**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES PGR STRATEGY**

CONTEXT

This strategy is intended to set out a way to overcome current challenges in the HE environment and make the most of the considerable opportunities the Faculty has to provide an outstanding and distinct PGR education.

Challenges

The Faculty faces a number of challenges:

1. Recruitment Pool
2. The shrinkage of the PGT market and the closure of particular PGT programmes potentially reduce the pool of suitably qualified applicants in some areas.
3. Increasing international competition for the best students from high-quality providers who may provide higher levels of funding (e.g. US) or employ PGR students as staff (some European countries) at a time when international PGR recruitment to the UK is stagnating.
4. Visa and immigration rules continue to negatively affect international recruitment.
5. Financial Constraints
6. Financial challenges facing the University (e.g. loss of QR income, pension costs, estates plan) make for a constrained and to an extent uncertain funding environment, limiting our ability to direct resource to supporting PGRs.
7. These constraints could be heightened by reduced levels of funding being available from RCUK, especially in view of the re-commissioning of ESRC DTCs from September.
8. Students graduating with increasing limits of debts may affect take-up of PGR study, especially by those who might previously have self-funded.
9. Increasing Resource Needs
10. Increasing demands (esp. from research councils) that PGRs develop as researchers capable of producing impact and knowledge exchange, and hence become widely employable require new training provision and additional resource to be made available (e.g. for placements).
11. The model of training delivery training required by Research Council UK (RCUK)– (e.g inter-institutional Doctoral Training Partnerships [DTPs])- is resource-intensive.
12. Internal challenges, such as inadequate completion rates, take up resource, thereby potentially affecting the Faculty’s ability to improve PGR education.
13. Competing demands on academics’ time pose a challenge in terms of providing support and training to PG researchers and their supervisors.

Opportunities

At the same time, the Faculty benefits from considerable opportunities:

1. Strong reputation and brand of the University of Manchester and the city attracts PGRs from around the world.
2. The Faculty is able to draw on outstanding breadth and depth of scholarly expertise to provide supervision and a wider research environment.
3. The Faculty is able to provide access to outstanding academic resources and world class collections.
4. There is a strong internal setup supporting training with methods@manchester, artsmethods and Faculty researcher development able to address increasingly important agendas.
5. Interdisciplinary research is well supported, especially through research centres.
6. The collegial working environment and strong PGR communities support PGR development and achievement.
7. Working with staff, PGRs and students from all over the world prepares PG researchers for an increasingly international working environment.
8. Despite the resource constraints outlined above, we have the largest share in the largest ESRC DTC in England, are lead institution for an AHRC DTP and are also able to provide studentships through a variety of other internal and external schemes (e.g. school studentships, PDSA, alumni).
9. Leadership of the AHRC NWCDTP offers opportunities to develop the knowledge exchange, impact and employability agendas, which are also supported by a range of university investments (e.g. policy@manchester) and have synergies with Goal 3.

**VISION: Developing future intellectual leaders**

Making the most of the opportunities and confronting these challenges requires a shift in culture both in terms of how we select and of how we subsequently supervise and train our PGR students. We need to clearly aim to do more than simply support PGRs to successfully complete their PGR Programme. We already do this in many parts of the Faculty. Agreeing a clear overall strategy will however allow us to ensure a consistently high-quality approach that can also be articulated to internal and external stakeholders. This will increase our ability to recruit excellent PGR students and thus further enhance our doctoral programme.

We propose to recruit those with potential to become intellectual leaders and to train them based on the assumption that this is what they will do. The difference aimed for here is not easy to articulate and, working with this strategy, we will continue to sharpen our understanding of what makes an intellectual leader. Our training will have to support PGRs in aiming high, developing intellectual confidence, in articulating new ideas, critically and openly reflecting on their own arguments and having the resilience to respond positively to potential set-backs while also simply getting things done. In other words we need to foster ambition, initiative, ability to influence, resilience and productivity in our PGR students. More precisely this means that our vision is:

**To provide the expertise and environment in which high calibre individuals are supported to develop their potential to become ambitious, creative, professional researchers able and willing to provide intellectual leadership within academia and beyond.**

The Faculty of Humanities will provide support and opportunities for postgraduate researchers to develop as leaders with an international outlook who:

