Minutes for the 1st Meeting of the Group of PGR Reps for Science (GPRS)

Date: 13/08/2020   Time: 14:00 – 15:00   Location: Zoom

Attendees:		
Meeting Chair**:**	Hamad Rashed (HR)	Faculty PGR Rep. for Science (Chemistry)
Science PGR Reps:	Emma Campbell (EC)	Chemistry
	Ioana Vaduva (IV)	Mathematics & Statistics
	Sean Bommer (SB)	Institute of Photonics / Physics
	Lewis Hill (LH)	Physics (Chair of the DRG)
	Nicholas Klemm (NK)	Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences
Guest Attendees:	Allison Strachan (AS)	Joint Faculty PGR Rep. for Engineering
	David Bomark (DB)	Faculty PGR Rep. for HaSS
	Sherine Mohamed (SM)	Faculty PGR Rep. for SBS
Minute Taker:	Maisie Keogh	
Apologies:		
	Alana Horne	Physics
	Jordan Murray	Physics
	Mollie McFarlane	Physics
	Molly Keith-Baker	Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences
No engagement:		
	Daniel Awomukwu	Chemistry
	Najla Etaher	Computer & Information Sciences
	Diane Duffy	Computer & Information Sciences
	Rosemary Gaw	Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences
	Adil Abbasi	Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences

AGENDA

Item	Main Speaker	Time
1. Chair's welcome, and apologies	Hamad	(5 min)
2. Introductions / Meet and Greet	All	(5 min)
3. Group Terms of Reference Discussions (Paper 1)	Lewis	(20 min)
4. What should be improved from back to campus procedures?	All	(5 min)
5. What working practises should be retained?	All	(5 min)
6. How has your PGR Rep experience been? • How did you engage with your department? • Was the PGR Rep training adequate? • What do you feel was lacking?	All	(15 min)
7. Any other business? • Doctoral Peer-mentoring Program	All	(5 min)
8. Date of the next meeting • TBC (quarterly meeting? Mid-November 2020?)		
	Total time	(60 min)

Item 1	Chair's welcome, and apologies
	It was noted that there was no representation from Computer & Information Sciences. - LH explained briefly what the Doctoral Researcher's Group (DRG) is, where they fit into the University and how they work to the benefit of all PhD students on campus. - HR was introduced by LH who went on to thank the attendees and introduce himself and what his research project involves.
Item 2	Introductions / Meet and Greet
	- All attendees present then briefly introduced themselves and their role in the group in turn. They also spoke about what they hoped to gain from the meeting today. - EC praised the creation of the group and asked for further clarification on the role of the DRG in the university.
Item 3	Group Terms of Reference Discussions (Paper 1)
	- LH introduced the terms of reference by highlighting perhaps the lack of awareness of the DRG by the PGR community at Strathclyde. The DRG was formed in 2018 and there has been a push to bring awareness to not only the DRG but the Doctoral School as well. - Many of the 1st year PhD students are likely to be aware of the group as they spoke at the two Inductions in 2019/2020 and they held the DSMS (Doctoral School Multidisciplinary Symposium). - The DRG has been working to engage with more PGRs at Strathclyde and to raise awareness of the group and its activities and is something that is actively championed at the moment. - The paper submitted by LH is the proposed remits for the group and essentially what the purpose of the meetings are. It is very much a draft and is an open conversation and LH is open to suggestions and changes to the paper. - Point 1 – Constitution and Purpose – LH stressed that if the DRG is to work on behalf of PGRs then they need an open line of communication with all reps to ensure that all information is passed on to the relevant people and that appropriate actions are taken. He highlighted the name of the group – Group of PGR reps for Science – and asked if anyone had any suggestions for change – which no one did.

