

**The School of Economics and Finance
Postgraduate Research
Student Staff Liaison Committee
Thursday 3rd October 2019**

Approved Minutes

Staff members present:

Dr. Alessandra Bonfiglioli (AB)
Chandani Amin

Director of Graduate Studies (Chair)
PhD Administrator (Secretary)

Student members present:

Name	Programme and level
TBC	MRes Economics
Laura Perez (LP)	1 st year PhD
Yannis Papadakis (YP)	2 nd year PhD
Elisa Facchetti (EF)	3 rd year PhD
Maddalena Ronchi (MR)	4 th year PhD

Apologies for absence: no apologies received.

Part 1: Preliminary items

Minutes of the previous meeting

2019:01 The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Part 2: Student reports

Reports from student course representatives

The Committee **received** reports from student course representatives and **noted** the following:

Maddalena Ronchi noted the following issues relating to the 4th cohort:

2019:02 MR raised attention to how the current teaching structure is working and incentivising students. MR explained that once the scholarship ends, students are given a teaching contract. During the writing-up status year (4th cohort) students cannot teach more than 80 hours (PT contract) which is paid little. During the job market year, students are given the choice between a PT and a FT time contract. The FT contract pays well, but it implies a lot of teaching hours. Students normally tend to take up the FT contract because they need to earn more money given

that the previous year they were forced to have a PT contract, but this implies doing too much teaching while on the job market.

AB responded that the School is doing what is allowed within the College restrictions and that the issue needs to be taken to the College/HR who provides the separate contracts. AB notes that this could take a long time to change as it needs to be in line with other Schools.

YP added that the system is created for people going on the job market but not everybody does.

EF raised the possibility of a Research Assistant role for faculty. AB informed the committee she is already working on this as a possible role.

MR suggested that a third contract with less teaching than FT but more money than PT would be a good solution to this problem. The system currently incentivises students to look for teaching jobs elsewhere. AB notes that if students do want to work elsewhere we can endorse students to get jobs outside QM.

MR summarises the possible solutions:

1. Have a 5th year top up
2. Create a 3rd type of contract (between PT and FT)
3. Research Assistant role for Faculty
4. Increase the £400 job market allowance

ACTION: AB to bring these issues to the GSC and escalate to Sujoy/Michelle appropriately.

2019:03 MR asked for clarification on the use of job market allowances: can they be more flexible. If the budget is available does it need to have specified amounts for the US and EU markets? If a student was not going to the US, could this additional allowance be used for the EU market and vis versa? However, MR does report that students have said the £400 EU market budget does cover EU market costs.

AB responded that these budgets may change and are subject to the conditions of the market. This year was a test to see how the first cohort coming out of the full PhD do in terms of numbers of interviews, fly-outs, placements etc. If it goes well this will be good for our reputation and dictate what future budget allowances are needed.

ACTION: CA to discuss job market allowance flexibility with Nick and update students.

Elisa Facchetti noted the following issues relating to the 3rd year PhD cohort:

2019:04 EF noted issues with research budget regulations e.g. EF had an issue where she was notified of a conference and made the booking in May but the event was not until September. EF was told the funds would come out of her 2019/20 budget despite booking before the start of next year.

AB agreed there is a mismatch between when the money is spent and when the event is. The system needs to work for all students. The justification for the regulations needs to be clarified.

MR asked why is there a cap of only £300 to carry over to the following year's budget. If we could carry all remaining budget over then it wouldn't matter which year the budget comes out of?

ACTION: CA to find out what the justification for this is. Is there a reason why some students were able to use last year's allowance and others not. There needs to be a rule that is clear and applies to all.

2019: 05 EF noted that the restriction on working hours – students cannot teach more than 6 hours per week – does not provide enough income.

YP agreed this incentivises students to stop teaching and take up other work.

AB agreed this is a serious issue but will take time and a lot of work to solve so a short-term creative solution is needed, such as increasing pay for those hours. Also a possibility to pay students to complete 'projects' that are not restricted by the 6 hour cap.

ACTION: AB to come up with an official proposal, referencing the policies of other Universities e.g. Cambridge and Warwick where students are allowed to work for more hours.

