

**Graduate School Review – College of Arts  
8 May 2014, Kelvin Meeting Room  
Number 11, The Square**

**Panel Members:**

Professor Steve Beaumont	University of Glasgow	Convenor
Professor Frank Finlay	University of Leeds	External Panel Member
Professor Richard Berry	University of Glasgow	Internal Panel Member
Professor Nicholas Jonsson	University of Glasgow	Senate Assessor
Ariel Xu	University of Glasgow	Student Panel Member
Mary Beth Kneafsey	University of Glasgow	Clerk to Panel

**Review Meeting Attendance:**

***Key Staff Meeting***

Name	School	Role
Dr. Heather Walton	School of Critical Studies	Senior Lecturer (Theology and Religious Studies)
Dr. Kenny Brophy	School of Humanities	Deputy Dean of Graduate Studies
Dr. Penny Morris	School of Modern Languages and Cultures	Senior Lecturer (Italian)
Dr. David Archibald	School of Culture and Creative Arts	Lecturer (Theatre, Film and Television Studies)
Adeline Callander	Graduate School	Graduate School Administrator
Dr. Barbara Burns	Graduate School	Dean of Graduate Studies

***Student Meeting***

Name	School	Year of Study
Abigail Boucher	School of Critical Studies	2
Rebecca DeWald	School of Critical Studies	Part time, final year
Calum Rodger	School of Critical Studies	3
Hannah Tweed	School of Critical Studies	Submitted, pending viva
Rosemary Spooner	School of Culture and Creative Arts	2
David Cochran-Yu	School of Humanities	3
Emily Ryder	School of Modern Languages and Cultures	2

### ***Supervisor Meeting***

Name	School	Role
Dr. Marc Alexander	School of Critical Studies	Lecturer in English Language
Dr. Rhona Brown	School of Critical Studies	Lecturer (Scottish Literature)
Dr. Rob Maslen	School of Critical Studies	Senior Lecturer (English Literature)
Dr. Debbie Lewer	School of Culture and Creative Arts	Senior Lecturer in History of Art (History of Art)
Dr. Vicky Price	School of Culture and Creative Arts	Lecturer in Theatre Studies (Theatre, Film and Television Studies)
Prof Lynn Abrams	School of Humanities	Chair of Modern History (History)
Dr. Chris Dalglish	School of Humanities	Lecturer (Archaeology)
Dr. Steve Marritt	School of Humanities	Lecturer (History)
Dr. Costas Panayotakis	School of Humanities	Reader (Classics)
Ms. Adele Redhead	School of Humanities	Deputy Course Director (Humanities Advanced Technology and Information Institute)
Dr. Don Spaeth	School of Humanities	Senior Lecturer (History)
Dr. Eanna O'Cellachain	School of Modern Languages and Cultures	Senior Lecturer (Italian)

### ***Final Review Meeting***

Name	School	Role
Dr. Barbara Burns	Graduate School	Dean of Graduate Studies
Adeline Callander	Graduate School	Graduate School Administrator
Professor Murray Pittock	College of Social Sciences	Head of College

### **Purpose of the Review**

All higher education institutions in the UK are individually responsible for the quality of their educational provision. However, to help ensure that quality is maintained and enhanced throughout the sector, the Scottish Funding Council, through the sector's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), has developed and recommended a Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) for use by all institutions. This includes:

- institutional responsibility for quality, incorporating institution-led/self-evaluation and review;
- external review by QAA in the Scottish University sector – Enhancement-led institution review (ELIR);
- student engagement in quality arrangements;
- information for stakeholders and the public on quality; and

- the promotion of enhancement, for example through thematic approaches in university strategies.

All elements of the QEF are interdependent as one process closely relates to and is referred to by other processes within the Framework.

The purpose and benefit of an internal graduate school review is threefold:

- to provide an opportunity for the University to evaluate its provision, the processes it uses to support its students and the resources available to ensure that provision is of a consistently high quality across the institution;
- to build the case for investment and institutional change to support postgraduate research; and
- to enable the University to provide evidence of the high quality of its postgraduate research provision when required.

The operation of a system of institutional self-evaluation and review demonstrates the University's commitment to quality to students, external reviewers and other relevant stakeholders.

The Graduate School Review process provides a formal opportunity for a Graduate School to reflect on and critically evaluate its PGR provision and to benefit from a constructive dialogue with senior academics from outwith the College. It is intended to be a positive and constructive activity, supporting Graduate Schools in the enhancement of their provision; it is not punitive or intended to be confrontational.

