Graduate School Review

College of Science & Engineering

3,4,9 April 2025

Commendations:

- **Leadership and Graduate School Structure:**
    - The Graduate School is commended for its approach to doctoral education including the support it offers to staff and students and its management. The Graduate School is well structured and the MPA team is knowledgeable and offer continuity and consistency of practice and support.
    - Graduate School Manager, Heather Lambie, has been in the post since 2012 and has provided strong leadership. It was noted that the merger of CDT hub with the Graduate School had been a smooth transition and shown good results. Heather had a key role in the restructure and efficient running of the graduate school. The panel also commended Heather's instrumental role in establishing the James McCune Smith scholarship programme and supporting the implementation for all four Colleges.
    - All staff in the leadership roles are a credit to the college and committed to supporting their colleagues, other staff and students. The PGR directors are not only very dedicated but also greatly appreciate the centrality and criticality of the professional services (PS) staff in the graduate school, and that the support and expertise of the PS staff is vital to them for delivering their responsibilities.
    - The panel commended the management and running of the James Watt School of Engineering given it is relatively a large school.

- **Partnership PhD and TNE**
    - The Partnership PhD programme has been a positive development and should bring many benefits, including fostering strategic engagement with the industry.
    - Jointly supervised TNE programme in Singapore has been successful and brought in significant collaboration and impact. Students bring in industrial problems and solve them through their PhD.
    - The panel noted that the dual PhD Program allows the College to explore further avenues in cross national delivery of postgraduate research.

- **Funding and Scholarships**
    - Most of the PGRs in CoSE are funded by their government, industry, funding councils or philanthropic organisations. College strategically invests internal funds in scholarship to continue maintaining the student numbers.

- o It was noted that the college, in general, offers international fee waivers as per the College's budgetary scenario. The Head of School normally reviews fee waiver requests and are granted when there is very high-quality student, for studentship through an industry partner and if a suitable home student cannot be found for a project.

- **Supervision:**
  - o The panel appreciated that in the appointment of supervisors, the career stage of the staff member, opportunities to secure funding and quality of application are considered. Staff members are encouraged to enhance their web profile in order to attract potential students to their research area.
  - o Supervisors, in general, provide good support to their students and are willing to invest their personal time to resolve their student's issues.

- **PGR Training**
  - o In the GSR meetings many positives were noted about Inkpath offerings (e.g. 'soft' skills like writing, presenting etc.). However, students also expressed the need for more specific and relevant training, with practical vs zoom lecture format.
  - o Students are also given opportunity to feedback on specific trainings and encouraged to identify training opportunities.
  - o DTP and CDTs students have access to specific trainings, conferences, wellbeing, network of support and networking connections across other institutions. Students are encouraged to take up internship and placements during their PhD. This varies across non-CDT students depending upon their discipline/ research area. The panel commended the overall CDT/ DTP landscape, PGR support and coordination.

Overall, the panel noted many positive points from PGR students, who participated in the Graduate School Review meetings, including why they chose to pursue their PGR studies at the University of Glasgow. Students were complementary of the University, the College, and their groups and overall experience.

Recommendations:

- **Harmonisation and Community of Practice**
  - o Although there are good reasons for some degree of autonomy at School level, there is, in general, a need to have a more harmonised approach across the Graduate School to ensure consistency and sharing of good practice. This will also deliver benefits given the natural and relatively fast turnover of PGR Directors and Dean of Graduate Studies. The Graduate School Board is a

forum that should be used more effectively than at present. It is recommended that the Graduate School reviews and develops mechanisms to facilitate coherence in PGR management and support across the college.

- **Student recruitment**
  - Panel noted that the Graduate School hasn't sufficiently demonstrated how the EDI perspective is incorporated in their recruitment strategy. Selection at school level was based on supervisor's assessment of quality of the application in general. It was also observed that at one of the CDTs the selection was made at the centre, and the supervisors weren't aware and involved in the recruitment process. It is recommended that the recruitment process is formalised across the graduate school and incorporates EDI perspective. An interview panel for PGR positions in all schools would be a good practice. This will ensure transparency in the recruitment process along with ensuring continued high quality PGR students.

- **Scholarship & funding**
  - It was observed that the Schools adopt varying practices for the allocation of PGR funding and consider a variety of factors such as quality of application, incentivising impact, balancing opportunities to staff for engaging in supervision etc. The panel has recommended that the Graduate School, going forward, implements a central and consistent approach and as above, should also incorporate EDI perspective in decision making.

