**PGR Experience Event Report**

22nd June 2017

RSIO

The following report details the main discussion points and suggestions recorded at the above event held on 22/06/2017 by RSIO at the Charles Wilson Building, University of Glasgow. There was enthusiastic participation from colleagues across the University willing to share their experiences and offer meaningful suggestions to improve the lives of our PGR students.

Kezia Falconer, from DAO, wishes to signpost [The Network](http://www.theglasgownetwork.co.uk) to all delegates and persons interested in PGR development. For more information on the site you can email Kezia: [Kezia.falconer@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Kezia.falconer@glasgow.ac.uk).

**Delegates**

Approximately 50-60 delegates attended on the day. There was a strong turnout from professional services with many colleagues placed within Schools or central services and a moderate representation of PGR students. There were very few academic staff, unfortunately, and very few PGR Convenors. RSIO will work with Graduate Schools to try and understand this level of attendance which could be attributed to timing or topics discussed.

**Discussion**

Areas of the PGR Experience discussed:

* Supervisors;
* Physical Space;
* Online Communities;
* Centralised Communities;
* Building Academic Identities for PGRs;
* PGR Engagement & Representation;
* Researcher Development.

Below are some selected suggestions that were made on the day for each discussion point:

* Supervisors
  + Supervisors must be in support of development opportunities for PGRs and aware of services that can help PGR students. Robust and improved training of supervisors should take place to deal with student well-being issues (including if a student wants to leave) - possible sanctions imposed for not attending.
* Physical Space
  + Sport services wish to carry out further research on PGR engagement in sport and use of the Stevenson Building;
  + Research into how PGRs use space on campus and discussions with Estates to find out what provisions and facilities (if any) they have for PGR students;
  + **New space for PGR students: Reading Room at Hunterian.** Students can contact [Ruth Fletcher](mailto:ruth.fletcher@glasgow.ac.uk) to find out more about utilising this space.
  + The recent PRES results tell us that PGR students are generally dissatisfied with the provision of social space.
* Online Communities
  + Schools should continue to encourage students to develop their own online presence. As one delegate remarked: “My online community is an extension of my research identity.”
  + Schools should continue to promote the [PGR Development Blog](http://researcherdevelopment.academicblogs.co.uk/) to students and staff. It provides an honest and varied account of PGR life discussing topical issues and personal accounts of experiences felt at Glasgow, whilst signposting help and support networks. The blog welcomes guest posts so please [get in touch](http://researcherdevelopment.academicblogs.co.uk/contact/) if you have an idea for a post;
  + Can [The Network](http://www.theglasgownetwork.co.uk) be used more effectively as an online community?
* Centralised Communities
  + A common misunderstanding of the PGR student impacts the accessibility of a centralised community for many PGRs: especially out of their subject areas;
  + Collate names of centralised PGR communities pocketed across the University so staff can suggest places to go for sense of community.
* Building Academic Identities for PGRs
  + Could we set up a GTA/PGR opportunities hub to mirror the Internship Hub?
  + Should we have the introduction of competencies at each level/year of study - to define identity for the PGR student?  
    **Note**: most Graduate Schools already make use of the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, which outlines the skills, behaviours and attributes of researchers at each career stage. This is highlighted to students at induction, used to signpost to training opportunities and included as part of formal documents for progress review. However, it’s unclear whether supervisors are aware of it or if these documents are discussed during progress review.
* PGR Engagement & Representation
  + All staff should be aware of the services the International Office provide to incoming International PGRs through Orientation (dealing with bank accounts and accommodation). SRC also run [PAVS](https://www.glasgowstudent.net/news/private-accommodation-viewing-service/) to help students find accommodation;
  + Are there sufficient support services running outside of UG calendar (summer months?
* Researcher Development
  + Could we be encouraging PGR Volunteering: stronger partnerships through SRC?
  + Are we analysing attendance at workshops and how best to make use of those with spaces?
  + Supervisor training must include the support of PGR Development (training inconsistent across Grad Schools and Colleges).

**Points to take away**

* **Who is the PGR Student?**

A common thread felt throughout the event was a **universal misunderstanding of who the PGR student is** and what their experience consists of. PGRs constitute a large and important part of the Glasgow community and an understanding of this large cohort is essential in improving the PGR experience.

Actions

* RSIO are going to work on developing some material to showcase PGR students to the wider University community and will continue to promote the PGR Development Blog as far as possible.   
  If you work in a service that interacts with PGRs (or has little interaction) can you try and educate your colleagues in an upcoming staff meeting?
* We would like **you** to organise a weekly PGR lunchtime walk or coffee morning in your School (inviting members of University Services you may work with) to talk to PGRs and invite them to be more involved in your communities. If you are a student, can you organise some tea and cake in your area with colleagues?
* **Centralised information system**

Many people thought that there needs to be a central area of information for both staff and students with PGR information.

Actions

* Sian, who is working in RSIO over the next few months will be looking at the PGR Development website and improving links and information. Inter-disciplinary events and content could be featured;
* Graduate Schools must ensure their websites are up to date for their PGR community.
* **Supervisor training**

There was a strong feeling amongst many of the delegates that there needed to be a review of supervisor training to include mental well-being of students and signposting to development opportunities.

Actions

* RSIO are going to review how these areas are incorporated into current Supervisor training and seek to improve these aspects.

RSIO welcome any further discussion on any of the points raised and contact details can be found below:

Mary Beth Kneafsey: [MaryBeth.Kneafsey@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:MaryBeth.Kneafsey@glasgow.ac.uk)

Elizabeth Adams: [Elizabeth.Adams@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Elizabeth.Adams@glasgow.ac.uk)

Sian Collins: [Sian.Collins@Glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Sian.Collins@Glasgow.ac.uk)