The Graduate School Review refers to the University's Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees (<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/>) which is based on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and in particular Chapter B11: Research Degrees. It covers the following aspects of postgraduate research provision within each Graduate School:

- academic assessment standards for postgraduate research;
- structure to support PGR provision both academic and administrative (e.g. staff structure, procedures and policies specific to the Graduate School); and
- how the Graduate School ensures and enhances the quality of PGR provision.

### ***Aims of the Graduate School Review Process***

The aims of the review are to provide support to the Graduate School in enhancing its postgraduate research provision through:

- an evaluation of:
  - the relevance of research, for which PGR supervision is provided, to the overall aims of the Graduate School;
  - the currency and validity of the research supported in terms of developing knowledge within the discipline, the application of that knowledge in practice, advancement of high quality research, and developing well qualified and well prepared researchers;
  - the effectiveness of supervision and assessment methods in meeting the intended outcomes for the Graduate School's postgraduate research provision;
  - the correlation of provision with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the requirements of external regulators and funders;

- the effectiveness of the measures in place to assure the quality of provision and maintain standards; and
- recent and proposed enhancements to the quality of provision.
- a discussion with Graduate School and relevant staff, students and stakeholders on:
  - the quality of postgraduate research provision, facilities, equipment and resources;
  - the Graduate School’s approach to enhancement of provision including recent developments and future plans;
  - the quality of the postgraduate researcher experience and ways in which it might be enhanced; and
  - ways of promoting postgraduate researchers’ effective achievement of their research degrees.

### Introduction to the Review

Prior to the restructure of the University in 2010, the former Faculty of Arts was reviewed in 2009 in the first Graduate School Review to take place at Glasgow. While the overall composition of the Faculty and College are essentially the same, the internal structure was changed with a smaller number of Schools made up out of the previous Departments and a Graduate School with a renewed remit for supporting students.

Currently the staff composition of the Graduate School is: the Dean of Graduate Studies (DoGS) (Dr. Barbara Burns), the Graduate School Administrator (GSA) (Mrs. Adeline Callander), and 1.5 FTE for administrative support. Moreover, there is a Deputy Dean post as well as Postgraduate Convenors and Postgraduate Administrators in the Schools which work closely with the Graduate School. The Schools which comprise the College of Arts are, listed with their subject areas and research centres:

School of Critical Studies	School of Culture and Creative Arts	School of Humanities	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
English Language	Cultural Policy	Archaeology	Comparative Literature
English Literature	Film & TV Studies	Celtic & Gaelic	French
Scottish Literature	History of Art	Classics	German
Theology and Religious Studies	Music	History	Hispanic Studies
Centre for Robert Burns Studies	Theatre Studies	Humanities Advanced Technology and information Institute (HATII)	Italian
Medical Humanities Research Centre	Centre for Cultural Policy Research	Philosophy	Russian
	Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History	Centre for Battlefield and Conflict Archaeology	The Stirling Maxwell Centre
		Centre for Gender History	

School of Critical Studies	School of Culture and Creative Arts	School of Humanities	School of Modern Languages and Cultures
		Centre for Scottish and Celtic Studies	
		Centre for the Study of Perceptual Experience	
		Scottish Centre for War Studies	

Briefly, the number of students in the Graduate School is as follows for 2012/2013 and 2013/2014:

### Student Numbers 12/13 and 13/14 by Study Load

Study Load	Masters 12/13	PhD 12/13	Total 12/13	Masters 13/14	PhD 13/14	Total 13/14
Full Time	26	196	222	31	198	229
Part Time	18	107	125	17	113	130
Thesis Pending	15	122	137	7	91	98
Total	59	425	484	55	402	457

### Student Numbers 12/13 and 13/14 by Residence Status

Residence Status	Masters 13/14	PhD 13/14	Totals	Masters 12/13	PhD 12/13	Totals
Home/EU	48	323	371	47	341	388
International	6	77	83	12	82	94
Rest of UK	1	2	3	0	2	2
Totals	55	402	457	59	425	484

### Graduate Studies Strategy Update 2014

The Review Submission (Self Evaluation Questionnaire [SEQ]) described the journey of the Graduate School in developing their strategy since the last review in 2009 as being focused on the quality of supervision arrangements, skills training and interdisciplinary opportunities *'in order to maximise the potential of the PGR experience and equip our graduates to lead the agenda in whatever context they choose to develop a career'*. The SEQ also contained a summary of their current strategy, which is set out in the paragraphs below.

