

Meeting:	Doctoral Council
Location:	Chancellors Building 3.6 & Teams
Date & Time:	23 November 2023 10:15 – 11:45

In attendance: [any staff or SU Officers present]

Taibah Orpin	Student Voice Coordinator (Postgraduate Representation)
Jura Neverauskaite	SU Postgraduate Officer

Item	
1.	<p>PG Officer Update</p> <p>Welcome to the first doctoral council this academic year.</p> <p>Introductions from everyone.</p> <p>Update on the SU top ten:</p> <p>We have a doctoral specific Top Ten point this year, which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop doctoral professional development through work-based opportunities. <p>The other points in the Top Ten are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure safer sport through developing match day medic schemes. • Develop a range of activities to reduce isolation and improve overall experience for PGT students. • Increase the range of inclusive study spaces that meet the needs of all students. • Ensure that all students can easily access recordings of all their lectures throughout the year. • Ensure that students receive constructive assessment feedback that helps them improve. • Develop a housing strategy covering both University managed and private accommodation. • Pilot early move in and arrivals week for new international students. • Ensure all students have access to a financial safety net when needed, through a range of accessible scholarships, bursaries, hardship funds and other support. • Working with First Bus to develop an accurate GPS service and live capacity information to keep students informed.
2.	<p>Separate Personal Tutors</p> <p>Some doctoral student feedback suggested that separate personal tutors would be a good idea.</p> <p>A separate personal tutor would provide pastoral support, professional development and training, and career support.</p> <p>Having a separate personal tutor could be useful if you are having issues which are not research related.</p> <p>I would find a separate personal tutor useful – not because there are any issues with my supervisors, but because there isn't time to talk about other issues in our meetings. I want to get as much input as possible on my PhD project during supervision meetings,</p>

so use all the time to talk about that. It would be good to have someone to go to with issues that are not such a priority in supervisions.

Would like to have someone I could go to about things that aren't academically related.

Some CDTs do offer a personal tutor, but they don't always reach out. Some academics are very good as personal tutors, but there are others who I would not want to go to with personal issues. I would not feel comfortable approaching them.

Would this be something added on top of lecturer's workload? If it is on top of other work, I would not want to add to their workload for this, and I think it could make them resentful of the personal tutor role. It depends a lot on the academic.

The PG DoS in Physics does fill this role for everybody in the department, and is able and willing to address issues within other staff in the department.

The minutes for this meeting have previously been published on the website. Initially, the minutes will only be sent out to members of the Doctoral Council, where members will be given the chance to review them and to amend or strike any details they are not happy with. Some reps found having the minutes on the website useful, and liked the transparency.

Is the role of a personal tutor already filled by the Independent Academic Advisors? While the advisers are able to offer support when students have an issue with or feel unable to approach their supervisor, these advisers generally help with specific issues the students bring to them, and do not provide the regular check-ins that a personal tutor would.

Every programme is very different. Within Maths, almost everyone is full-time and based in Bath. Because of this, there is a good community and little things are picked up during social events, e.g. coffee mornings. The SAMBA CDT also has people who fill in this role. In my experience, the only things people need extra support with are bigger issues. Because of this, I do not think personal tutors would work in this department or be needed. But personal tutors but might be beneficial to other departments.

Some CDTs have peer support groups that fill the role of personal tutors. My CDT is spread over three departments, and is meant to have peer support groups. However, these meetings do not happen most of the time. People in the research group are quite scattered, and people who are not on campus that much, or are not in the same department, seem to fall through the cracks. There is the motivation and intention to have peer support sessions, but staff are spread too thin, so wellbeing and social activities do not happen. A lot of people in this group are working alone a lot of the time.

A lot of doctoral students spend a lot of time studying alone.

An opt in personal tutor scheme would work well – so people who feel they would benefit from a separate personal tutor can have one.

It would be good to have a choice who your personal tutor is, to make sure the person you are talking to is someone you would be comfortable discussing personal issues with.

This would make sense, but personal tutors for UG and PGT courses are randomly assigned. A doctoral Personal Tutor scheme would most likely follow the same model.

Do you think it would be good to have a personal tutor in the same faculty/ department? Or do you think it would be beneficial to have a personal tutor from a different discipline?