Yannis Papadakis noted the following issues relating to the 2nd year PhD cohort:

2019: 06 YP noted that there is no formal process to buy datasets e.g. DAQ which is an expensive subscription. MR suggested a simple form that students can hand into the admin office would be sufficient as a process; then the School can decide if they need/ approve the purchase of data.

AB suggested that Tim/ Derek could make a case to the Library but YP had already asked Tim and this wasn't an option.

AB suggested two other possible solutions: 1. Get your supervisor involved or 2. Team up with other students before making the dataset request e.g. by emailing all research staff to find out if the data is needed or could potentially be interested in using this data in the future.

EF added that other grants can be applied to for funds to access data (including outside QM).

2019:07 YP raised an issue brought to him by a student regarding the diversity of ethnic backgrounds within SEF Faculty – that there are no black professors. YP explained that students want to feel like they have a staff member they can relate to (e.g. same ethnicity) that they can go to if racial issues are affecting their student experience.

MR responded that there is an EDI committee in place and one of the hiring of faculty. Jason Sturgess is heading this committee.

AB – EDI commission is led by Francesca Cornaglia: anybody can address them for EDI matters. Both faculty and MRes/PhD admissions are made solely based on quality and match on fields.

Laura Perez noted the following issues relating to the 1st year PhD cohort:

- 2019:08 LP noted it was not clear in the induction email sent out by CA to 1st year PhD students if they can buy data with the research budget.
- ACTION:** CA to ask Donald/ Derek to clarify research budget use and then send an update students.
- 2019:09 LP asked if students can request to change their PhD office allocation. There is one micro and one macro student on 4th and 5th floors that would benefit from swapping.
- ACTION:** LP – ask students in question to email CA with their request and CA will look into it.
- 2019:10 LP noted that there is always a delay in setting up computers for students progressing from MRes to PhD. This needs to happen for everybody at the same time. At the very least we need access to Dropbox on laptops.
- AB agreed the process needs to be smoother as PhD students need to start their research and a week delay is too disruptive.
- ACTION:** CA to discuss with Nick and Donald why there is such a long delay when we know in advance who is progressing to the PhD. Can the computers be set up in advance/ be ready for the start of term or can students at least have access to Dropbox?
- 2019:11 LP raised the issue that students on Tier 4 visas who are progressing from the MRes to first year of the PhD are unsure as to whether they can apply for a visa until quite late.
- AB responded that we know in June whether a student has fulfilled the minimum 60% pass criteria to progress. If someone does not meet this, the dissertation result becomes crucial to progression. In the cases where students meet the minimum criteria, it could be a possibility to communicate this information earlier.
- 2019:12 LP noted that the visa applications are a huge expenditure for international students and wondered if there could be financial help put in place. The first stipend comes out 1 October but they have to make this payment in advance to secure their visa. Could there perhaps be financial loans or funding to help?
- ACTION:** AB to discuss with Michelle if there is a way to anticipate funds to help with visa payments. AB to find out if there are similar issues in other Schools and how they deal with this.
- 2019:13 No MRes students volunteered to represent their cohort for this meeting.

ACTION: CA to email MRes cohort again to get a representative for the next SSLC meeting.

Part 3: Programme delivery and other matters

Other matters

PRES results and proposals to address negative points

The Committee received feedback from student representatives regarding the PRES results and noted the following:

2019:14 PRES issue “I have a suitable working space” – air conditioning/ temperature complaints are ongoing. YP noted that students complain that there is no space to relax. AB responded that that is about non-working spaces. There are ‘chill out spaces’ on campus, such as Mucchi’s in Library Square is now a space to relax.

2019:15 PRES issue “There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and online resources)” – the Committee agreed that students need more information on how to access facilities or request additional facilities, such as access to data.

AB noted that many of the negative points in the PRES report could be solved through improved information sharing.

ACTION: CA/ AB to create a section in the next student handbook on ‘what to do if you need...’ and give information on the options that students have to access facilities or who to ask if they are unsure e.g. for access to data – ask the library, supervisors, email faculty staff.

2019:16 PRES issue “My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students”. EF highlighted that without set formal relationship(s) with staff member(s) outside the supervisory roles, if important issues arise it can mean students do not know where to go.