- Point 2 – Remit – LH read from the paper and explained where the various committees sit within the University and how they are run. He also explained what they do and how they are currently working to represent PGRs. He highlighted why it is so important to have everyone's view represented and stated that it was important that GPRS was a link in that chain of communication. He asked if anyone had any questions or comments about paragraph 2.1 of the remit – no one did.
- In paragraph 2.2 LH covered which representatives would be in attendance at these meetings.
- In Paragraph 2.3 LH discussed that if there is a departmental issue then it should be discussed and resolved in that specific department but through these meetings, if it is discovered that several departments within the faculty are having these same issues then the GPRS can discuss it further. The example given was the PhD pay issue that was resolved through cross department and faculty communication, this issue was finally resolved.
- LH then discussed the purposes of the group as highlighted with examples being given at the end of paragraph 2.3 and what potential topics of discussion could be had within the faculty.
- LH opened it up to the group for discussion and EC noted that there may be some confusion about what kind of issues should be resolved at the department level and what should be escalated to the faculty level and used the example of the PhD pay issue. In her department, that was resolved within that specific department and she raised the point of "How do these issues get acknowledged at the faculty level"?
- LH clarified that as departmental reps then the GPRS is a place to raise these issues for discussion and identification on how to proceed.
- AS agreed, commenting that these meetings are a place where if one rep voices that there is a problem within their department and it prompts other reps to speak out with similar experiences in their departments, then this can lead to changes at the faculty level. She used bench fees as an example. AS also raised the point that some departments are reluctant to change their policies and procedures unless it is communicated at the faculty or university level and this is why these meetings can be so valuable.
- LH moved onto the figure in paragraph 2.3 which was originally designed by AS which shows where the GPRS fits in with the other committees and where the DRG sits. LH went on to read paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5. He noted that he hadn't finished paragraph and noted that for further action.
- LH encouraged the group to comment on the draft over the coming weeks then he can prepare a final copy of the paper for circulation.
- LH moved on to section 3 -Function – LH thinks that quarterly meetings would work well, with the first meeting being held approximately a month

	into the new academic year. PGR reps get elected in October and a new generation will be coming in and then from that group, the faculty rep gets elected to represent by the group. LH noted there is nothing in the draft about the voting process, but he is open to clarifying that. AS agreed, that it could be decided at the rep meeting by majority vote. ○ LH moved onto section 4 – Composition – with the main question for the group being "Should there be faculty staff representation at the meetings?" for example one of the vice deans of the faculty. Pros and cons were highlighted such as having a direct link to a staff member who could be made aware of issues and work with the group to resolve then quickly but also that having staff at the meeting might make it less likely for honest opinions to be raised. LH asked for all comments on this to be sent to him by email after the meeting due to time restraints. ○ LH covered sections 5, 6 and 7 - reading from the paragraphs and no comments were raised by the group. In regard to section 7 – Quorum – he mentioned that this could be changed from one third of the total Reps to instead 50% of faculty departments having representation to ensure validity of the meetings. ○ LH concluded by asking for comments to be emailed to him and passed back over to the chair, HR.
Item 4	## What should be improved from back to campus procedures? ○ HR explained that a blended learning approach is being taken on campus and that there is more scope to work from home. He was keen to hear from the group about what improvements could be made to the process of returning back to campus. ○ LH commented that people are returning to campus on a tiered basis, but he was unsure whether people were being told on what tier they were on and when they would be returning to campus. ○ SB explained the 3-waves approach of returning to the university and how it has been working in the Institute of Photonics. He also said his department was looking to introduce a wave 1.5 before opening it up to the majority of researchers. SB said he can feedback to the group how these procedures works out in his department at the next meeting. ○ NK added that in SIPBS, he felt the process was a bit last minute (NOTE: NK had poor internet connection and so some of his points could not be heard clearly). He said that he has completed an online form indicating if he was fit to return. LH noted the different ways departments are choosing to handle returning to the university and highlighted that reps can write the head of department and ask for clarification.