- You would get better career advice from someone from a similar department, because they can provide professional development and academic career advice specific to your field.
- Possibly from a different department but the same faculty? If your Personal tutor was from a different department in the faculty, there would be no conflict of interest. You would be able to talk more openly about issues, as they are less likely to have a close relationship with staff in your department.
- Would someone from a different department have the same rapport? Or would someone who is engaged in the department, but not directly involved in teaching, be better?

Second supervisors in Maths already fill a pastoral role.

The role of the second supervisor very varied. Some of them are largely pastoral, some are very engaged in research, and others are barely involved. A lot of people don't really meet or know their second supervisor.

3.

Isolation and Building Community

I do not feel that I am part of a community, because of the nature of my programme, which is part-time and hybrid. My colleges and peers are extremely busy. I would like to have a more immersive student experience. Would like to access the all the services, activities and chats the university offers. It would be good to have more get togethers, e.g., coffee mornings. Also, it would be nice to have a Writing Wednesday specifically for doctoral students. I work alone and study alone, so having more online events and spaces, such as an online co-working space, would be good.

I feel part a of a departmental community, rather than a university wide one. There are regular events in my department and people get together and do things on the weekends. It would be hard to change the culture of that in the department. People see the university wide events and feel like they don't need to attend because there is already so much happening in the department.

There is a similar culture in Physics, where the department and postgrad society regularly put on events. When there is food at events, people turn up.

Are there any specific events that you would be interested in?

The postgraduate and staff football league is the most popular event outside of the department. Competition based events and activities tend to attract more people. They like to compete for departmental pride.

Would be good to build a community among the professional doctoral students. They are often working alongside studying, so have similar experiences and patterns of study.

	<p>Most professional doctoral students are remote or hybrid, so more online events would be good.</p> <p>Most of the activities and events which are best for tackling isolation are quite organic, and involve a couple of people taking the initiative to organise something, particularly when students are spread across several departments. I have tired organising drinks and other social events before. The university doesn't recognise or reward people when they take the initiative to put on events, and departments aren't always that encouraging. I think that more of these events would happen if people who are interested in setting up activities, and who take the initiative to help build a community, are awarded and supported.</p> <p>More people would attend university wide events if the SU reached out to departments and departmental societies to promote them. People are more likely to attend if other people they know are also going.</p> <p>A lot of doctoral students have ideas for events they would like to happen and are willing to organise, but don't know where they can get support to set things up. Can the SU help with things like booking spaces, advertising, risk assessments etc.? People would be much more likely to set up their own events or activities if they knew help was available, and that they wouldn't be doing everything by themselves.</p> <p>Many doctoral students are interested in running their own small-scale events, but would like to have support from the SU in doing this.</p>
4.	Break
5.	<p>Information from the university and SU</p> <p>How to get support setting up postgraduate events – Contacts details, what the SU can do to help, how to get comms sent out from a professional email address.</p> <p>Details of who you should go to with various issues or for support. – Some departments have these in social spaces or on Moodle, but this information is not always in the same place.</p> <p>Information about what events are happening, and how to meet new people.</p> <p>Where to go if you want to talk about mental health.</p> <p>A clearer explanation on what the second supervisor's role is.</p>
6.	<p>Any other business.</p> <p>How often does this group meet? Usually twice a semester, although we are only meeting once this semester. We also have a meeting over the summer.</p> <p>We receive too many emails. Would be good to get information from the SU in another format, as we often don't get around to reading SU emails.</p>

	<p>More support for postgraduates who teach. There is not enough support on how you can maximize teaching opportunities, or on the professional bodies you can join.</p> <p>We will revisit this issue in the next meeting, and try to get someone from the university to co-chair.</p> <p>Maths have started running a specific teaching seminar; this is a new initiative for the department, and seems to be popular.</p> <p>More support for people who are preparing lecture content, and are presenting lecturers. The content on Moodle is not that relevant to the role of a lecturer – would be more useful to receive the level of training that lecturers do. Setting assessments, creating course content and teaching is not covered in the training.</p> <p>Issue also raised by another rep – reached out to Professor Tina Skinner on researcher wellbeing.</p> <p>It would be good to have something on the website about the support available for people who teach.</p> <p>There doesn't seem to be any specific training on teaching in academia. Postdocs don't get training on how to teach.</p>
	<p>The meeting ended at [11:14].</p>
<p>Item No</p>	<p>Actions</p>