

MDCSG
24th June 2026
NOTES

In attendance: Elizabeth Cartwright, Helen Baker, David Bechtold, Anne-Marie Walsh, Monique James, Admos Chimhowu, Tasleem Hanif, Amy Smith, Alex Hinchliffe, Richard Cotton, Rachel Miller, Beck Heslop, Ruth Whelan.

For Item 9 – Emma Stansfield

Apologies: Jon Pittman

1. MDCSG

i. Notes from the previous meetings

Received: notes from the May MDCSG meeting.

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

ii. Matters Arising

UKRI Submission Within the Funded Period

Noted:

- a. Communications have been circulated with limited formal feedback.
- b. Some feedback in HUMS led to further analysis of low submission rates and potential interventions e.g.
 - Financial interventions were discounted; focus to be on project scoping and support.
 - Annual reviews will include explicit consideration of submission within funded period.
 - Revised offer communications will remove references to longer completion timeframes.
- c. No substantive concerns were raised in FSE or FBMH.

iii. PDS Call – “Sensing the World”

Noted:

- a. Draft call developed with intention to move to a single cross-Faculty call.
 - b. Early timing identified as important to maximise engagement.
 - c. Alignment of timelines and closing dates across Faculties discussed.
- Agreed:** to align timelines across Faculties where possible. MJ to liaise with FSE and BMH
(ACTION – MJ).

2. Admissions Report

Noted:

- a. That there was an increase in applications across all Faculties.
- b. That there was an increase in home students, particularly in HUMS.
- c. That international demand remains strong.
- d. That Faculty DA admissions teams continues to experience capacity pressures.
- e. That clarification was required on the MDCSG reporting route (previously comments went to PRC).

Agreed: HB to confirm reporting route and provide narrative to share alongside data
(ACTION – HB)

3. Planning and Quality Assurance

i. Bicentenary Update Paper

Noted:

- a. Two versions of the Bicentenary Cohort 2 outcomes paper have been prepared for submission to Research Committee:
 - A full paper following the same format as the Cohort 1 report.
 - A shorter summary paper.
- b. Support was expressed for returning with a future evaluation paper to assess the initiative's outcomes.

Agreed

- a. Colleagues should provide any remaining comments or amendments to the Bicentenary Cohort 2 paper as soon as possible **(ACTION – DAS)**.
- b. The paper will be finalised and submitted to Research Committee once outstanding comments have been incorporated **(ACTION – HB)**.

ii. PGR M2035 Implementation Progress

Noted:

- a. A progress update is required for Research Committee.

Agreed:

- a. Members to complete any outstanding inputs on the shared document **(ACTION – ADs)**.
- b. Helen Baker to draft and submit final paper **(ACTION – HB)**.

4. Funding

i. Bid Updates

Noted:

- a. An MRC funding interview took place during the previous week and was reported to have gone well. Outcome expected by the end of the week
- b. Participation in the NERC call is progressing, with faculties being asked to contribute to the leverage package. Consideration is being given to how professional services support would be resourced should the bid be successful, noting the challenges associated with funding this from baseline resources. A query was raised as to whether there are any expectations for a contribution from FBMH to the NERC proposal, as no previous request had been received.

Agreed: Confirm whether the NERC bid includes any request or expectation for a contribution from FBMH **(ACTION – RW)**.

5. Progression and Assessment

No items

6. Researcher development, experience and wellbeing

i. PGR Festival

Noted:

- a. The PGR Festival will take place from 23–27 November and will replace the previous PGR Showcase format.
- b. The revised format responds to feedback that the Showcase sometimes duplicated faculty activity and provides greater opportunities for networking, community-building and social interaction across Doctoral Academies.
- c. The festival theme will be Connection, Community and Collaboration.

- d. The Festival will retain a keynote speaker element. Professor Sam Illingworth has been invited to deliver the keynote, drawing on his expertise in research communication and the use of AI in research. Discussions are ongoing regarding the specific focus and content of the keynote presentation, and there remains scope for stakeholders to provide input.
- e. A PGR summer BBQ will take place on 8 July, with all 200 available tickets allocated. The BBQ will be used as an opportunity to promote the festival, showcase planned activities and gather additional ideas from PGRs.
- f. Doctoral Academies are being consulted on any existing activities taking place during the festival period that could be incorporated into the festival programme.

Agreed: Include the PGR Festival in communications planning for the forthcoming academic year and explore opportunities for content creation and promotion in collaboration with the festival organisers (ACTION – GD).

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. Digital Credentials Policy

Noted:

- a. A Digital Credentials Working Group was established following a request from AQSC-TLS to develop a framework for the management and future expansion of digital credentials across the University.
- b. A Digital Credentials Subgroup of TLSC is proposed to provide institutional oversight, maintain a register of approved digital credentials and ensure consistency across the University.
- c. Where a digital credential relates to PGR activity, approval would be expected through MDCSG before submission to the Digital Credentials Subgroup, which will provide institutional oversight, maintain a register of approved digital credentials and ensure consistency across the University.
- d. Following approval of the policy, pilot activity is planned to test processes, workflows and data quality, with any lessons learned informing future revisions to the policy.
- e. The policy has been approved by TLSC and is currently progressing through the University's governance process, with Senate approval anticipated following consideration by the relevant committees.
- f. Discussion highlighted potential future applications within the PGR environment, including:
 - Researcher development programmes.
 - Professional development activities.
 - Co-curricular experiences.
 - Student representation roles.
 - Participation in activities such as the Three Minute Thesis competition or the PGR Festival.
 - Recognition associated with supervisor development and accreditation schemes.

Agreed:

- a. The Committee supported the Digital Credentials Policy and Procedure, subject to any minor comments or drafting amendments to be submitted directly to the policy lead or

AH following the meeting (**ACTION – MDCSG**).

ii. DASS Academic Advisor

Noted:

- a. DASS would like a named academic contact in each faculty that they could work with to support discussions relating to complex disability support cases.
- b. It was noted that the primary aim of the proposal is not necessarily to create a new role, but to identify an academic contact within each faculty who could:
 - Act as a liaison point for DASS.
 - Support consideration of cases that fall outside standard reasonable adjustments.
 - Provide faculty input on support plans and related issues.
 - Help develop consistency in the management and triage of complex cases.
- c. Faculties may already have existing roles into which these responsibilities could be incorporated, subject to local arrangements and capacity.
- d. It was recognised that faculty structures differ and that potential alignment with existing progression, completion, wellbeing or research culture roles would need to be considered locally. HUMS reported that the proposal aligns with recent governance developments and the creation of a dedicated PGR wellbeing leadership role.

Agreed:

- a. Further consultation and discussion to take place within faculties before any decision is made regarding implementation of the proposal.
- b. Circulate the draft role description to members for review and faculty consideration (**ACTION – AH**).
- c. Review the draft role description and provide feedback on the proposed role, its scope and how the responsibilities might align with existing faculty structures (**ACTION – FACS**).

10. Date of Next Meeting

Wed 22 July 2026, 11:00 – 13:00, Roscoe 3.1