* **Conduct rigorous, creative, original research on challenging and important problems;**
* **Articulate the relevance and outcomes of their research to both academic and non-academic audiences;**
* **Shape the environment within which they and others conduct research.**

**STRATEGY**

It will do this by:

1. **Recruiting high quality PG researchers with significant potential to become an intellectual leader by working within the research environment of the Faculty**
2. **Supporting PG researchers in developing the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and experience to become intellectual leaders**
3. **Recruiting high quality PG researchers with significant potential to become a leader by working within the research environment of the Faculty**

* Provide significant support through competitive studentships and wider opportunities enabling research and training activity
* Use robust selection processes to select the most able future researchers
* Ensure that PG researchers’ projects fit with the research expertise and opportunities available in the Faculty

1. **To support PG researchers in developing the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes and experience to become leaders**
2. **Ambition**

* Support PG researchers to work on challenging research problems and develop rigorous, creative, original, defendable research
* Ensure that doctoral work is published in high quality outlets
* Provide access to a large and diverse community of internationally recognised academic experts to stimulate intellectual debate and development
* Support PG researchers in developing an international outlook

1. **Initiative**

* Provide opportunities to independently organise research-related events workshops, reading groups, conferences and seminars
* Provide the opportunity to apply for placements /internships within external institutions, partners and/or businesses
* Provide the opportunity to apply for institutional exchanges

1. **Influence**

* Provide support to enable PG researchers to participate in and present at (international) conferences, workshops or other events (e.g. public engagement) that provide relevant professional opportunities
* Provide opportunities for PG researchers to undertake training, conduct research and/or disseminate research beyond the university
* Provide opportunities for PGR researchers to understand their project within the context of Social Responsibility and to pursue related engagement activities
* To provide opportunities for PG researchers to receive mentoring beyond their supervisory team

1. **Resilience**

* Ensure PG researchers receive constructive feedback on their research from research leaders as well as peers and be supported to use such opportunities to improve upon and persevere with their research and develop as a researcher
* Support PG researchers in developing the confidence and resilience necessary to succeed in a competitive environment

1. **Productivity**

* Support PG researchers in developing the capacity to manage and complete a research project within set deadlines
* Provide advice and support on developing a profile for themselves, which will support their employability

**CHALLENGES AND NECESSARY RESOURCES**

In order to achieve the shift needed to really move towards training future intellectual leaders, we need to do further work to determine how develop an appropriate framework for support. However some key resource requirements are immediately obvious. While have already made headway in this direction, we believe that we need to continue to focus on enhancing the following

1. Studentships: We have to continue our efforts to provide a significant number of attractive studentships (drawing on internal resources or obtaining funds externally).
2. In-programme support: We have to ensure that PG researchers have the opportunity to apply for funds to support leadership-enhancing activities. For example, currently, we have limited funds to support conference attendance, but we would also have to think about placements, institutional visits and knowledge exchange activities. This is cannot be achieved by simply using current conference budgets for a wider range of activities; rather more resource needs to be invested.
3. Support and training: We need to give more thought to how we best support PG researchers in becoming leaders and what training events might be useful for them and their supervisors. This would most likely involve creating a new development programme.

Although this strategy does not directly address this issue, strengthening our doctoral programmes will also enhance opportunities for PG researchers to more directly support the Faculty’s research agenda. This is something that will be considered through the implementation of the strategy.

**MEASURING SUCCESS**

In measuring the success of this strategy, resource expended in collecting data has to be balanced against the benefits of measuring. KPIS will still need to developed, but as a starting point we propose:

KPI 1: Increases in the percentage of internally or externally funded students

KPI 2: To improve student satisfaction (PRES) results to be above the Russell group average

KPI 3: 90% completion of those entering the second year by 2020

KPI 4: Increases in publications by PGRs – precise measurement to be determined

KPI 5: Positive destination – precise KPI to be determined when DDAR led project is in place

KPI 6: Increases in students going on placements or institutional exchanges

NEXT STEPS

The next step will be the development of an Implementation Plan to be approved by PGRC. This will clarify how we propose to meet these objectives across the Faculty. To this end, it will identify where we are already successful in meeting these ambitions and where we need to focus efforts to improve.

Progress against this plan will be monitored by PGRC on an annual basis and be in line with the University’s newly developed [Research Strategy 2015.](http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=26131)

Approved by PGRC

October 2015