#### ***Vision***

Graduate Studies in the College of Arts contributes to the University's *2020 Global Vision*: 'We aim to attract academically talented students from around the world, providing an

intellectually demanding, research-informed education that prepares students for lifelong learning and provides the means for them to contribute as global citizens.’

## **Delivery**

### *1. PGR: A World-Leading Graduate School*

The remit of the Graduate School is threefold:

- Student support (including Skills Development workshops and disbursement of awards for research support and collaborative training initiatives);
- Quality assurance (including approval of all new or major changes to PGT programmes and courses and review of Annual Programme Reports);
- Administrative functions (including scholarships, PGR Annual Progress Review, PGR examination, Moodle resources).

Key initiatives will focus on up-skilling our research students in **public engagement** and **knowledge exchange** through schemes such as the Hunterian Associates Programme, increasing use of the resources of **Glasgow Life**, and **student mobility initiatives** which draw down existing and developing Framework agreements. College **internships** will provide PGR students with experience across a range of research, teaching and administrative activities, and Researcher Development Funding will offer additional opportunities for **transferable skills training**.

The newly founded Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities, serving PGR students across Scotland, but with its administrative base at Glasgow, will enable our students to access new training opportunities and benefit from partnership working with more than 30 non-HEIs from across a range of sectors.

### *2. PGT Courses: Review, Enhance, Develop, Withdraw*

The College will offer relevant and high-quality learning opportunities for students from around the world, through ongoing review, enhancement and development of our PGT portfolio. It will support staff in creating courses that are **collaborative**, feature **unique selling points**, and have a focus on **employability**, and will work to help staff engage effectively in **conversion activity** as a crucial element of the recruitment process.

Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programme and course content</li> <li>• programme cost/income</li> <li>• marketing, recruitment and conversion activity</li> </ul>
Enhance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• create meaningful ‘learning for work’ opportunities (e.g. through internships, master-classes and other employability initiatives)</li> <li>• refresh courses through new materials, industry contacts/networks, imaginative modes of delivery and assessment</li> </ul>
Develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop internationally attractive, timely and collaborative programmes, drawing on cross-School or cross-College expertise</li> <li>• work strategically with the College’s research themes</li> <li>• focus on unique selling points</li> </ul>
Withdraw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• programmes that have little recruitment potential</li> <li>• courses that persistently have fewer than 6 students enrolled.</li> </ul>

## Structure of the Review

The Panel's initial comments were very positive, noting that continued progress in the Graduate School was palpable since the 2009 Review, and that their efforts to develop and improve were clearly sustained through the restructure of the University. The process of consultation with staff and students undertaken by the Graduate School to produce the SEQ was also commended by the Panel. The Convenor further noted evidence of coherent and strategic thinking in the SEQ and that there seems to have been quite a pragmatic approach to growth. Nonetheless, perhaps with the focus on the development of the Scottish Graduate School in the Arts and Humanities and the resultant changes on the horizon, the panel felt that there was further work to do to identify specific areas to work on in relation to barriers to recruitment.

The DoGS was keen to highlight the success of the Graduate School in their successful AHRC bid in the BGP2 round to secure the funding for the Doctoral Training Partnership (£14.2 million) and the Scottish Funding Council (£1.8 Million) for the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Humanities (SGSAH). The bid was led by Glasgow and the SGSAH will be based in and run from Glasgow with a new team of staff set up to act as a directorate for the School. This review, it was felt, comes at an opportune moment for Graduate School as the new SGSAH has the potential to change the landscape in Scotland for the arts and humanities, in terms of funding as well as in terms of skills development. Scottish institutions will need to become less inward looking and more focused on developing collaboration, interdisciplinarity, and shared supervision of students. Further, partnership with a number of external organisations will be enhanced through their support of and involvement with the SGSAH.

