (IP) arrangements within supervisor–PGR relationships must be addressed, including questions of ownership and the possible distribution of shares in spin-outs.

**Agreed:**

- **a.** MDCSG endorses the 'PhD by Enterprise' programme and supports the proposal's direction; a dedicated task and finish group will move the initiative forward. (ACTION – JL / EC).
- **b.** Feedback should be submitted to James and Aline for further refinement. (ACTION – MDCSG).

## 4. Funding

i. **Bid Updates**

**Noted:**

- **a.** Leverhulme doctoral scholarship bids open Nov 2025, deadline March 2026. Each institution may submit one bid; proposals should avoid commercial or clinical references and align with UoM rather than UKRI priorities. A centrally-run open call is preferred, as before (ACTION - AH to locate and share previous process for approval).
- **b.** EPSRC Focal Awards (nuclear skills) are pre-announced, led by Jon Pittman.

## 5. Progression and Assessment

i. **Supervision Policy**

**Noted**: The PGR Supervision policy now requires supervisors and advisors to disclose close personal or intimate relationships with PGRs for transparency and to avoid conflicts of interest.

**Agreed**: The updates are approved, provided section 8.4 is removed **(ACTION – AH to add to Senate paperwork).**

ii. **Viva Adjustments for Disabled PGRs**

**Noted:**

- **a.** The Disability Advisory Support Service (DASS) has proposed a standardized, University-level approach for viva adjustments to support disabled postgraduate researchers (PGRs), aiming to ensure both fairness and legal compliance.

**b.** A core set of viva adjustments has been identified and implemented without requiring approval on a case-by-case basis.

**c.** The core adjustments include: the use of notes, repetition of questions, scheduled rest breaks, access to assistive technology, provision of accessible environments, scheduling preferences, mock vivas, advance notice of general topics, permission for assistance dogs, and allowances for panic attacks or other specific needs.

**d.** Requests for non-standard or complex adjustments are proposed to be reviewed by Faculty-level panels consisting of academic and professional services staff.

**e.** The MDCSG expressed overall support for these proposals and offered several recommendations for further refinement and clarification:

- Point 22 was duplicated.
- Points 23 and 27 could be combined for clarity.
- Points 26, 30 and 36 should be removed (not supported).
- Greater detail is needed regarding the final stage at which adjustments may be requested and approved.
- Clarification is sought on the extent of input from supervisors and examiners.
- Confirmation should be obtained that the UoM Legal Team has been consulted.
- Engaging with PGRs regarding the list of adjustments is recommended.

**Agreed**: that JL would feedback to Louise in DASS **(ACTION – JL)**

**6. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing**

**i. Researcher Development SharePoint Website**

**Noted:**

**a.** The new Researcher Development SharePoint site has been widely consulted on and updated and is now ready for MDCSG approval.

**b.** The SharePoint site is set to launch at the beginning of academic year 25/26.

**c.** Resdev is exploring Canvas Catalogue for managing supervisor CPD, aiming to centralize booking, track progress, monitor attendance, and issue certificates.

**Agreed:**

a. CPD terminology would be incorporated into the supervisor page **(ACTION – James Lawrence).**

**7. Careers and employability**

No Items

**8. Activity Reports**

**i. RDRD Activity Report**

No comments.

**9. Any Other Business**

**i. PDS Refocus**

**Noted:**

**a.** A proposal is presented to unify the PDS scheme across all faculties to award 15-20 fully funded studentships annually.

**b.** The programme will focus on interdisciplinary research with cross-faculty supervisory teams; academic leadership comes from all faculties, and administration is handled by faculty Doctoral Academies.

**c.** Launch planned for the 2025/26 recruitment cycle, with an annual open call for projects each September.

**d.** Funding will use current faculty budgets, offering 4-year studentships with enhanced support.

**e.** Risks include increased leadership workload and potential effects on international recruitment.

**Agreed:**

**f.** Each faculty will have a recruitment quota.

**g.** Melbourne Dual Award funding will come from other Faculty budgets.

**h.** Cohort activities, like the Welcome Event and President Q&A, should be reviewed with the full recommendations submitted to the President for feedback or approval via UE **(ACTION – HB to check with Melissa how to proceed).**

**i.** Melissa Westwood recommended including central representation on the panel for oversight and cohort activity management, but not for recruitment or selection.

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

Wed 24th September 2025, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 3.1 (Annual Monitoring)