

Guidance

- Your report should be 1000 words or fewer. You should write in all three sections, but it is up to you to decide how much weight to give each section.
- Your report should be submitted one week before the date of each Scrutiny Panel. Completed reports should be emailed to r.nadeem@guild.bham.ac.uk or l.gill@guild.bham.ac.uk
- You will have two minutes at the beginning of each Scrutiny Panel meeting to supplement your report with a verbal update.

Officer:	Danielle Murinas, Postgraduate Officer
Date of panel:	4/11/21

Written Statement action plan

This section is for you to track your progress on your written statement priorities, as outlined in your action plan. The “context” section of the document can remain the same for each panel.

Written Statement Aim #1	
Improve mental health and wellbeing support for postgraduates	
Context:	<p>Postgraduate study and research have specific wellbeing concerns that differ from that of undergraduate study. Issues such as funding, relationship with supervisor and imposter syndrome are experiences that are more acutely felt at postgraduate level. It is thus important that support for mental health and wellbeing across the institution is representative of the entire student population and their specific needs.</p> <p>Communications regarding support have often been framed and timed in a way that fit undergraduate students more. There have been no dedicated postgraduate related communications or services, that make it clear services are accessible to them. The heavily promoted service Pause for example, is for people under the age of 25, in line with how the NHS splits its services. However, with no equal service for those</p>

Written Statement Aim #2	
Improve Postgraduate Careers Network Accessibility and Advice	The Postgraduate Researchability and Advice Survey (PRES) showed that PGRs did not feel there was adequate support for their mental health.
Context:	Another internal survey done by a PGR similarly highlighted issues. The Postgraduate careers network is hard to access, as it is on multiple different sites, and information is not always clear about how to access specific advice. This means that though information and advice is available, students are not always aware of where or how to access it.
	<p>There also needs to be a move away from the assumption of academic wellbeing content</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating with the University Graduate School on revised content Started plans for wellbeing weeks, which would be at key points of stress for postgraduate studies, giving more information concerning where to go for help Working with Guild Advice on resources <p>There is still a cultural assumption that all those doing a postgraduate want to move onto an academic profession, which is not the case. A move towards general employability of PhD qualifications would be an improvement, giving information on the various different career paths.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with Drew Linforth on ways to develop UB Heard to be more postgraduate accessible
Progress:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating a communications plan with Postgraduate Careers Network Met with PGR who developed wellbeing survey and the new Westmere scholar for wellbeing and have made an actionable plan Met with Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Transfer and discussed ways to improve information given to PhD applicants
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with Director of Employability to discuss how this can be built into the employability strategy Attending regular postgraduate careers team meetings

Written Statement Aim #3	
Improve Guild/University Communications	
Context:	<p>Issues with communications stem from the issues with organisations and management, that mean students are bombarded with emails. There can also be a lack of clarity on where to go for information, as particularly for postgraduate students, there are many different sections of the university which provide services for them. Closing the feedback loop is also something that needs to be improved, as there are various points through which the Guild and the University have collected feedback, but it is not always clear how it has been acted on. The COVID pandemic would have had a negative effect on this, as information and communications around this became a priority. Now that these would be potentially less, it is important that communications are more tailored, better timed, and consistently action focused.</p>

Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved in rep inductions • Met with college reps • Arranging meetings with PGT and PGR reps before graduate boards • Postgraduate section of the Guild website in the process of being redone • Tailored newsletters and working to making sure they are being timed with other newsletters • Monthly update to what has been worked on during September • Done social media content concerning specific meetings
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Written Statement Aim #4

Providing more opportunities to share research

Context:	<p>Students are given disproportionate opportunities to engage in the sharing of research and research related discussions. Opportunities are at the minute departmental and vary in relation to school and college. Though it is difficult to ensure consistent opportunities throughout colleges, it is important that students are provided with opportunities in some way. The Graduate School put on research events, but it is also important to have informal discussions in a relaxed environment. Previous feedback from PGRs has indicated that research culture needs improving, and this years' Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey indicated that PGT students do not feel part of a larger academic community.</p>
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Progress:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with Student Experience Officers to discuss college approach • Met with the Graduate School to discuss their research events • PGT academic experience discussed in the Student Voice Report • Met with Dean of Postgraduates and Director of Postgraduate Research in regards to PGR lectures • Early stages of planning for 'work in progress' events at the Guild
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Written Statement Aim #5

Work to facilitate a postgraduate community	
Context:	<p>Postgraduate study and research can be extremely isolating because of the nature of independent work. This was made worse due to the COVID pandemic, where opportunities to meet other postgraduates were limited. It is important that various opportunities are given to postgraduates, which would allow them a safe space to meet each other, and other students. The postgraduate community is currently quite fractured and separated, with less opportunities for Masters and PhD to integrate with each other.</p> <p>It is important that postgraduates feel welcome and supported in spaces, both for social opportunity and for improved wellbeing.</p>
Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate Welcome event had over 350 people attend • Hosting a weekly postgraduate networking mixer • Planning further weekly themed events • Met with Westmere Scholars to discuss plans for the year • Regularly meet with community leads within the Graduate School • Postgraduate website to include more prominent information on student groups and sports

Role and responsibilities

This section is for you to write about any projects you have been working on or meetings you have been to that you think are of particular importance to your remit.

Meeting / project	Outcome for students
Graduate Taught Board (GTB)	Meeting with Director of Postgraduate Taught Studies and PGT college leads, and discusses issues related to PGT assessments, community and communications.
Graduate Research Board (GRB)	Meeting with Director of Postgraduate Research and PGR College leads, and discusses issues relating to PGRs, including teaching opportunities.
University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC)	Oversees quality of degrees, and teaching and learning

Student Representative System Advisory Board (SRSAB)	Oversees the student representation system
Research Committee	Looks to the aims, culture and funding of research at the University
Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (SELT)	Informs departments on what is required for students in regards to teaching
University Education Committee (UEC)	Main education committee at the university

Ideas and policy

This section is for you to report on progress made to ideas and Guild policy that you have been mandated to work on. You only need to update your actions taken. You can also add ideas or policy as they are passed through the year.

Idea / policy	Action taken since last Panel
Food and drink outlets to be opened on the weekend	Contacted food and drink lead within campus services, and then communicated with the specific manager. Unfortunately, all places were not able to be facilitated and I was informed of places that were open. But it was logged for future reference.

Other student issues, meetings or projects to note:

Alongside the points and issues raised in this paper, I am also examining the status and positions of PGRs within the University. PGRs are in a unique situation, in which they have student status, but work as and with staff members in various capacities. Though no action has been taken on this, I am discussing this with various researchers. I am enquiring as to their experiences and any issues they have faced. I am also co-ordinating with the Graduate School, and finding out more about the processes and support that is offered to PGRs with this issue.