Broadly, the Panel wanted to cover the following during the Review:

1. How well developed are the strategic aims of the Graduate School / College?
  - What are their plans for developing their recruitment practices and growth in PhD numbers? What are the constraints and/or barriers?
  - Is there a well-developed sense of what their areas of research strength and research priorities are? Are they playing to their strengths sufficiently or is there untapped potential in some areas?
2. Operational matters:
  - Is it clear what the boundaries of responsibilities are between the schools and the Graduate School?
  - Are processes sufficiently harmonised and do students have a sense of how to navigate these?
  - What are the existing feedback loops and how is good practice disseminated?
  - How are they handling and continuing to improve space management issues?
  - Some staff seem to be supervising too many students. How will this be addressed?
  - How does the Graduate School plan to develop their researcher training programme?
3. To what extent do students feel like they 'belong' to a Graduate School? This wasn't perceived as an issue in the College of Arts in particular. However, this has been a matter

arising broadly in other Reviews and one that the Convenor wished to monitor, in particular in the first post-restructure Reviews of each of the Graduate Schools.

## **Summary of Discussions**

### ***Strategy***

It was noted that the landscape for Arts and Humanities research is shifting due to the AHRC focus on Doctoral Training Partnerships and the implementation of the SSGAH. This will provide significant funding for research students funding as well enhanced opportunities for skills development. Further, as the SGSAH is Scotland wide, institutions that take part will need to be less inward looking and more focused on developing collaborations and interdisciplinarity. Staff noted that this is already happening and they have had to be thinking about developing research partnerships and developing opportunities for students to engage outside the University for some time. It is clear that staff feel that students can benefit from having a sense that their research is meaningful to wider society.

The External Panel Member queried their approach to developing partnerships and whether this was seen as a unique selling point for Glasgow. Staff did not seem to think that there was a specific strategy or any overarching management of the development of partnerships but rather that this is a trend that has been developing and from which certain themes were emerging. Specific mention was made of the 'public humanities' and work being done around cultural heritage, partnerships with Glasgow Life, and projects such as 'Cultural Artefacts, Buildings, Landscapes and Environments: Scotland (CABLES)' workshops, which was funded by AHRC. It was noted that these partnerships tended to be based on personal relationships but that the Graduate School was broadly supportive in their development.

### ***Research Strengths and Priorities***

As part of the discussion on strategy, the Panel explored what research strengths and priorities were developing within the College; whether staff had a sense of what these were and the extent to which their development was intentional. The DoGS was clear that she was thinking about the PhD broadly as a programme of skills development, including knowledge exchange, public engagement, careers and employability. It was further noted that the top 5 subjects for recruitment were English Literature, History, Archaeology, English Language, and Theology and that they have the critical mass for development and capacity in terms of staff and ability to develop training. Staff felt that Glasgow itself as a city is a great draw for students as well as a rich vein to mine for partnerships and engagement activity.

All staff are encouraged to think about interdisciplinarity but it was noted that staff can be cautious and feel out of their comfort zone. There are efforts to try to shift the culture so that staff are more used to and able to think this way, for example encouraging applications to the Kelvin Smith scholarships which focus on building new and interdisciplinary collaborations between staff. Examples of budding areas of interdisciplinarity in the College are textile conservation, the concept of 'landscape' in the Humanities and medical humanities. The Convenor noted that these priorities or developments weren't evident in the strategy reflected in the SEQ document. The DoGS confirmed that much of the focus in the past couple of years has been on the bid for and development of the SGSAH.



The Panel queried, however, whether there were any missed opportunities for a more strategic approach or barriers to this type of development. A barrier for staff is the level of resource that they have to work with to attract partners and build relationships with them that give some value back to the partners. Related to this, if there is funding for a particular project and a relationship is developing with a partner, when that project's funding runs out, there is unlikely to be another source of funding to continue working with the partner to develop further funding bids. An additional barrier is also that staff are engaged personally with partners and students but that there has not really been an opportunity to gather information about activities at a higher level. Staff in different areas may be working with the same partner organisations without realising it and losing potential synergies from working together. It was acknowledged that these are difficult to address but that some support from the Graduate School in these areas might be of benefit. Several staff suggested that an analysis of documentation produced for the REF might highlight where some links or trends are that are not evident on the ground.

### ***Recruitment***

The discussions about strategy turned to student recruitment. Colleagues underscored the importance for the College of converting PGT students into PGR students and the efforts that were made to keep their best students and encourage them onto PhD programmes. They noted for example that there were efforts in several Schools to get both student groups to mix at events such as symposia and to get PGT students to think of their project work more as research and less of an assignment.

