

IGC Postgraduate Studies Committee

14 October 2021

Present:

Val Brunton

Kathy Evans

Susan Farrington

Nick Gilbert (Chair)

Pauline McDonald (minutes)

1. HGU update (Nick)

NG confirmed there are currently 192 PhD and Masters students currently in IGC at present.

MRC HGU PhD recruitment 2022; will be advertised imminently, with funding to cover 6 studentships onto doctoral training programme. Due to the international fee waiver in place across the University, statistics for international recruitment are significantly better.

2. CRUK update (Val)

Edinburgh Centre recruited 3 non-clinical and 2 MBCHB (Tracc) students this year.

It is expected, that the CRUK centre renewal will be a joint centre award with Glasgow; a bid for 6 non-clinical PhD students has been requested, 3 based in Edinburgh and 3 in Glasgow. Following confirmation of funding, recruitment for next tranche of students can commence.

3. CGEM update (Kathy)

CGEM recruited 3 PhD students and 1 MSc student for 2021/22 intake.

4. Precision Medicine update (Susan)

SF confirmed that 8 students are based in IGC this academic year. As one student expressed concerns of feeling unsupported due to the research culture, SF encouraged the student to talk to supervisor in first instance but will follow-up.

There are ongoing discussions between Stephen Lissaman (Business Manager), Helen Nickerson (Science and Strategy Manager) and Nick Gilbert about research culture in HGU. VB confirmed that CRUK are looking to put something in place regarding research culture.

The committee agreed that this should be a rolling agenda item to continue discussions.

Action Point: follow-up discussions at next PGSC meeting

5. Student administration update (Pauline)

PM confirmed that there were 44 new students on programme and that welcome/induction events took place in person, were streamed online, and were recorded. All events were well attended and new starts were enthusiastic about commencing their studies.

Wellbeing Space is now functional and available for use in the MEC (Outpatients Dept., WGH). Andy Shanks (Director of Student Wellbeing) viewed the space and was supportive of this initiative.

A new supervisor handbook containing quick links to accessing information is now available to download/view via the IGC Graduate Research and Training website.

6. Advertising Precision Medicine and EastBio Studentships (Nick)

Precision Medicine and EASTBIO PhD recruitment will be open to applications in November. IGC will highlight PM and EASTBIO projects on IGC website.

7. Student Annual Leave (Nick)

NG reported that there is no official process for students applying for annual leave. UKRI handbook recommend that students should have about 6 week's annual leave (in line with staff). The committee agreed that supervisors should remind their students to take annual leave; student checklist will act as a prompt for this. NG confirmed that the new UoE system, People and Money, do not treat students like staff.

8. Student Sick Leave (Nick)

The committee discussed supporting students when they are unwell, and confirmed that all funding bodies have different rules and regulations surrounding sick pay. If a student is sponsored by a larger funding body, they are more likely to receive sick pay, but the funds have to come from the allocated training budget, which can put pressure on Centres. If the funding body does not specify anything, a discussion at College level would be advised, to see if the student can access discretionary College funds; it was noted that College has no obligation to provide additional funds. The committee discussed the possibility of making funding bodies aware that it is unacceptable not to have sick pay for students when advertising scholarships.

The committee agreed the importance of communicating sick leave to students and that this will need to be well phrased.

9. Pastoral Support Committee (Nick)

Overall, supervisors are supportive of postdocs volunteering as pastoral committee members. If successful, this model may be used in other Centres/Institutes across College, depending on research cultures.

NG confirmed that training was delivered to mentors and was similar to content delivered in supervisor briefing sessions. Mentors were advised that their role is not necessarily to solve problems, but someone to speak to and signpost accordingly. If the student expresses serious concerns, mentors should approach PG Directors in the first instance.

Action: Student-admin to email first tranche of students to let them know which mentors they are paired with.

10. Student/Supervisor Checklist (All)

NG to finalise, implement and rollout across IGC. The committee agreed that this would help to stimulate a discussion between student/supervisor.

Action Point: Student-admin to send to all students when finalised and record when checklists are returned.

11. Student Concerns (All)

The committee agreed that no major concerns were highlighted at the recent Student Staff Liaison Committee meeting and the students felt well supported.

One student had approached one of student representatives to say they felt undue pressure from their supervisor and felt there were unrealistic expectations of what was required from them as a student. VB asked the student rep to encourage the student in question to raise concern with her directly. The committee agreed that it might be good to have a round-table discussion with all Early Career Researchers once per year and remind them of their role as a student supervisor.

Action: Committee to discuss the possibility of piloting/mandating at next PGSC.

12. Any other business

PGR Open Day this year is Wednesday 10 November. As the event was successful last year, NG agreed to run the session again to try and attract prospective students to the Institute. Attendees should register and sign up.

Schedule for event, below:

10.00 Nick Gilbert - Introduction to the IGC (Brief overview of our PhD programmes)
10.05 Simon Wilkinson - CRUK Cancer Programme
10.10 Bradley Harris - The life of a CRUK PhD student
10.15 Cataline Vallejos - Wellcome HDRUK Data Science Programme
10.20 Nathan Constantine-Cooke - Computational Research in the IGC
10.25 Nick Gilbert - MRC Human Genetics Unit Programme
10.30 Katy Graham - The life of an HGU PhD student
10.35 Dee Davison - Science Communication
10.40 Elena Lazarova - Science Outreach within IGC
10.45 Ioannis Kafetzopoulos - 3 Minute Thesis; Communicating our Science
10.50 Sarah Taylor, winner Max Perutz writing prize; Inspired by my research
10.55 Questions for us!

VB gave an overview of required data collection for CRUK, and reported that CRUK are being more prescriptive about what student data is being collated locally. VB putting a document together to send to current students.

KE highlighted the lack of core funding in CGEM for studentships, and would encourage PIs to be proactive in applying for external funding.

13. Student update

Student Disability Service - the committee agreed that it would be helpful if supervisors are notified when a student registers with the disability service.

14. Date of next meeting

April 2022