

MDCSG
27th May 2026
NOTES

In attendance: Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, David Bechtold, AnneMarie Walsh, Monique James, Jon Pittman, Admos Chimhowu, Tasleem Hanif, Amy Smith, Alex Hinchliffe, Richard Cotton, Rachel Miller.

For Item 7i – Antoinette McKane

Apologies: Ruth Whelan, Georgina Dalton.

1. MDCSG

i. Notes from the previous meetings

Received: notes from the March MDCSG meeting.

Agreed: that the notes were an accurate record of the meeting.

ii. Matters Arising

UKRI Submission Within the Funded Period

Noted: following agreement at MDC Exec to share a communication with UKRI PGRs and supervisors regarding the expectation for PGRs to complete within the funded period, draft emails have been prepared. Feedback has been received from FSE with minor revisions incorporated. FBMH are content with the draft, subject to the addition of a banner clarifying that, as most FBMH programmes are four years in duration, the impact is expected to be limited.

Agreed:

AMW will update the comms with a banner and recirculate for final agreement with DAs
(ACTION – AMW)

DAs to agree a date on when to share the communication **(ACTION – AMW / DAs)**

FBMH/FSE to agree who sends the communication to their cross-faculty PGRs **(ACTION – DB / JP)**.

iii. Bicentenary Update Paper

Noted: that detailed discussion has been deferred until June due to delays in receipt of the EDI data. The paper is now scheduled for submission to Research Committee in July.

Agreed: that HB will circulate the draft paper to MDCSG in advance of the June meeting to allow time for feedback to be incorporated ahead of the July Research Committee deadline
(ACTION – HB).

2. Recruitment and Admissions

No items

3. Planning and Quality Assurance

i. International PGR Tuition Fee Setting

Noted:

a. that, when last discussed at MDCSG, it was agreed that HB and RH would update the paper and circulate the revised version (now complete).

b. that Faculties were asked to consider the document through Faculty governance processes to provide further feedback, agree a preferred approach, and confirm timelines.

- c. that two options were proposed:
 - Option 1: a standard annual inflationary increase (5% for this year, as agreed by UE), with Faculty Planning, Finance and PGR colleagues meeting annually to agree any exceptions.
 - Option 2: annual Faculty-level decision-making, with Planning, Finance and PGR colleagues setting international fee increases for new intakes, with decisions reported to MDCSG with justification.
- d. that Rosie Haynes has confirmed HUMS will adopt Option 1; responses from FSE and FBMH are still outstanding.

Agreed:

- a. that FSE and FBMH confirmed they agreed to option 2.
- b. that HB would amend the original University Exec paper with the MDCSG agreements and timeline (**ACTION – HB**).

ii. PRES vs PGR Voice

Received: a paper presenting two options – to continue with PGR Voice or revert to PRES.

Noted:

- a. that the key consideration is the value of benchmarking through PRES, and that the survey includes an option to add University of Manchester-specific questions, which has previously been underutilised.
- b. that, if returning to PRES, there would be an opportunity to make fuller use of institution-specific questions to support alignment with M2035 priorities.
- c. that PRES is understood to be less resource-intensive than PGR Voice.
- d. that alternative options were discussed, including potential collaboration with other institutions who are not satisfied with PRES, and the need to consider incentives to increase PGR engagement.

Agreed: to continue with PGR Voice and that AMW will develop a plan for the launch of the next PGR Voice cycle (**ACTION AMW**).

iii. PGR M2035 Implementation Progress

Received: PGR M2035 Implementation Plan

Noted:

- a. that an update on progress is required for Research Committee by 17 July 2026, and that Faculties are invited to provide comments / updates to the document ahead of the June MDCSG.
- b. detailed discussion regarding metrics and targets, including the proposed 85% completion rate excluding extensions and interruptions.

Agreed: that the completion rate target would be 85% (excluding extensions and interruptions).

4. Funding

i. Bid Updates

Noted:

- a. that new Venture Doctorates call has been announced, with Aline Miller leading (with support from DAs required).
- b. that JP will contact Aline Miller to follow up on the Venture Doctorates opportunity (**ACTION – JP**).
- c. that two further Doctoral Focal Award (DFA) funding opportunities are forthcoming.
- d. that the *Environmental Evidence Synthesis* opportunity (NERC/ESRC) is now live on the UKRI funding finder, with funding to support up to two awards for students starting in

2027.

- e. that potential alignment has been identified with existing activity led by Richard Kingston (Digital Futures) and colleagues in Sustainable Futures, including MERI.
- f. that an ESRC opportunity focused on *AI innovation in social science skills* is expected, with early planning underway for a cross-University bid involving AMBS, SoSS (Cathie Marsh Institute), Centre for Digital Trust & Security, Digital Futures, and SHS colleagues in FBMH.
- g. that this ESRC investment is intended to pilot innovative doctoral training approaches and build capacity in data-driven research skills.
- h. that an MRC mock interview has recently taken place.