The College has a large number of PGT programmes which they referred to as serving as something of a 'shop window' showcasing their research activities and strengths. They acknowledged that there were a large number of programmes but highlighted that a number of courses were used as electives on more than one programme, reducing the proliferation of individual courses. Staff noted as well that new programmes, in areas such as translation studies, and research centres, such as that in gender history, are expected to develop further and support additional recruitment. However, they also reiterated their concerns about growing too quickly or finding that student numbers had outstripped the ability of staff to support them effectively.

It was also noted, however, that there is very little in the way of funding for postgraduate programmes. Students are encouraged to start their PhDs and fund themselves but apply for funding opportunities along the way. It was acknowledged that this is risky as there may not be funding available.

The other side of the recruitment issue, however, is that staff were a bit worried that the PGT (and subsequently PGR) numbers would grow too rapidly and become unmanageable and that there would be insufficient staff numbers to support them. The physical space issues faced by the College were highlighted here as well – students need not just office space, which is at a premium, but may also need studio, practice or performance spaces.

The College has recently appointed a new post-holder in the Recruitment Conversion and Marketing Officer (RCMO) role. The plan is that she will look more strategically at how to grow and at ways to positively influence recruitment. However, the Head of College noted that there are resources issues at play here as there is little central resource for marketing.

The RCMO is a single post with a broad responsibility for recruitment for all student careers and can't possibly focus on as many aspects of marketing and recruitment as would be ideal for the College. The Head of College also suggested that senior management support for providing more resource in this area might be fruitful.

Staff noted that it is easier to advertise for PGT programmes but that PGR recruitment is more closely linked with personal contacts and meeting prospective students at events or conferences. The DoGS also added that staff need to think strategically about how to use their time travelling to fly the flag for Glasgow, for example by carrying brochures with them to give to prospective students.

Staff agreed that there was insufficient tracking and communication with former graduates in order to use their success stories in recruitment efforts. This was mainly due to time pressures for staff and a lack of administrative support to source and collate this information. This may be an area which the RCMO can investigate.

The Panel asked students in their session why they came to Glasgow: these included

- geographical reasons, either for research (e.g. access to a location or resource) or proximity to family;
- previously did a degree at Glasgow and wanted to stay or return here;
- university rankings;
- excellent word of mouth from current and former students;
- availability of funding.

The Panel queried how the Graduate School used their scholarships funding to increase PGR numbers and if there was a strategy being employed or targets to meet. The DoGS confirmed that funding varied from year to year and that it was limited because of their commitment in the context of the AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership to co-fund a number of scholarships each year. This year, they were able to fund 20 internships with the College, committing £250k of their existing scholarship funding to this. These internships offer a variety of experience to students with the focus of their activity changing each year, supporting projects in teaching, research and/or administration. These internships are also open to international students who have many fewer opportunities to secure funding.

### **Operations**

The Panel wished to explore the more functional / operational side of the Graduate School's activities. This included trying to ascertain what was handled by the Graduate School and how this differed from what Schools were responsible for – and the extent to which students understood this and knew where to go to resolve issues. The discussion raised some issues that were apparent from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), especially as School level scores were noticeably lower in some areas, as well as issues highlighted within the SEQ itself. The division of responsibilities is of interest to the Panel, across all of the Graduate Schools within the University, as they are still in their initial phases of development in the post-restructure period.

With regard to the variability in the PRES results at School level, the DoGS has been meeting with particular schools to try to identify where the issues are. Students were

included in meetings about this as well to explore their views. In some cases, a clear reason hasn't emerged why scores are a bit lower in some areas. In addition to the action plan produced at Graduate School level, each School is asked to produce an action plan in response to the results and submit this to the Graduate School.

### ***Graduate School Administration***

The Graduate School Administrator shared her reflections with the Panel, noting that the key challenges were the changing funding and training landscapes for arts and humanities, for example the way AHRC funding has changed to the DTP, and making sure that there is enough resource in their team to support the variety of processes that are necessary. Administration had previously been more fragmented but there now is a core central team in the Graduate School, led by the GSA. Additionally, the Graduate School has reviewed and will continue to review administrative practices in order to improve the support provided for students.

Staff highlighted that the different type of learning and different demands on research students, such as for public engagement and internship-type activities, requires more administrative support and this should be acknowledged. Colleagues also re-iterated the limiting factors on their growth, both in terms of human resources and in terms of physical resource.