	o EC noted that she felt the process of communicating return to the lab has been a bit last minute but reflecting on it, her Head of Department was sending out information as quickly as possible and her peers in the department are in agreement. o NK then re-clarified his previous comments and said that he felt that the information was coming out almost live.
Item 5	**What working practices should be retained?** o LH said that working from home has been nice to an extent and having that flexibility to work remotely would be beneficial. HR agreed and detailed how it works in the TIC. HR thought that working from home was good practice when it wasn't essential to be in the lab. o IV agreed with HR and from the perspective of math's students who don't have lab work to do, working from home has been good and her department is trying to keep this practice. o At this point LH noted he has to leave promptly at 3 and jumped ahead to the end of the agenda to point 7 – Any other business and discussed the doctoral peer-mentoring programme (which I have written under Item 7).
Item 6	**How has your PGR Rep experience been?** o HR returned to discussing the PGR Rep experience and introduced items 6.1-6.3.
Item 6.1	**How did you engage with your department?** o Item 6.1 was covered during Item 5 and the discussions on Item 6 started on Item 6.2
Item 6.2	**Was the PGR Rep training adequate?** o LH was interested in hearing about people's opinions on the training. He asked how many of the group had attended rep training this year. He said that they were looking to run training again in October and he wanted to hear if there was anything that the group felt could have been included in the training that wasn't.

	- HR raised the point of having the training via zoom as having this flexibility would be beneficial for a work/life balance and this point was echoed by IV who said he wasn't able to attend rep training due to scheduling conflicts and that having it online would be helpful. - Pre-recorded and online training was discussed, and both would be welcome. SB then raised that the university has mandatory training modules available to reps. LH then discussed that whilst it is supposed to be mandatory, in reality it isn't as if you couldn't attend the training then that department wouldn't have representation. It is a grey area. LH wanted to find out how to make the training more appealing. - HR mentioned that by preventing credit being attained or a certificate being generated until the training had actually been attended might encourage reps to show up and take part in the training. - AS mentioned, that if the training was faculty specific then this might be beneficial and that way different reps in the faculty could then meet each other. LH then suggested a shorter general training session with all PGR reps and then a longer session with other faculty specific reps with a degree of handover with the previous year's reps and the new generation of reps. - SM agreed with AS and discussed how this works currently in the business school. - SB then suggested an online module at the end of the training with a 'real-life scenario' where you have to describe what actions you would take and actually use the resources available to you as a rep to complete this. The group agreed this was an excellent suggestion. - LH then mentioned that the DRG is working with SPARQs next year and that they would be interested in hearing this – adding an online component to the training that can be completed in your own time and adds an interactive element to it. - SB said the university has a drama club that could help with acting out scenarios to help with the training.
Item 6.3	What do you feel was lacking?

	o This point was covered in Item 6.2
Item 7	**Any other business?** o LH introduced the Doctoral Peer-mentoring programme.
Item 7.1	**Doctoral Peer-mentoring Program** o LH discussed the doctoral school's planned implementation of the DRG initiative of pairing a final year student with a new first year PhD student. He highlighted that it is an important programme, in particular this year as perhaps lack of contact with others who would be working in the same office with you could lead to students feeling isolated. o The doctoral school are still in the fact-finding stages of development and LH agreed to send out details so that the group could leave feedback about the idea and what sort of training people might need to carry out mentoring effectively. o SM then added to this point by saying it would be a good idea to include 2nd and 3rd year PhD students. LH said he would forward SM the email so she can get in contact with Debbie Meikle to discuss this further.
Item 8	**Date of the next meeting** o HR introduced the point of when the next meeting should be held.
Item 8.1	**TBC (quarterly meeting? Mid-November 2020?)** o HR moved onto ask if November was a good time for the meeting. LH reiterated that the first meeting of the year should be when all the reps had been elected. So, a mid-November meeting would be best. SB echoed this, saying that the group should aim for every three months and then closer to the time a doodle-poll should be sent out to find the most convenient time for everyone. o SB then quickly went back to the point about allowing staff members to attend the GPRS meetings and said that he thinks that if a particular issue is

	raised then having a direct meeting with that staff member on that topic might be more beneficial.
	○ LH asked for all comments on the paper to be send to him directly. LH thanked the group for attending and noted the great representation present from the departments within the faculty.
	○ HR then concluded the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Discussed Papers

Paper 1:

Group of PGR Reps for Science (GPRS)