LP added that if the issue is with the supervisor students need another staff member to go to. AB responded that in this case students can come to her but agreed that a formal system needs to be put in place to ensure AB does not deal with all issues.

LP also noted that it needs to be clear what type of issues can be taken to the GSC representatives.

ACTION: AB to take issues to GSC and inform students if an agreement is made. AB will make a proposal to have time available for students 3 times per year (end of each term and end of year) to report any issues through making appointment with their GSC representative. But also available at any time for any urgent issues that arise.

ACTION: AB/ CA – GSC representatives should also be listed in the next Student Handbook so that students have this information when they start each year.

Any other business

2019:17 YP asked for clarification as to why Airbnb is not allowed. CA responded that Fabienne had explained this is based on health and safety.

2019:18 YP asked whether students are still paid their studentship if they forgo teaching.

ACTION: CA to discuss with Nick and update committee.

Date of the next meeting

2019:19 The Committee did not discuss the date of the next meeting. The next meeting usually takes place in February.

Action Sheet: Student-Staff Liaison Committee

Minute	Action	Progress	Responsibility	Timescale
2019:02	AB to bring the issues raised by MR regarding the current teaching structure to the GSC and escalate to Sujoy/ Michelle appropriately.		AB	
2019:03	CA to discuss job market allowance flexibility with Nick and update students.	CA discussed with Nick. The School will seek to clarify this as a policy and include details in the next student handbook. In the interim students can make requests on the use of their job market allowance on a case by case basis.	CA	
2019:04	CA to find out what the justification is for why research budget allocation is based on the date of the event rather than the time of booking. Is there a reason why some students were able to use last year's allowance and others not? There needs to be a rule that is clear and applies to all.	Nick has confirmed that this is how the university manages its finances (it is not a School rule). Budget allocation is based on the date the event takes place. This will be made clearer in the next student handbook and is a rule that applies to all students.	CA	
2019: 05	AB to come up with an official proposal regarding the restriction of working hours, referencing the policies of other Universities e.g. Cambridge and Warwick where students are allowed to work for more hours.		AB	
2019:08	CA to ask Donald/ Derek to clarify research budget use for buying data and then send an update students.	Nick updated CA that this issue was discussed in the GSC committee on 14 October. The process should be made clearer in the next student handbook. There are routes students can try to access data but this can be requested using their research budget – as a last resort.	CA	
2019:09	LP to ask the students who wish to swap offices to email CA with their request.		LP	
2019:10	CA to discuss with Nick and Donald why there is such a long delay in setting up computers when we know in advance who is progressing to the PhD. Can the computers be set up in advance/ be ready for the start	Setting up computers cannot happen in advance – despite the School knowing who is progressing, this process is contingent on enrolment. Only once a student has enrolled and set their new credentials to Donald can he begin the process of setting up their	CA	

	of term or can students at least have access to Dropbox?	computers. Unfortunately, this also means Donald is completing this for many students at the same time. CA has emailed Donald to ask about Dropbox access.		
2019:12	AB to discuss with Michelle if there is a way to anticipate funds to help with visa payments. AB to find out if there are similar issues in other Schools and how they deal with this.		AB	
2019:13	CA to email MRes cohort again to get a representative for the next SSLC meeting.	Email sent to MRes students 10/01/2020 to aim to recruit before next SSLC meeting.	CA	Completed
2019:15	CA/ AB to create a section in the next student handbook on 'what to do if you need...' and give information on the options that students have to access facilities or who to ask if they are unsure e.g. for access to data – ask the library, supervisors, email faculty staff.		CA/ AB	
2019:16	AB to take issues to GSC and inform students if an agreement is made. AB will make a proposal to have time available for students 3 times per year (end of each term and end of year) to report any issues through making appointment with their GSC representative. But also available at any time for any urgent issues that arise.		AB	
	AB/ CA – GSC representatives should also be listed in the next Student Handbook so that students have this information when they start each year.		AB/ CA	
2019:18	CA to discuss with Nick whether students are still paid their studentship if they forgo teaching and update committee.	Students are required to teach 50 hours to meet the conditions of their studentship.	CA	Completed