- **Student feedback mechanism**
  - College response rate to the university's PGR surveys is low. It is recommended that the Graduate School reviews and develops plans for improving student engagement as it allows student to feedback anonymously and confidentially.
  - The panel noted that there is a heavy reliance on APR as a feedback mechanism for students to raise concerns and complaints in some schools. However, this doesn't ensure students have confidentiality in expressing their views, especially about the supervisor-supervisee relationship.

- **PGR Support and representative**
  - It was noted that there is a disparity in the level of awareness among students and staff about the forms of support available and point of contact for raising and resolving issues. This could cause unequal support and potential unfairness. Students are mainly informed about the support offered by the University in the induction sessions. It was observed that the PGR directors and supervisors try to solve individual problems personally and at significant

time and personal commitment. The Graduate School is central to providing guidance and for signposting to available support and PGR Code of Practice. It can learn good practice from other graduate schools in this regard.

- o It is recommended that the College appoints dedicated PGR Student Support Officer/s (SSO).
- o It is also recommended that a Graduate School professional services staff oversees students based in off- campus locations. The Graduate School should signpost staff and students to the initiatives taken for international students and students having English as an additional language (EAL) to facilitate the sense of belonging to the UofG PGR community.
- o There are promising results from the Partnership PhD programme. The panel, however, recommended to communicate the branding and details of the programme effectively in the college to avoid any confusion. The size and profile of this student cohort should be kept under review since they are predominantly based in industry, and engage them in the UofG PGR community, so they are not siloed from the overall PGR cohort.

- **Supervision**
    - o The panel appreciated supervisory teams' efforts in providing effective support to their students. It was noted that most students meet their supervisor at least monthly but most is much more frequent. However, it was noted that in some cases the second supervisor is less involved and maintains minimal engagement with the student. Multi/cross disciplinary supervision teams generally experienced as positive but may potentially cause unclear/infrequent supervisory contact which should be monitored.
    - o One of the staff members, who attended the GSR meeting, mentioned being appointed as second supervisor without any discussion and notification until the first APR of the student approached. There is also lack of awareness of the role of associate supervisor. It is recommended that the Graduate School coordinates a more formal College wide process for appointment of supervisory team.
    - o It is also recommended that the Graduate School produces a guidance which contains expectation from a supervisor and a PGR student which is given to both at the start of the PGR studies. This is currently in use in the College of Arts & Humanities.

- **Training**
    - o It was noted that there is a need to strengthen the awareness of the supervisory team about their responsibilities for training, and that they are making this topic more explicit to their students in their supervisory meetings.

- o Training / Development Needs Analysis should be looked at more rigorously and be included in the APR process so that the review of training/ development needs is embedded and updated at different stages of the PGR student journey.
- o There is an opportunity to open up training to non-CDT students where feasible to facilitate inclusivity.
- o With respect to handling student's complaints, it is recommended that the Graduate School implements the "scenario-based supervisor training" that is in practice in MVLS which staff complete every 5 years. The supervisors should also be provided the opportunity to come together and share real life challenging issues they are experiencing.

- **APR:**
  - o Some students valued APRs as an opportunity for presenting and discussing their work and perceive it a valuable development process. They find it a confidential space to discuss issues without supervisors being present. There were mixed views whether presence of secondary supervisor in APRs inhibits or enables open forum for discussion. It is recommended that the Graduate School reviews the APR process and coordinates a uniform approach for appointing the review panel with consideration given to research expertise, pastoral advice and a forum for confidential discussion.
  - o It is recommended that the Graduate School provides guidance to students, supervisors and reviewers with regard to expectations of the APR process for each year during the PGR programme including thesis submission.

- **Communications:**
  - o Student mentioned that they are inundated with incoming communication, which brings along risk of missing important information. They expressed that this may be unavoidable if the communication is coming locally such as from the supervisor, Graduate School or PGR Director.

- **SUERC**
  - o The panel acknowledged that admirable efforts are made to develop support and community within SUERC. However, there are concerns about physical and social isolation of this unit located off-campus. It is recommended to increase connections with the wider college and Graduate School making sure that the student and supervisors are well supported and the PGR experience is of the required standard.