

## IGMM Postgraduate Studies Committee

14<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 10.00 – 11.00 am, Zoom

Present:

Val Brunton

Kathy Evans

Susan Farrington

Nick Gilbert

Pauline McDonald – (minutes)

### Agenda

1. Minutes from previous meeting for approval  
The committee approved previous minutes and agreed that having minutes on website was helpful.  
Action: Pauline to put EastBio and Precision Medicine handbooks on Graduate Research and Training website.
2. HGU update (Nick)  
PhD recruitment for 2021 intake of students will go live week beginning 19 October on FindaPhD. MRC have revised eligibility criteria, which means international students are now eligible for full funding, however, international numbers are capped at 30%. The committee agreed that this should attract more interest to the programme.
3. CRUK update (Val)  
Recruitment for 2021 CRUK funded PhD students will commence when Centre approval is given.  
TRACC programme recruited their first tranche of students this year, some of which are based in Edinburgh and others in Glasgow. TRACC will recruit again next year and should run smoothly now the programme is up and running.
4. CGEM update (Kathy)  
No news on recruitment of 2021 UoE/Helsinki PhD funding at present. CGEM had 7 students commence in 2020 via external sources such as Translational Neuroscience, EASTBIO programme etc. The committee agreed that PI's should be reminded about the possibility of recruiting students via external funding and that they should contact PG Directors to let them know funding has been awarded. The committee established that 2 people from the approved list of Centre supervisors should be on a panel when a student is being recruited non-competitively i.e. self-funded.
5. Precision Medicine update (Susan)  
Project call for 2021 recruitment done, around 70 projects submitted, with a good proportion of projects being submitted by IGMM PIs. There are approximately 26 studentships on offer; students who have completed a masters will typically be awarded 3.5 years and students who only have undergraduate degree will be offered 4 years of funding.

A feedback survey was circulated to students and supervisors requesting information prior to submitting the programme renewal. The programme structure will remain similar to existing format, however, students may be required to obtain more credits from next academic year. There may also be a re-consideration of timeline when students carry out the taught components through the lifecycle their PhD.

6. Student administration update (Pauline)

Student admin has run smoothly this academic year, considering remote working and challenges of introducing a hybrid teaching system for students. Annual reviews, 10 week report and first year report assessments have been actioned.

Pauline attended refresher course on Gender Based Violence (GBV) in liaison with Rape Crisis Scotland. The committee agreed that communication should be sent to students highlighting GBV but we should approach Lesley Johnston (Sexual Violence and Harassment Liaison Manager, UoE) to determine how best to do this. The committee also concurred that working closely with the IGMM Wellbeing committee and the Equality and Diversity committee would be best practice to ensure everyone is aware of correspondence being disseminated to students.

Action: Pauline to draft email to Lesley Johnston.

7. COVID-19 issues (All)

NG reported that there had been a knock-on effect of funding extensions for final year students, one of which was invoices being sent to students from the Fees department. NG is advising 4 year funded students who receive an invoice (going into their 5<sup>th</sup> year) that IGMM will cover the cost directly. However, 3 year funded students (going into their 4<sup>th</sup> year) is asking students to pay the matriculation fee, with a possibility that this will be reimbursed by the university in future.

The committee explored the possibility of supporting students who are struggling with internet access and agreed that this should be done on a case by case basis. Supervisors should be reminded of the responsibilities of supporting their students and that any major issues should be raised with Nick Gilbert.

8. Advertising Precision Medicine and EastBio Studentships (Nick)

Student-admin team will advertise EastBio projects that have been submitted from IGMM. Student-admin should request project details from EastBio and Precision Medicine Administrators where first or second supervisor is based at the IGMM and highlight project on Centre websites to maximise exposure of recruitment.

9. Student Annual Leave (Nick)

The committee discussed the new annual leave system being implemented for staff, and the impact this would have on students. It was agreed that future annual leave requests should be directly communicated to supervisors and logged at a research group level. Expectations for annual leave should be included on the student/supervisor checklist.

10. External Review: Bullying and Mental Health (Nick)

Summary of report indicated that the IGMM need to make some changes to improve the student experience. It was acknowledged that these changes will take time to implement. Action points to be addressed:

- Improved process for pastoral support – pastoral thesis committees to be introduced
- Supervisor checklist – to allow students and staff to discuss expectations

- Improved student complaint system – compulsory training to be introduced to supervisors on how to handle student situations. This training will be in addition to UoE supervisor briefing sessions.

11. Pastoral Support Committee (Nick)

Pastoral support committees will be introduced and rolled out as soon as possible across College, and will be coordinated by Paddy Hadoke. The committee agreed that this would be good for students, but acknowledged that having additional thesis committees would have a knock on effect on supervisors' time. The committee discussed the possibility of having a postdoc and PI on pastoral committees to spread the workload, which NG will raise at the next Board of Examiners meeting. The committee agreed that feedback should be requested from students once implemented to review process.

12. Student/Supervisor Checklist (All)

The committee discussed the importance of implementing checklist and agreed it would be helpful to action the following points:

- >highlight guidance for annual leave (between 5-7 weeks) requested via supervisor
- >highlight recommended number of hours to be worked (should be between 30-40 per week)
- >discuss what forms of communication are acceptable i.e. is the student happy to be contacted via text or Whatsapp?
- >career plan – should be final part of the checklist
- >add question "has it been agreed between supervisor/student that is acceptable for student to work from home where possible"?

Checklist to be sent to supervisors just after start of academic year.

Action: NG to edit form and distribute to students/supervisors

13. Student Concerns (All)

NG reported that a new UoE complaints process is being implemented and that a temporary student complaint process has been initiated for the IGMM. All students should report complains or concerns to either Paddy Hadoke (CMVM) or Margaret Frame (IGMM).

Action: highlight on website.

14. Any other business

NG reported that discussions are taking place at local level to explore whether an experienced role, dedicated to student health and wellbeing, can be based on site at IGMM.

15. Date of next meeting

March/April 2021