### ***Feedback***

The Panel picked up on issues around feedback provided to students. The DoGS stressed that the general standard is that students should meet with supervisors every 3-4 weeks and get feedback within 3 weeks of their meetings. Supervisors were encouraged to complete the Record of Postgraduate Supervision Form as a formal record of the supervision meeting. This was not mandatory but, where it was not used, colleagues were expected to use other appropriate means of maintaining a record of meetings. Records were not filed centrally at College level and how these were filed varied across Schools.

The feedback from the student session was that those in attendance were all happy with the level of support and the feedback that they got from their supervisors. They all confirmed that they received written feedback. The only dissenting voice was a student who noted that they had a second supervisor in another discipline and this hadn't proved to be as useful a relationship as that with the 'home' subject supervisor.

Students should also be discussing their development needs with their supervisors. Interestingly, most students didn't feel that they had much discussion of this with their supervisors. Staff, however, reported that they did discuss this with students and fairly frequently. Each group, staff and students, was just a small sample so no conclusions can be drawn about this.

In the same vein, the Panel queried the process for the Annual Progress Review (APR). Staff feel that this process works well, is reflective and useful to students and allows staff to pick on any issues with students at an early stage. The current process has grown up out of good practice from around the College and the Graduate School has worked to streamline the process to minimise the bureaucracy. Students having noted that supervisors didn't, in their opinion, stress training and development opportunities, did feel that the progress review

form provided them with an opportunity to have a structured conversation about this with their supervisors. The Graduate School noted in the SEQ that it hoped to implement an online APR system to securely and confidentially manage document/form submission, provide electronic workflow emails and instant tracking information and act as a robust document repository. It is hoped that this would simplify the APR process for all staff and students.

### ***Supervisor Training***

Colleagues in the staff session articulated the value of the supervisor training that was required of them and noted that this hadn't been done in such a comprehensive way in the past. Some staff noted that the training is less interactive than it could be and that if sessions were more widely available it might be easier to attend. They also felt that staff who are perceived as needing training the most are perceived to be the ones most often to avoid the training. The Graduate School noted that it produces an annual '10 Things a Supervisor Needs to Know' and distributes this to all supervisors. This is a concise way of highlighting changes to process or other important pieces of information and was commended by the Panel.

### ***GTA Training***

Of particular note in the PRES results were low scores for GTA training. The Panel wanted to explore this and find out how the Graduate School intended to address this. The DOGS explained that she had, at the start of 13/14, piloted a GTA Network so that GTAs could support each other and develop some informal networks and some small training opportunities. While the idea had been well received and the launch event was successful, the networking aspect didn't materialise. An additional event was held recently and feedback from that event will be used to inform new developments. There have been some issues about the availability of opportunities. The students in their session concurred with this, raising concerns about where students found information about opportunities and that students feeling that some were 'tapped on the shoulder' for these roles. The Graduate School has put in place a new policy and a clear process for those being appointed for start of teaching for 14/15. All opportunities will be clearly advertised and appointments made after an interview process. Clear guidelines will be given about expectations and how much time will be required. Students speaking about their experiences as GTAs reported a diversity of experience across different schools, a lack of clarity of what was expected of them sometimes and some variation in practice as to what a GTA would be paid for in terms of preparation and/or marking.

### ***Space Management***

The Arts Graduate School is not the first Graduate School to raise the issue of limited physical resources. However, this figured strongly in their SEQ. It is widely known that the University is embarking on a major campus redevelopment project although it is not anticipated that this will improve the situation with physical resources for several years. The Panel explored with the Graduate School how they manage the situation currently and what they think they may be able to do in the short to medium term before the anticipated additional space is available.

The Graduate School reported that they have recently added new desks for students and that they manually audit spaces to see how they are used. There is unused / unallocated

space but this is mainly hot-desking space and students tend to want their own dedicated space. They gave the example of the Alexander Stone Building which is hot-desking space but which is often underutilized. Staff also reported that some students had said that they did not always feel safe in this building at night and it can be quite dark, with automatic lighting not always functioning properly.

The College Secretary in Arts dedicates significant effort to trying to find more space and the Graduate School attempts to police the use of allocated spaces to make sure they are not wasted. It was noted as well that some funders insist that students be provided with a dedicated desk space and therefore these students had to be given priority. Students not in receipt of funding did not always feel that this was fair.

