

**Graduate School Review  
College of Arts & Humanities  
29 May, 4 and 9 June 2025**

**Commendations and Recommendations**

**Commendations:**

- **Reflective Analysis and GSR documentation:**

The panel thanked the Graduate School (GS) for their time and the information provided in the GSR documentation. The level of reflection, clarity and recognition about the areas that aren't currently working at the desired standard was appreciated. It was acknowledged that in the recent period GS has gone through significant changes in staffing and leadership.

- **Current improvement plans and initiatives:**

The panel commended that there is significant work taking place to address some of the key areas and gaps in the College of Arts & Humanities (CoAH). The GS has a strong desire to improve and streamline processes, enhance student support, offer appropriate training and development opportunities and overall build robustness into the provision. The GSR is expected to contribute constructively by providing insight and support for the ongoing work.

- **PGR student focus:**

The GS places its students at the centre of their thinking and planning which illustrates the willingness to involve PGRs in the enhancement process. In the GSR student meeting, the panel observed that the students recognised the excellence of the academics as one of the main reasons they selected UofG to pursue their PGR studies.

- **GS Strategic Plan:**

The four central pillars in the Graduate School strategic plan indicates a clear direction and course of action which is underpinned by a strong partnership with the students, the academics and professional services colleagues. The Dean of Graduate Studies indicated that the GSR process would assist the GS in delivering its strategic plan by connecting the various elements and works being carried out at different levels.

- **Staff feedback:**

In the wider college staff meeting, the panel noted that academic and Professional Services staff commended the Graduate School team for their collegiality, approachability and ability to respond to queries from colleagues in a helpful and timely manner.

- **Strong leadership:**

PGR Directors expressed that they feel valued, empowered and supported in their role. The Dean of Graduate Studies is approachable and welcomes ideas and feedback and was commended for demonstrating strong leadership.

- **Graduate School Structure:**

PGR Directors expressed their support for the Graduate School Board that it is one of the most useful committees which is well-organised, functions productively and helpful to the staff in addressing issues.

CoAH has a dedicated MS Teams group which serves as a community of practice for all PGR admin staff across the college.

- **PGR numbers and funding:**

It was acknowledged that there is a decline in PGR internal and external funding opportunities. The GS currently has healthy PGR numbers with a significant percentage of self-funded students. All funded and self-funded students of Arts & Humanities are members of SGSAH. It serves as a central training hub and also offers a successful internship program for which all students are eligible to apply. The panel noted that the GS is looking at ways to formalise the fee waiver system and make it a more visible part of the offers to PGRs.

- **PGR Community building:**

The panel commended on the GS's initiative and appointing Community Building interns, who are PGR students. They will play a significant role in improving communication, designing provisions appropriate for PGRs and enhancing their experience.

## **Recommendations:**

- **Harmonisation and Community of Practice**

The panel appreciated that the PGR Directors actively participate in the Graduate School Board, however, this platform could also be used to share good practice amongst the schools and recognise and address the gaps.

There are duplications of processes and there is some degree of inconsistency and lack of clarity which can cause unnecessary workload and render knowledge gap across the college. It has been observed that there is a devolved structure and line management. The panel acknowledged that the GS is conducting a "Process Design Review" to look at variations in practice between schools and how their processes map onto GS operations and aim to develop robust and universal processes. It is recommended that the GS evaluate and implements a structure which is centrally managed and locally delivered and is incorporated effectively in the Process Design Review. This would bring in more clarity, promote a shared point of direction and avoid single point failures. The GS team should build wider collaboration in the university for their implementation and would receive institutional support for their initiatives as appropriate.

- **PGR communication**

PGR students, who attended the GSR meeting, expressed that they are inundated with information and lose clarity of what is important and relevant to them. The panel noted that

the GS is working to bring alignment in dissemination of information by school and college to PGRs. The migration from Moodle to a central SharePoint site is part of this work which will provide a single source of information. CoAH PGR newsletter is a dynamic resource providing a comprehensive account of news, opportunities and activities. The onboarding document for PGRs, provides comprehensive guidance, information on support and relevant contacts. However, it was noted that a school produced a supplementary guidance to help fill the gap in the college level communication and guidance. The new desk-space policy is recognised as a good initiative but requires the GS to bring wider awareness amongst students.

The panel recommended that graduate school undertakes a comprehensive review and mapping exercise, and clearly identify areas that require homogenisation at university, graduate school and school level if a disciplinary context is required.

- **PGR applications**

It was noted that the assessment of student applications is generally devolved. Schools implement different approaches to the student recruitment process. The panel suggested the GS to take a comprehensive view of the assessment process and evaluate if interviewing applicants should be a standard practice across the college.

- **Annual Progress Review (APR)**

Students broadly find APR as a useful process. The administrative guidelines are in place but students at times are unsure about the process and expectations. There is also a gap in supervisors' understanding about the outcomes of the APR process. The Graduate School is recommended to review the APR process and bring clarity for staff and students and a degree of standardisation to have a robust and constructive process.

The APR process should not only be used to review progress and but also to discuss development. It should provide a systematic approach to the Training Needs Analysis (TNA). CoAH can draw on the practice of the other UofG GSs who have TNA incorporated in their APR process.

- **Student diversity:**

The panel discussed that the composition of the student body is changing. It was felt that there isn't a strong recognition of how to create a diverse student cohort and an inclusive environment to support diversity. Students have various backgrounds and circumstances, and diversity is now a norm rather than an exception. Supervisors may not fully understand the non-academic needs, support and reasonable adjustments for students such as with disabilities, caring responsibilities, balancing employment with part-time studies etc. The panel noted a good practice in MVLS. Their GS offers a scenario-based training for supervisors which allows them to understand and deal with various situations. It is recommended that CoAH review their training offer to supervisors and identify the obstacles and gaps in facilitating an inclusive environment for students to thrive.

In addition, a focus group organised for part-time students to learn their experience and needs would be very beneficial to device the provisions appropriately.

- **Student engagement opportunities:**

Students expressed that APR allows them to present and discuss their work and further plans and objectives however they would be like to participate in more scholarly discussions in the university. The GS is recommended to look into providing more opportunities for the students to engage in academic discussions.

- **Student wellbeing support**

CoAH does not have a dedicated local Student Support Officer (SSO) for PGRs which is observed as unfavourable. The well-being support is provided inconsistently across the college. GS is suggested to review the well-being support structure understanding the resource constraints.

- **Supervision**

Supervisors feel valued by their students and colleagues. However, PGR students don't always contribute to the academic staff's own research. They rather assist in balancing the undergraduate teaching workload. Supervisors expressed that the PGR supervision is not fairly reflected in their workload.

The panel noted that CoAH is rolling out a new workload framework which would include PGR supervision hours, APRs etc. This will bring in a consistent approach across the college.

- **Graduate Teaching Assistants**

GTA work sits within the College's learning and teaching remit, therefore, the Graduate School doesn't have a direct control over GTA recruitment and teaching allocation as it is managed at School level. There is a hybrid practice with respect to oversight and governance across the college. It was noted that the CoAH is in a transition phase and will be led by institutional level decision about Graduate Schools' role.