Terms of Reference DRAFT

1. CONSTITUTION AND PURPOSE
The establishment (or continuation in the case of HaSS + Engineering) of quarterly meetings between the newly created PGR Faculty Reps and the PGR Departmental Reps of each of their respective Faculties was requested by the, at time of writing, Chair of the Doctoral Researchers Group (DRG), Lewis Hill, in May 2020.   The GPRS has been established in order to recognise Faculty level problems and identify or advise on solutions, to discuss good PGR Rep working practise within the Faculty, and to ensure a robust line of communication from all PGRs across the Faculty to the Strathclyde Doctoral School Management Board (SDSMB).
2. REMIT

2.1 The Doctoral Researchers' Group's committee members sit on many of the university's management committees on behalf of the PGR community such as: the Strathclyde Doctoral School Management Board (SDSMB), the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), the Research Development Subcommittee (RDSC) and the Careers and Employability Working Group (CEWG). It is also called upon for short term groups such as the Operations and Business Continuity Team (OBCT) and various work streams feeding into the Return and Resume Development Group (RRDG). For all PGRs to have the opportunity for their voices to be heard, a strong chain of communication (Fig. 1) is required to ensure DRG representatives are informed and up to date.
 	
 In support of this, part of the remit of the Group of PGR Reps for Science is to:
     I.   Provide a link in the full communication chain between PGRs to SDSMB, specifically ensuring that the PGR Faculty Rep. is informed of the opinions of the various PGR Departmental Reps.
     II.   This chain should work both ways, with the PGR Faculty Rep. at times being called upon to disseminate information from the SDSMB or DRG to PGR Departmental Reps.

2.2 The PGR Faculty Rep. will attend the quarterly PGR Faculty Reps Meetings, comprising of all PGR Faculty Reps, the Chair and other committee members of the DRG, and SU and SDS representatives. The GPRS should advice the PGR Faculty Rep. on topics they wish to be raised at the University-level meeting.

2.3 The group should work to reveal issues or topics of debate which effect PGRs across the Faculty of Science. The group should then seek to understand these topics in finer details by seeking additional information from Faculty or University policy and try to identify and propose solutions. It may then be decided that the Faculty Rep. is asked to raise a specific topic with Faculty staff. This may include:
- Considering potential changes to infrastructure and systems currently in place to support PGRs.
- Identifying opportunities to increase PGR representation at a Faculty level.
- Identifying opportunities for departmental collaboration.
- Identifying ways to nurture a faculty-wide community.