The students interviewed by the Panel were aware of issues with space but had themselves gotten a dedicated space either during their first or second year. They highlighted some of the difficulties of space management, such as the non-traditional hours that PGRs tend to keep where it can be hard to tell if they are using the space. They noted a case where a part time student had a part time workspace and had difficulty negotiating with the other student who shared the space as to when it could be used. While use of study space was kept under review by the Graduate School, students did note that they were not always aware of how to deal with issues within the shared spaces and could feel awkward when they had to police each other.

One student highlighted in particular how valuable the workspace was once they took on the GTA role and suggested that GTAs should get priority for desk space. Students also had quite a bit to say about the quality of the IT that was provided, feeling that the computers are slow and have limited software on them and that Wi-Fi connections were often not very good. They further added that while IT Services was very helpful, it was challenging to get them out to carry out work on a computer as workspaces are shared and tend to be locked when not in use.

### ***Supervision Loads***

Echoing staff concerns about potentially growing too fast and not being able to support the number of students recruited, the Panel wished to explore the supervision load in the College. From the SEQ, it was noted that some staff had quite high loads. The DoGS pointed out that the figures included thesis pending students and so could be regarded as not entirely representative of the workload. Staff, however, noted that there is a workload issue for students with a thesis pending status. In workload terms there is a 10 hour allocation for supporting these students, but staff found that these students required much more support than this.

Supervision loads are included in workload management processes so while some staff may have higher loads, they will do less of other tasks to balance this. It was acknowledged that this has been an issue but is being actively monitored. It was noted as well that the Postgraduate Convenors in each School have a very good handle on what was happening in their Schools and were able to manage capacity quite effectively.

The Panel queried how issues arising between students and supervisors were managed. It is preferred that issues are dealt with locally in subject areas and in a positive and friendly

manner but the Dean would take a role where it was warranted. It was highlighted that during the APR process, students have the opportunity to speak confidentially to the panel without their supervisor being present to bring forward any issues. Students are also able to speak confidentially to their advisor of studies about any issues.

### ***Admissions Process Changes***

The Panel noted that a change to the admission process had taken effect at the start of this academic year and queried how this had worked so far. The response was that it was probably too early to judge: issues were being ironed out as they arose so there would be a better idea next year about how it had gone overall. One concern that the Graduate School had, however, was that as applications go first to the admissions team in the Recruitment and International Office (RIO) and communications come from that team rather than the Graduate School that there may be missed opportunities to connect with students and it may affect their sense of belonging to the Graduate School. It wasn't clear that this was the case and perhaps the Graduate School could spend time it has previously spent on the mechanical aspects of processing applications on other ways to foster community.

### ***Training Matters***

The Graduate School is committed to delivering excellent and comprehensive training to students to support their academic development as well as their personal and professional development. Each year they produce a training booklet to support students in finding and choosing relevant courses and opportunities.

The Panel asked students what their experiences were and they generally reported that the training was useful. There was variability in what they found most useful and in what they wanted to do in terms of training – although they tended to report that the compulsory training in the first year wasn't always as useful as it could be. There were issues raised as well with how and when courses were advertised and that they could fill up quickly. Some students added that they might like some additional specialist, subject-specific training. One thing that the students on the panel agreed on, however, was that MyCampus had made the process difficult and that it was sometimes difficult to find courses.

Students were asked what role their supervisors took in helping them to identify training. They didn't feel that their supervisors necessarily had a good awareness of what training was on offer and didn't often suggest any training to them. Experience was variable here as some students didn't share this view. Training was mainly a topic of conversation during the completion of the Annual Progress Review. Supervisors were, however, aware of their fields and were more likely to suggest development opportunities such as relevant conferences or support students in developing funding bids.

### ***Sense of Belonging to the Graduate School***

Finally, the Panel wanted to explore with both staff and students whether they perceived a sense of 'belonging' to the Graduate School. Further, was there a strategy for community building?

The Graduate School highlights that it reinforces its role early on, including during inductions where students are given a sense of the whole picture of the community. Students however felt that the Graduate School level inductions, while informative, were a bit overwhelming.

They could feel intimidated by the size of the event. The Graduate School has taken feedback about inductions seriously and has outlined some of their ideas for improvement in the SEQ, such as collecting more detailed feedback from students and being more aware of 'induction fatigue' and trying to design different types of events so that students are more usefully engaged by these.