5. Progression and Assessment

i. Policy on Progress and Review

Received: Updated PGR Policy on Progress and Review

Noted:

- a. that the Policy had been reviewed via PROG and wider consultation.
- b. that the principal change is a consolidation and expansion of the *Roles and Responsibilities* section, incorporating supervisors, co-supervisors, PGRs, review panels and Doctoral Academies, while removing repetition of core supervisory duties covered elsewhere in policy.
- c. that minor amendments have been made throughout to streamline and clarify language.
- d. that the inclusion of section 5.5, which states that progress review meetings should normally take place in person, had been queried.
- e. that PROG supported referencing meeting format expectations, with face-to-face engagement as the norm during the programme, in contrast to the final viva where participants may be overseas.
- f. that the current wording could be refined to provide greater flexibility.
- g. the proposed revised wording:
"Formal progress review meetings should normally be held face to face. Where this is not possible, they may take place remotely with the agreement of all participants, considering individual circumstances such as fieldwork, placements, or reasonable adjustments."
- h. that language in relation to supervisor expectations should be softened e.g. removal of the word 'accurately' from the responsibility to submit formal reports.
- i. Add 'where appropriate' to the co-supervisor responsibility sections as it may not be appropriate to all.
- j. that the wording in relation to formal review panels may need additional nuance to avoid confusion with progression review panels in FBMH.
- k. that where the PhD by Enterprise is mentioned to also mention PhD by Practice or remove reference to entrepreneurship experience and change to 'relevant' experience.

Agreed: that AH will make the required updates to the draft policy and circulate the final draft by email to MDCSG for final sign-off ahead of submission to AQSC (Research) for recommendation to Senate (**ACTION – AH**).

ii. Oral Examination Procedure

Noted:

- a. that the *Oral Examination Procedure for Postgraduate Research Degrees* has been updated to include a section on unexpected disruptions to the viva, and MDCSG approval was sought.
- b. that the updates were previously discussed and supported by PROG following a case in which a PGR appealed a viva outcome, citing illness during the examination which had

not been raised at the time.

- c. that PROG agreed it would be helpful to include a short section covering a range of potential disruptions.

Agreed: that the proposed updates to the *Oral Examination Procedure for Postgraduate Research Degrees* were approved (**ACTION – AH to update**).

6. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing

i. Supervisor CPD action plan

Received: the action plan resulting from the Supervisor CPD review

Noted:

- a. that, following completion of the Supervisor CPD internship research project (September 2025–January 2026), and the presentation and circulation of its findings at the January 2026 MDCSG meeting, a plan has been developed outlining key recommendations and associated actions.
- b. that the overarching aim is to enhance Supervisor CPD provision through implementation of the recommendations arising from the research.
- c. the action plan highlighted 6 main recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Restructure workload to better recognise the importance of supervisor CPD.

Recommendation 2: Ensure consistency across Faculties in how participation in mandatory supervisor CPD is monitored and measured.

Recommendation 3: Make CPD provision more inclusive and flexible through blended delivery and multiple engagement routes.

Recommendation 4: Strengthen coordination between Faculties and Researcher Development in promoting CPD and gathering feedback.

Recommendation 5: Broaden CPD provision to cover areas where further supervisor support is needed.

Recommendation 6: Maintain alignment with sector-wide initiatives and best practice in supervisor development.

Agreed:

- a. (Recommendation 1) Res Dev to look at recognition for facilitators in the FSE and FBMH FCMs (**ACTION – Res Dev**).
- b. (Recommendation 1) AS to follow up separately with AC about HUMS WAM (**ACTION – AS**).
- c. (Recommendation 1) AS to look in to adding a discussion prompt on supervision development to new Academic PDR form and signpost to support in PDR guidance document (**ACTION – AS**).
- d. (Recommendation 2) Supervisor CPD CoP to progress this to ensure alignment (**ACTION – AS**).
- e. to take forward the Supervisor CPD action plan, subject to a number of minor amendments (**ACTION – AS / AM**).
- f. to circulate the plan via Faculty DALT meeting (or equivalent) (**ACTION – AM**).

ii. Nature Online Masterclasses

Noted:

- a. that the contract is in progress, with one outstanding issue identified last week which may now be resolved.
- b. that the aim is to launch in June 2026.
- c. that AS has been in discussion with Teaching and Learning colleagues regarding promoting the resource to T&L students, with free access proposed.

- d. that AS will provide an update on sustainability of provision, with Colette having agreed to fund the first year and ongoing costs to be considered by Faculties following evaluation at the end of the 12-month trial.

7. Careers and employability

No items

8. Activity Reports

i. RDRD Activity Report and Library Updates

Received: reports from RDRD and the Library.

9. Any Other Business

i. Chile Dual Award

Noted:

- a. that HUMS is progressing the Chile Dual Award agreement in collaboration with FSE, with agreement to proceed using the previously approved template contract without amendment.
- b. that discussions are ongoing with Chile, and that revisions have been made to the original contract to reflect one-way mobility, including removal of clauses (e.g. fee waivers linked to funding) that are not appropriate in this context.
- c. that, due to the devolved structure in Chile, separate Faculty-level agreements will be developed, with the intention of maintaining consistency across contracts as far as possible.
- d. that draft contracts will be shared with Doctoral Academies for comment once initial details have been agreed.

ii. PDS sending the world

Noted:

- a. that draft wording for the PDS: Sending the World call has been developed by HUMS and shared for feedback with FBMH and FSE.
- b. that the proposed wording emphasises interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to understanding global challenges, including cross-disciplinary and methodological innovation.
- c. that feedback from FSE and FBMH is invited.

iii. Invitations to 3MT final

Noted: an invitation was extended to ADs to attend the 3MT final on Thurs 11th June 2pm Sam Alex SLG.12 –. Amy to share details by email (**ACTION – AS**).

iv. MDCSG Excellence Award Winners

Noted: the committee confirmed their approval of the MDC Excellence Award winners.

v. Early roll out of Copilot licenses for PGRs

Noted: MDCSG support for the early roll out of Copilot for PGRs.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Wed 24 June 2026, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 3.1