Topics of conversation which relate to a specific Department within the Faculty are not within the remit of this group, however if it becomes apparent that such a topic is of importance to all, or many departments within the Faculty, then it may then fall under the group's remit.
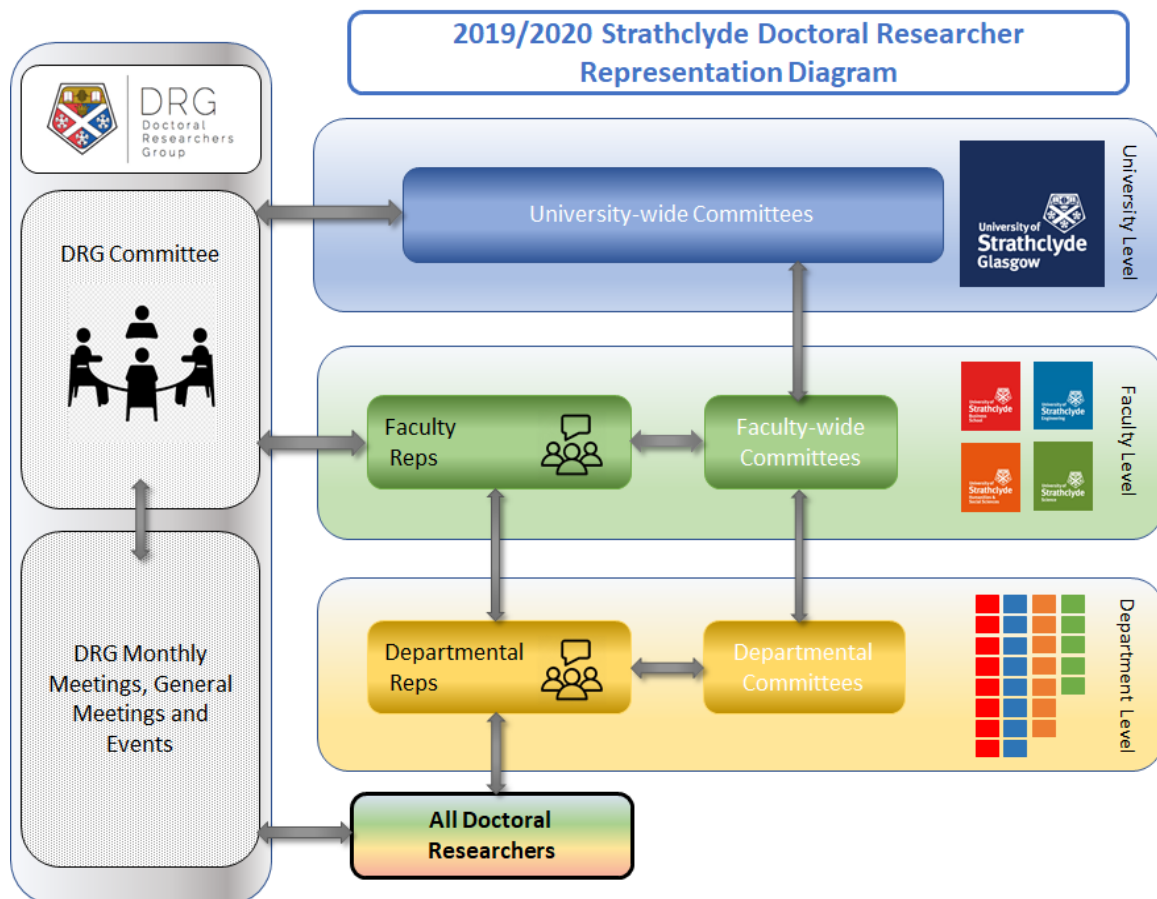

Figure 1: Current PGR Representation Structure at the University of Strathclyde.

2.4 The PGR Faculty Rep. may be asked to attend Faculty-level committees, in which case they should report back to this group on topics of importance and gather the relevant thoughts and opinions from other group members.

2.5 This group should act as a forum for sharing good practise on PGR representation from within various departments of the Faculty. This may include discussions on how to engage with PGRs of the various departments.

3. FUNCTION

GPRS meetings normally follow the pattern below*:
- Start of PGR academic Year (October/November). This meeting includes the election of the new PGR Faculty Rep. (who must come from this group and is elected by the members of this group), the reviewing of strategies and key priority tasks for the coming year, and discussions on changes to the Remit of the group.
- Mid-Year (January, April, July). Meetings dates should be fluid in order to allow for strategic timings, such as occurring a few weeks before SDSMB meetings.

    * Additional meetings may be necessary to respond to external events and/or special topics requiring strategic direction.

4. COMPOSITION

4.1 The composition and membership of the group is: the PGR Departmental Reps for the Faculty of Science (List of departments: Chemistry, Computer and Information Science, Mathematics & Statistics, Physics, Institute of Photonics, Institute of Pharmacy & Biomedical Sciences), Faculty staff representatives(?), and an invited minute taker. Other members may be co-opted for specialist topics or projects.

4.2 The group will maintain a record of attendance at each of its meetings and a minute and will include this information, which will subsequently be sent to PGRs of the Faculty.

5. REPORTING

5.1 **The PGR Faculty Rep. will report to the PGR Faculty Reps Meetings.**
5.2 **The PGR Faculty Rep. may be asked to join Faculty-level committees.**
5.3 **Minutes will be distributed to Members of the Group and PGRs of the Faculty electronically.**

6. FREQUENCY/FORMAT OF MEETINGS

6.1 **The group should meet at least four times per academic year, unless further meetings are deemed necessary.**
6.2 **Business may be conducted electronically as required.**

7. QUORUM

7.1 The quorum is one third of the Faculty's PGR Departmental Reps.

DATE – August 2020   Terms of Reference of Group of PGR Reps for Science (GPRS)