The DoGS confirmed that student experiences varied depending on where students were located. Some subjects have 'PG rooms' for socialization and engagement, some subject areas don't even have much office space to offer and students may be located in areas far from their subject areas. However, each school has money for student-led activities that combine learning and social aspects and works toward building this identity. There is funding, for example, to encourage PGs to go to seminars by providing lunch which has been successful. Training opportunities tend to bring students together from across the College to interact with each other. Students reported being fond of smaller, shared interest activities such as reading groups or small-scale symposia. Students also note that they are happy to organise things themselves if given some space to work in by the University.

There was quite a lot of activity evident around conferences and academic events. There is a College level interdisciplinary conference which is an annual event and an excellent development opportunity for those who volunteer to organize it. There are also a number of subject and school conferences, mainly run by students but supported by staff. There is also funding set aside to develop collaborative training opportunities: while this is focused on training, there is an element of community development in this.

### **Areas of Strength**

The Panel noted the following areas of strength:

- the emphasis on engagement and external partnership building with organisations such as Glasgow Life or cultural heritage organisations was both excellent and successful;
- the GS has developed an interesting and commendable internship programme which provides work experience for students and is an imaginative way of using scholarships funding;
- the emphasis on developing skills and employability in students, for example initiatives such as the 'Careers Focus' workshops;
- the success in winning the AHRC BGP bid and setting up the SHSAH and the tremendous opportunities for growth and collaboration that it provides;
- students are very positive and, while they raise significant issues, they would all recommend Glasgow to others;
- there is an effort to support student-led events and training opportunities and students spoke positively about events where they could talk about and share their research;
- administrative systems have benefitted from review of practices and establishment of the central team in the Graduate School;
- APR systems are working well and clearly good practice has been implemented from across the College.

## **Areas for Development**

The Panel noted the following areas for development:

- The ongoing physical resource constraints are a source of frustration for students and staff alike. It is clear from students the value they place on this and the University needs to continue to help with this and it is clearly a limiting factor.
- There should be further emphasis on strategy development, to support and effectively manage growth and develop an emphasis on the distinctive strengths of the Graduate School and the College.
- PGT programmes can help with recruitment but also increase pressures on resources. It would be useful to see more strategy in this regard to drive students into areas that need to grow.
- There was a sense that the Graduate School undersold itself and its positive attributes and that staff should be more aware of what makes the College unique.
- There was no sense of an internationalisation strategy reflected in the documentation.
- There were issues noted by students about Graduate Teaching Assistant posts – with some noting a diversity of practice in how they were selected and supported as well as in what different schools might pay them for in terms of preparation or marking. The Graduate School had already been aware of these issues and noted that a new policy would come into effect for 2014/15 that should remove the inconsistencies across the Schools. This development is supported by the Panel as a positive step.
- As with any large and distributed organisation, communications can get lost or missed and students do not always know where to find information. The Graduate School should continue to work on streamlining and improving communications and making them as effective as possible.
- The Graduate School's suggestion that they may consider implementing an online system that would support progress review processes was commended by the Panel and the Graduate School is encouraged to pursue this further.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions**

The recommendations of the Panel can be summarised as follows:

1. The Graduate School should continue to develop its strategies, specifically with regard to their research strengths, unique selling points and their plans for internationalisation and growth in student and staff numbers. Staff that were consulted by the Panel were not clear on the strategic aims of the Graduate School or how to express the positive attributes evident in the Graduate School's SEQ.
2. The Graduate School has acknowledged its challenges in coping with physical resources, especially workspaces for students. Students rate this resource very highly and it contributes to their success here. The University should investigate ways to support the Graduate School to find or re-develop additional spaces in the short to medium term until the effects of the campus redevelopment project begin to bear fruit.
3. The Graduate School should continue to review and develop its administrative policies and practices and how these link to those of the Schools, and especially with regard to GTA training, selection and support.



4. The Graduate School should continue to review how it communicates with students and with staff to ensure that students know where to find the information that they need and that staff are aware of messages about the strengths and future direction of the Graduate School.
5. The Graduate School should consider implementing an online system that would support progress review in order to make further improvements in these processes.

The Panel was unanimous in their view that the Graduate School operated very effectively and has made significant progress in their development both since the last Review in 2009 and since restructuring in 2010. There clearly has been a process of reflection in the Graduate School and as a result, there was a lot of good practice to commend. The SEQ was well-written and showed an impressive level of consultation with students and staff. In particular, the Panel commented on the positivity of the students that were interviewed and their ability to be excellent ambassadors for the Graduate School.

The Graduate School should be very proud of its achievements and the Panel would like to thank them for their participation in the Review process.