

SSLC Meeting
Tuesday 4th May 2021
Remote Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Mary Cryan – Deputy Head of the Graduate School
Bob Fisher – Head of the Graduate School
Patrick Hudson – IGS Senior School Co-ordinator
Jonathan MacBride - IGS Administrative Assistant
Ionela Mocanu – PPAR representative
Traiko Dinev – RAS representative
Kaan Ocal – ANC representative
Rui Zhao – ICSA representative
Michael Camilleri – Data Science representative
Ishaq Ishaq - PGR Student LFCS representative

This meeting was conducted as an open forum and representatives were asked in advance to bring any issues or discussion points with them to be raised with other students in attendance or IGS staff. Also prior to the meeting the reps were asked how they felt the school support could be improved or changed post-pandemic. Also a specific request was made for any questions or queries that students might have relating to informatics buildings and the general working environment.

1. PGR Support

- a) The general consensus was that overall support in the past year or so had been sufficient and easy to access. This relates to within the school and other university services.
- b) It was suggested that supervisors who have many students, sometimes up to 10, will not be able to provide the same level of support that other supervisors with lesser numbers can. Some feedback from students suggest they felt that their supervision support could be better. Also if a student is part of a larger research group this may mean they will receive less support. Some supervisors may not be able to offer frequent meetings due to the nature of their research work.
- c) Many of the reps felt that supervision through the school was not consistent.
- d) Some feedback to our reps included students who felt there was a toxic environment relating to their supervisors. This included unhealthy relationships, students being pushed too hard and put under too much pressure. Students in these situations are unlikely to speak up in fear that this could ruin the relationship they do have with their supervisor and in turn this will negatively affect their PhD.
- e) MC wanted to reiterate the support on offer by the school and that she in particular is always available to speak to students and offer pastoral support. Also the school has three PGR tutors who can always offer support. Outcomes of a conversation like this can sometimes lead to a transition to a new supervisor, or a greater involvement of a 2nd supervisor, when necessary.

- f) Students asked about supervisor training on these types of issues and MC informed them that all supervisors are required to complete supervisor training every five years. The school are also looking at ways to improve the training around dignity and respect.
- g) The group had a discussion regarding the expectation vs the reality of a student's supervision. Are the supervisor and student on the same page at the beginning of the PhD? Does one expect more from the other. This should be discussed at the beginning of the relationship.
- h) MC said there were various IAD courses and the school offer VOX courses, 'Managing Research Relationships', that can help maintain better working relationships between supervisors and students.

Action – Reminder of support sent to students

2. Building and Facilities updates/ questions

- a) Many reps received feedback that their students are keen to get back into the building when safe. This will likely be a gradual transition as it has been throughout the pandemic.
- b) Ventilation in the building is an ongoing issue that affects a number of PGR offices. Concerns were raised that with a virus circulating this will be a bigger issue. PH updated the students regarding a survey completed by the University Estates team where they found all PGR offices (and all but 2 Forum offices) had sufficient ventilation and that there would be no additional risk to students who worked in these offices. Reps felt better communication could be made about this to them. We recognise that temperature in students offices is a sensitive issue.
- c) One student, on a recent visit, complained about an eye issue due to the ventilation so wanted to state they still felt this was still a concern and should not be viewed as a perception issue by the school.
- d) There were also ongoing complaints from students regarding the heat of some of the internal PGR offices. PH was able to update the students that the school has scheduled for some chilling beams to be installed in various offices on the 4th and 5th floors of the forum between Jun-August this year and those students affected by this work will be contacted directly about this.
- e) Some reps asked about the return to the building. A brief summary of restrictions was given but all students were also referred to the online guidance particularly if they want to return to the building to work.
- f) It was also noted that many sanitisers were placed throughout the building and the facilities and cleaning teams are doing all they can to make sure the environment is as safe as possible.

Action – PH to look to see if further information can be sent to students regarding the ventilation to avoid further concern.

Next meeting TBA